

# AUTHENTIC

SUMMER 2020 / 2021 ISSUE 12

MEN'S MAGAZINE

**STUART BAY**

Reaching the Community  
for the Kingdom

## 12 Reflections

ON PAUL'S COMMAND TO  
"REJOICE ALWAYS"

### A 'FRANK' DISCUSSION

We sit down with Rev. Frank Ritchie,  
a radio personality and media chaplain

From 1-day and Torpedo7 to Manta5

## Guy Howard-Willis

WISE WORDS FROM  
Charles Price

### PLUS

- Definitions of success and failure
- God blesses when you surrender
- Temptation can be good for us

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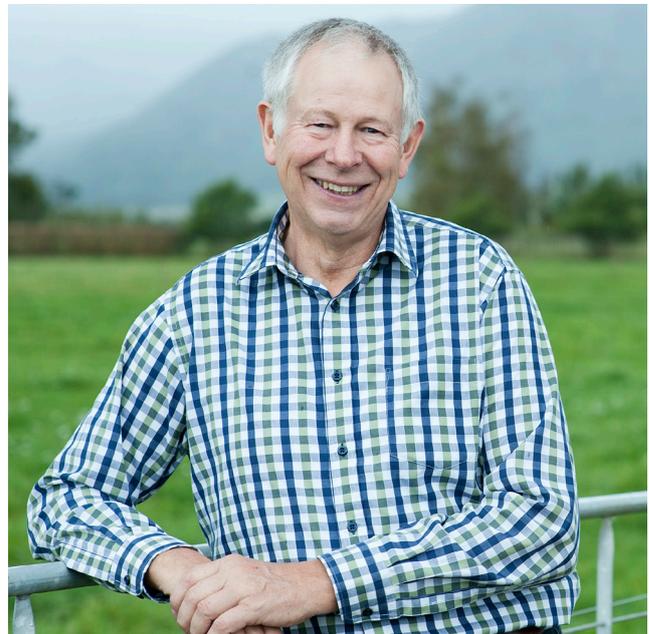
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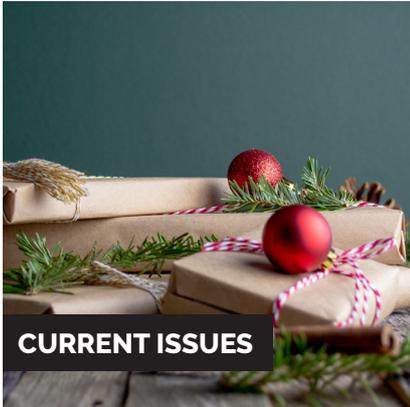
# 16 This 'Guy' is Making Waves!



**36** A 'Frank' Discussion



**56** Reaching the Community for the Kingdom



**CURRENT ISSUES**

- 06** It's Been Three Years!
- 11** A Christmas Devotional
- 42** The Euthanasia Law Will Be A Danger To The Vulnerable
- 54** The Christian Worldview



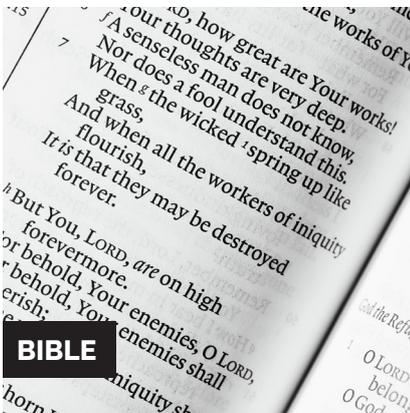
**MEN & FAMILY**

- 08** Leading with the Right Team
- 13** Definitions of Success and Failure
- 28** A Changing Work Culture
- 62** How Can We Be Sure God Loves Us?
- 64** The Fear of the Lord



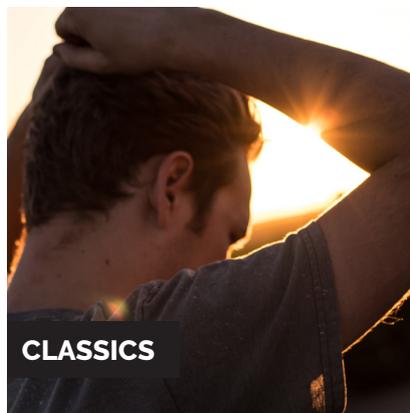
**LIFE**

- 10** Check the Oil Level
- 22** 12 Reflections on the Command to "Rejoice Always"
- 33** Whose Hat Are You Wearing?
- 50** Christians & Business



**BIBLE**

- 29** It Takes Practice
- 32** Don't Have A Favourite Bible Verse?
- 45** Temptation Can Be Good for Us
- 61** "Bat-Wing Dinosaur"—A Clumsy Flier?



**CLASSICS**

- 27** Major W Ian Thomas: Being and Doing



**REVIEWS**

- 66** Book: The Transforming Power of the Gospel
- 67** Book: Love Came Down at Christmas
- 67** Book: Piercing Heaven
- 68** Movie: Indivisible
- 69** TV Series: The Chosen

WELCOME TO THE TWELFTH EDITION OF

# AUTHENTIC

MEN'S MAGAZINE

## How on earth can it be three years since we launched Authentic Magazine?

And, of course, a lot has happened in the world since then!

Three years ago, Lee Hanson and I stepped out in faith with a bold vision to support and encourage the men of New Zealand by producing and distributing a printed magazine with an aim to have great teaching, relevant interviews and excellent resources to support and encourage them in their faith - and to give them tools to share their faith with their friends.

Here we are, three years later, printing our 12th issue. Admittedly, one of those

was digital, but we're printing issue 12 in a world which now looks very different. If you hadn't heard, 2020 was a strange one. Over here in NZ we've had an election. In America it looks like they will still be dealing with their election for some time and only the Lord knows exactly how that will play out. But things around the world are certainly different.

You may have read in the last issue, and also in this issue, one of the things we have reviewed is a TV series called, "The Chosen." I won't spoil it for you - you can read it - but "The Chosen" was

produced to show Jesus' life and the lives of those around him. - one of their catchphrases is "get used to different." In one episode, when Jesus talks to the disciples about recruiting Matthew, a Jewish tax collector and not well liked, into the group of the disciples, Peter turns to Jesus and says "yeah, but he's different" and Jesus replies, "get used to different."

Interestingly, it seems that could be a good catchphrase for this year - 'get used to different'. Well, we've all had to get used to different. At Authentic we've had some changes too. In our



structure, how we do things, with our personnel, some people have joined the team and others have moved on.

So, change can be challenging - but different doesn't have to be bad. I would certainly say things are 'good' different right now. Our team is growing. Skilled, passionate people are joining us. We have a shared vision to proclaim the authentic Christian life to the men and women of New Zealand. We want to prayerfully discern what opportunities we follow in order to do that. We are so thankful for the support and encouragement we've had from many, many people around NZ (and around the world actually) to continue in this vision.

Of course, we want to trust the Lord, be prayerful, and seek Him in all things and if we are to continue producing Authentic as a printed magazine, then we will! And if we are not to, then we will stop. So the fact that you have got this in your hands and you're able to read it means that right now we do firmly believe we are to continue.

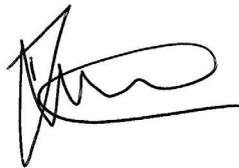
As I mentioned earlier, my 'partner in crime' when I launched Authentic Magazine was Lee Hanson. His heart, skills and vision were crucial in this journey and it's fair to say Authentic would have looked very different without him. For example, I wanted to call the magazine 'Nothing' because we

need Christ plus nothing! Thankfully he talked me out of it :)

Well, Lee and his family were called to serve overseas for a year but we kept in touch and 'long story short', he is now back with us at Authentic, rejoining our team in November.

We are very excited to have him on board. He will be heading up Authentic Media, our marketing agency, that helps ministries, churches, Christian schools, Christian camps, and even Christian led businesses with strategy, branding, logos, design, websites, social media, photography, videography and all that fun stuff.

For me, reflecting on these last three years, it's been a real privilege to lead this team and ministry. As we look to the future, I'm excited about what God is going to do and how He is going to use the people and the skills that He's given us.



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

# AUTHENTIC

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# IT'S BEEN THREE YEARS!

Andrew Stroud  
REAL LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

WISE WORDS FROM  
Charles Price

WATCHING UP WITH  
ear Grylls

Bringing faith with  
RAY COMFORT

Starbucks can teach the  
about evangelism

rote Hebrews? by Chuck Missler

BUSINESS / SPORT / CURRENT ISSUES / FAMILY / FAITH / ENTERTAINMENT

CHAT WITH WORLD RECORD HOLDER

Mary Wanhill

faith and life of  
CHRIS RATT

WISDOM SERIES BY  
Charles Price

MMM  
church's secret weapon!

WISDOM SERIES BY  
Charles Price

BUSINESS / SPORT / CURRENT ISSUES / FAMILY / FAITH / ENTERTAINMENT

2019 / ISSUE 7

Read the story  
Sports C

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We chat to t

Alfred

about family, f

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MEN TO

PLUS  
The Morning Hour

CRICKETER  
n Parker

WHAT WITH KIWI ICON

Simon Barnett

WISDOM SERIES BY  
Charles Price

A conversation with  
KEN HAM

PLUS  
Christianity & the

BUSINESS / SPORT / CURRENT ISSUES / FAMILY / FAITH / ENTERTAINMENT

SUMMER 2018 / 2019 ISSUE 5

For Warehouse CEO  
Mark Powell

shar

5

'Riding' on water?

WISDOM SERIES BY  
Charles Price

PLUS  
40 Years of Youth

SUMMER 2019 / 2020 ISSUE 9

Read the story  
Sports C

Char

We chat to t

Alfred

about family, f

THE  
3 MOST S  
PROBLE  
MEN TO

PLUS  
The Morning Hour

WINTER 2018

A TRIBUTE TO  
Chuck Missler  
1934 - 2018

WE CHAT WITH RUGBY LEGEND  
Bull Allen

WISDOM SERIES BY  
Charles Price

Spreading the Word with

BUSINESS / SPORT / CURRENT ISSUES / FAMILY / FAITH / ENTERTAINMENT / BIBLE / LIFE

AUTUMN 2019 / ISSUE 6

THE BUSINESS OF MINISTRY: A TRIBUTE TO  
Ian Elliott

7 Reasons why some churches  
are not reaching the Lost

Easterfest  
is going in Taupo

WISDOM SERIES BY  
Charles Price

PLUS  
The Morning Hour

BUSINESS / SPORT / CURRENT ISSUES / FAMILY / FAITH / ENTERTAINMENT

SUMMER 2019 / 2020 ISSUE 9

Read the story  
Sports C

Char

We chat to t

Alfred

about family, f

THE  
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PROBLE  
MEN TO

PLUS  
The Morning Hour

MEN'S MAGAZINE

This month (December) it's three years since the launch of Authentic Magazine. So, assistant editor Jeremy Smith caught up with a handful of the people who have appeared on our front covers in that time.

We asked each of them what God has been doing in their lives since their respective stories featured and if they've enjoyed following the Authentic journey. Thanks for taking time to chat with us everyone!



### Issue One - Andrew Stroud

It was good being on the very first ever cover of Authentic Magazine and I've enjoyed watching the journey since then. It's really high quality and is always full of material that is relevant for today. And yes, we've still got a couple of copies of issue one around the place. Since we caught up for our interview, we've shifted out into the country and the family is enjoying the extra space! More recently, I've been doing some work around increasing awareness of motorcycle safety.

On the family front, two of the boys - Jacob and Jesse - have taken up racing themselves, so that fills as much time as I'm willing to give it really. As a dad, yes, there are elements of excitement in watching them - but of course there's a few nerves at times! Another one of the boys, Caleb, has decided to focus on his building apprenticeship, despite achieving a lap record at Hampton Downs himself.



### Issue Four - Mary Wanhill

I have been learning to surf and introducing more extreme activities to Youth Encounter's activity-based youth programmes. The organisation has been growing from strength to strength and you are never too old to try something new! We are having a lot of fun and God is blessing our business, ministry and the social services we offer.

And yes, I definitely am enjoying following the Authentic journey. It's always exciting to see what God is doing through others and see the unleashing and releasing of God-given potential in other people and the work they do. So cool to be a part of the Authentic story.



### Issue Five - Mark Powell

I've just re-read the interview I did for Authentic Magazine a few years ago. It's really interesting to reflect on how God has been guiding me since. I'm still guided by the five priorities to honour God by using my gifts to help others flourish that I mentioned back then, i.e. business and commercial boards (I don't want to disappear into a Christian ghetto!), not for profit boards, personal speaking and teaching and also time for family and time with God. However, I can see that since then these broad priority areas have become even more focused and clear. I am now on three public company boards, plus Carey Theological College in the not-for-profit space. I've honed it down to just those.

My personal speaking and teaching has been even more focused on my local church and what I teach at Carey (Apologetics and leadership/teams), including being recently called as the discipleship/teaching Pastor to the team at my church. Family wise, we have just had our first grandchild with one daughter, and a second one is due in February, with my other daughter. My sons-in-law have started their own electrical services business, Tahielectrical - [www.tahielectrical.co.nz](http://www.tahielectrical.co.nz) - which I help with.

Finally, but probably most importantly, I have developed a better and more consistent daily rhythm of Bible and prayer time. Looking back, I can see how God has refined what I am doing and being! I still get copies of Authentic Magazine as they come out and it is inspiring to see how Dave and the team have moved forward with their vision.



### Issue Eight - Josh Coombridge

I'm still on the Morning Wake up for Rhema and Life Fm! That's obviously my work, but in other news I have just run my first ever marathon! Our rugby season was cancelled because of the second level three lockdown in Auckland so I had to do something to keep fit. Kudos to anyone who has ever run one, they are tough! My time was 3.44.08, for anyone that cares haha.

Instead of reading a new issue each quarter, I simply re-read my own feature issue if I need inspiration, or if I'm ever feeling down. I simply read some of my own answers and I feel great again! Only kidding - we get copies at work, always an interesting read.

# Leading with the Right Team

BY SHAUN BROOKER

**In American Football, each team actually comprises of three teams. There is a team for offence, defence and a specials team. As indicated in their names, one team is for plays where the team is on offence, advancing towards the goal. One for defence - when the team is protecting ground that they have made against an advancing team. And one for special moments, when the team has to think outside normal play.**

In leadership, each of these teams are representative of our leadership mindsets. We have a mindset that enables us to pursue our goals, one that protects the gains we have made towards our goals and a mindset that we use to think outside the box to either protect or advance when things are not going as we would expect. Each team has different strengths and while many players could play on any of the teams, to operate in an optimum space it is important to have the right team on the field at the right time. While you could have the defensive team on the field when you have the ball and are advancing towards the goal, it is not going to be as effective as having the offensive team on at that time.

At times in my leadership journey I have found myself trying to advance towards a goal with the defensive mindset. Usually it is when I find myself with a full calendar and not much time for thinking. A problem arises on the journey and I try to solve it with the defensive mindset.

Trying to mitigate the current risk and, in the process, 'fix' it with a short sighted vision. I focus on the current symptoms rather than the cause. This rarely solves the long term problem and almost always means I need to address the issue again and again - until eventually I play the long game and step into my leadership role fully - where I really lead, and do not just troubleshoot problems.

In our lives there will always be problems that require solving. Whether as a father, a leader, a minister or a coach, issues can be repaired through defensive thinking but rarely, in my experience, will this generate a long term solution. No matter how complex the situation there is always more than one way to approach an issue. Take time to think and pray. Asking God what is the best way to front foot the situation, seeking to not just mitigate risk, to not just solve the current issue, but to move forward, making yards in spite of what is at hand. | 

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■ Shaun Brooker is the principal of Hamilton Christian School and the chairman of the New Zealand Association for Christian Schools. He has taught and led in Christian and state schools in England, the Cayman Islands, and New Zealand.



# explore

life  
faith  
meaning

## MARK POWELL

To anyone thinking of doing an Alpha, I would say, "See it as part of seeking the truth." That's what it's designed to be.

There's no pressure. It's just saying—are you willing to hear about the Christian perspective away from the characters and the myths that are so often a false representation, and make your own mind up?

You will find the truth. And as Jesus Christ said, the truth will set you free.



Alpha

[alpha.org.nz](http://alpha.org.nz)

# WATCH OUT FOR THE OIL LEVEL!

BY LOCKY MCNEILL

**I am not always excited on a human level to write Simple Thoughts like this one. The reason being is they are not traditionally very popular. And in our social media likes-based value system, you have to reconcile that before you publish some things.**

God loves to see each of us encouraged in our faith. Built up. And growing. And as part of that growing process sometimes we need to be challenged, not just encouraged. Just being honest with you before I continue this train of thought...

I really felt to write and remind us to watch out for something very specific in this season. To ensure we have the oil we need to navigate our life and faith properly. Because we live in amazing times with some major change, drama and excitement, it is easy to forget about the most basic and needed components to faith in Christ.

Jesus shared a parable one day that goes like this...

Matthew 25:1-13 TPT

1 "At the time my coming draws near, Heaven's kingdom realm can be compared to ten maidens who took their oil lamps and went outside to meet the bridegroom and his bride. 2-4 Five of them were foolish and ill-prepared, for they took no extra oil for their lamps. Five of them were wise and sensible, for they took flasks of olive oil with their lamps. 5 When the bridegroom didn't come when they expected, they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. 6 Then suddenly, in the middle of the night, they were awakened by the shout 'Get up! The bridegroom is here! Come out and have an encounter with him!'

7 So all the girls got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 But the foolish ones were running out of oil, so they said to the five wise ones, 'Share your oil with us, because our lamps are going out!'

9 "We can't,' they replied. 'We don't have enough for all of us. You'll have to go and buy some for yourselves!'

10 "While the five girls were out buying oil, the bridegroom appeared. Those who were ready and waiting were escorted inside with him and the wedding party to enjoy the feast. And then the door was locked. 11 Later, the five foolish girls came running up to the door and pleaded, 'Lord, Lord, let us come in!'

12 "But he called back, 'Go away! Do I know you? I can assure you, I don't even know you!'

13 "That is the reason you should always stay awake and be alert, because you don't know the day or hour when the Bridegroom will appear."

This parable is purposefully shared by Jesus to get you to think. To think about your own readiness for eternity right now. To get you to check your oil level right now. When you read this I hope that is exactly what it does...

To all those who have read these Simple Thoughts over many years or maybe just recently and from all over the globe, I want to spend eternity with you!

Keep working on, making time for, and developing your relationship with Jesus.

Keep asking for the Holy Spirit to fill you each day.

I want to be ready. Are you ready? |  

■ Locky McNeill is a faith-based Jesus entrepreneur living in Taupo, New Zealand. He is a father of two young men and husband to one talented wife, who can bake up a storm of goodness. He splits his time between being a digital pastor and festival director for both Easterfest New Zealand and Christmas in the Park Taupo.



# A Christmas Devotional

BY CHUCK MISSLER



**Why is Jesus Christ so special? Why do billions of people celebrate his birth? Why do we believe that Jesus was the Messiah? What if He was just a man? Does it really make a difference? If you have ever asked yourself these same questions, be assured that the Bible does have the answers.**

For the greater part of the last 2000 years, the historical existence of Jesus has not been questioned. However, in the last two centuries an increasing number of skeptics have claimed that Jesus never existed, even though a cursory review of ancient Roman and Rabbinical writings reveals that Jesus was indeed a historical figure.

The Babylonian Talmud, an ancient Rabbinical commentary, makes a number of references to Jesus of Nazareth. The first century Jewish historian Josephus also made references to Jesus: "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man. If it be lawful to call Him a man, for He was a doer of wonderful works. He was the Christ. And the tribe of Christians so named

from Him are not extinct to this day..." (The Antiquities of the Jews, book 18, chapter three.)

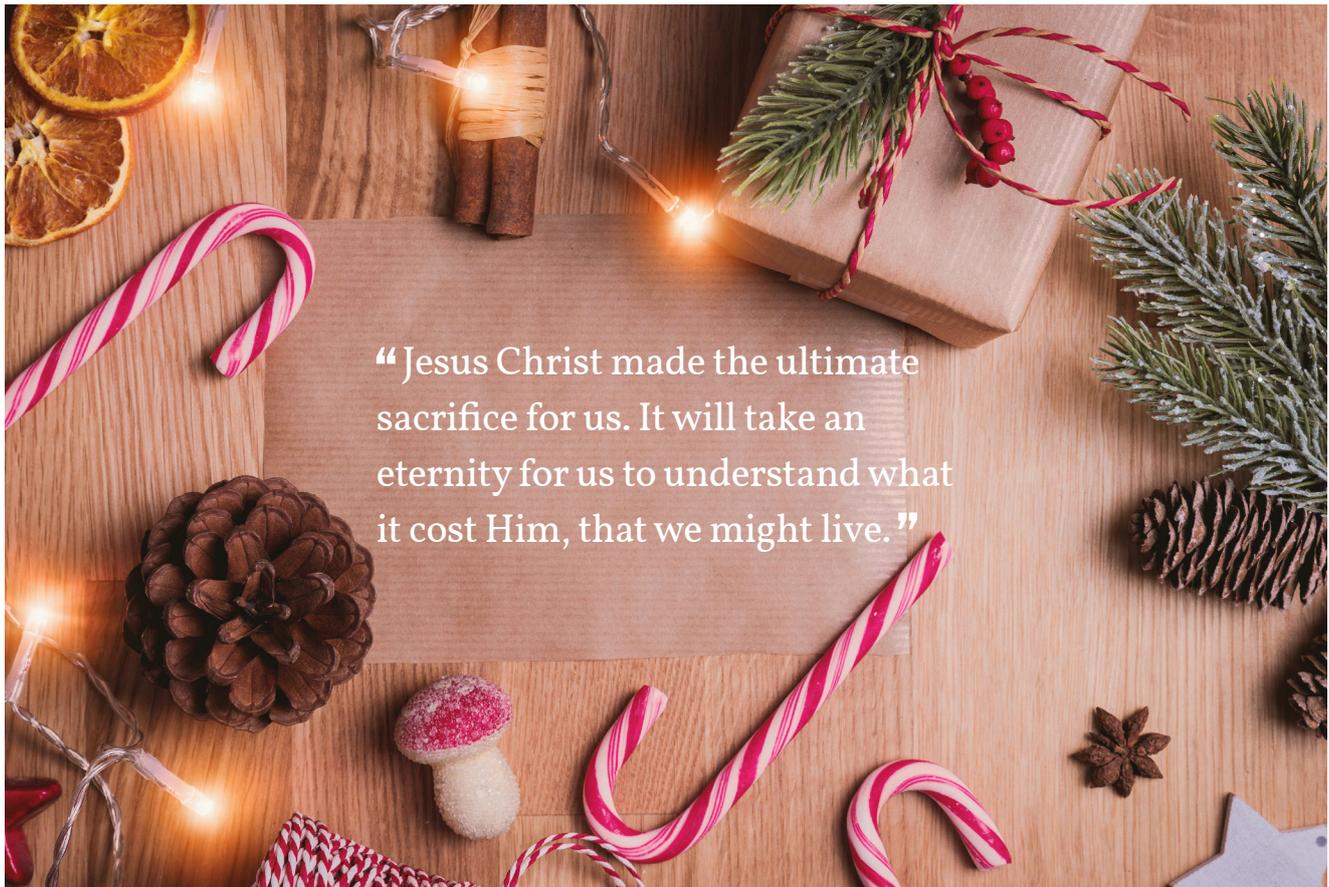
Throughout its text, the Bible clearly teaches that there is but one God. However, the mystery of the Godhead is that this one God manifests Himself in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This fact has led to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. In fact, the attributes of God, the works of God, and the names of God are applied to all three persons of the Trinity.

Throughout the Old Testament we are given a glimpse of the deity and majesty of the Messiah (also called the Anointed

One). Furthermore, the fact that God is a plural being, eternally existent in more than one person, is also found throughout the Old Testament. Elohim, the plural form of El, one of the names of God, is seen throughout the Old Testament, and in Genesis 1:26 God states, "Let us make man in our image..."

In the New Testament the disciples clearly spoke of the preeminence and deity of Jesus Christ. He is identified as the creator of the universe (Jn 1:1-14, Col 1:16), God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim 3:16), and our Lord and Savior (Titus 1:1-4). This is only a small sample of their claims about the nature and identity of Christ. By healing the sick, resurrecting the dead,

Jesus Christ made the ultimate sacrifice for us. It will take an eternity for us to understand what it cost Him that we might live. He "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:7-11)."



“Jesus Christ made the ultimate sacrifice for us. It will take an eternity for us to understand what it cost Him, that we might live.”

creating food out of nothing and by defying the laws of gravity, Jesus demonstrated His authority over the laws of physics and thereby revealed His divine nature.

Jesus' resume is impeccable. All the necessary attributes of the Creator are applied to Him within the Biblical text. He is independent of space and time, transcendent, distinct from His creation, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and has authority over the laws of nature. Jesus himself claimed to be the Son of God and the only way to eternal life (Jn 4:25; 9:35-37; 10:30-3; 14:6-9).

Indeed! This Christmas season is a great time to demonstrate your seriousness concerning His Lordship in your life. What "gifts" are you giving Him to celebrate His birthday?

Why not make this holiday season the occasion of offering something special, perhaps an indulgence we know we ought to doff; a habit that needs a firmer resolve; or, even better, our very selves, in some form of renewed commitment...what better way to clear our path in preparation for the special challenges that the coming New Year will bring? **IA**

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





# Definitions of success and failure

BY CARL TINNIION

**What is your true measuring stick for success? The world's definition, or from a biblical perspective? To generalise, I think the world's definition of success might include three things; status, power and money.**

Status is about what role or title you may hold in life, which includes your level of education attained. It could be about a leadership role and levels of authority in a company or in politics. It can also include any titles that have been inherited from birth without actually doing anything of merit. Status can also be connected to how much money you have.

Human power is about the ability to assert control or strength over an individual or group within a society. It can allude to your body shape and physical strength, but it is often more about your ability to make things happen by force. This might be connected to money because you can pay people to do whatever you want. Or it's about fear based leadership where

people just do what they are told for fear of the consequences.

Money. How much of it do you have, which also includes your level of wealth, assets and ownership of 'things'. Basically, the more you have earned, the more things you have, the more successful you must be.

Whether we like it or not, I believe all humans seem to be affected by such definitions. Even as Christians, it seeps into our worldview, leadership and influence within the body of Christ. How

## AUTHENTIC | MEN & FAMILY

'big' numerically is your ministry? How famous are you? These are still quite worldly definitions.

If you don't measure up to them, the opposite must be true by the fact that you must surely be a failure. You might have a low role, a small and insignificant ministry, or a small church. You are not famous. You must have failed because life is not seemingly successful.

When Jesus came to earth, I suppose He was famous for a while (amongst the poor). He acquired no wealth, failed in securing the title of being a Pharisee and was rejected by the religious community at large. Then He died on a Roman cross, weak and seemingly defeated. This doesn't look much like worldly success does it?

Let us look to the Bible for a more Biblical framework in defining this tricky word. Maybe it could help?

### Joshua 1:7-9

"Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. **Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.**

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate

on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good **success**. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

### Genesis 22:15-18

"And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from Heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of Heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, **because you have obeyed my voice.**"

### Proverbs 3:1-8

My son, **do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments**, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. **Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favour and good success in the**

**sight of God and man.** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones."

Quite a few of these scriptures (in bold) point to listening to God's voice, obeying His commands and staying on the path of righteousness and love. They mostly seem to be about having the right 'heart' if you like.

There are many other scriptures that point towards a deeper understanding of success in God's eyes and many of them point to the state of the heart towards God and being obedient. The scripture below, in the book of Acts, is my favourite and I think it gives us an excellent building block for living life in all its fullness.

### Acts 13:22 (ESV)

"And when He had removed him (Saul), He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, to be a man after My own heart, he will do all of My will.'"

Here we have an interesting insight into God's mind. He looked on David and found him to be a man after his



own heart. 'He will do everything that I ask of him', meaning he was a man of obedience. It seems like this was the measuring stick for David before he became King. Even though David was the youngest of a long string of successful looking boys, God already

think, according to God? The opposite must surely be not having a heart of worship for God, and being disobedient. Maybe this is true failure if we want to use such a crude word? So it is not primarily about numbers, how many people reached, how big you have built

in the moment, it also has the seeds within it that lead to mass multiplication, multiplication of the same DNA that it originated from.

**“Do not worry about being successful in a worldly way, in many ways it is the wrong question, the wrong foundation to launch from. Focus on loving God, and knowing Him and his words.”**

knew the state of David's heart and deemed him successful and exactly what he had been looking for.

We can even find David in the great hall of faith in Hebrews 11. 'A man after God's own heart' suggests he was a worshipper first, he pursued intimacy and relationship with God first.

Could it be that a heart of worship, coupled with radical obedience are the true marks of success in God's eyes? Perhaps it would be good for you to ponder that question for a moment and see if it aligns with your own definition of success? What are you driving for in life to earn recognition? If you can just get this right from the very beginning of your journey, you will work and live in a totally different way. It is so easy to allow the fear of failure to hold us back from ever doing anything. Or in the midst of ministry thinking you have failed or somehow let God down because something didn't work out the way you had hoped or assumed.

This definition, (for me) is much better as I think it takes the pressure off our need to perform. Can you say that you are loving God and being obedient? If so, even if the world is falling apart around you, you are successful in God's eyes. Here's the interesting part. If this is true, what might failure look like. do you

something, or how much money you have earned.

The Bible talks a lot about fruitfulness, or the promise of much fruit when you make your home in God's presence. What is 'fruit' then, and how can it be measured?

John 15 says if you abide (make your home) in Jesus, loving Him and putting him first, you will not just bear normal fruit, it will lead to abundant fruit! The Greek word in this instance means literal fruit so it's not some kind of complex meaning. Fruit doesn't just feed you

This could mean that the fruit of your own life is the impact of a life lived with God, one marked by loving kindness, worship and obedience to God's word. Your influence and life have the potential to mark other people's lives in a multiplication kind of way. Your life can be infectious, which can lead to people ending up copying or imitating you. This is one of the ways in which the Kingdom of God works and grows in the world.

This is true success. It is totally different to what we have been taught, or have subconsciously absorbed in the everyday world.

Do not worry about being successful in a worldly way, in many ways it is the wrong question, the wrong foundation to launch from. Focus on loving God, and knowing Him and His words.

Focus on knowing what He is asking of you in this moment, and in being obedient to that. It will lead to an extraordinary life, one that you won't have to engineer yourself. Godly success. | 



■ Carl is English, recently emigrated to NZ with his Kiwi wife and kids. Carl has worked with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) for 26 years in youth work, church planting, art ministry and as a travelling speaker. With a Masters in Applied Theology, he is setting up afresh in NZ, still working with YWAM in education projects throughout the Pacific, as well as a Story Teller, Chef and Lecturer on the side! He has recently launched a YouTube channel called 'Heavenly Nosh' combining theology, cooking and art!





# THIS 'GUY' IS MAKING WAVES!

BY JEREMY SMITH

**Guy Howard-Willis loves the question “What have you done with your life so far?”**

**So, that's what we asked him first up.**

**“I work in a small family office - there's five of us and when we have meetings they're really enjoyable and often a lot of fun.”**

**He has a visionary and creative mind in and out of business.**

**“God is a creative God - as we see clearly in His creation - and we're made in His image. I believe that means we're all creative in some ways.**

**Guy, who loves his family, has a boldness about him in which he regularly makes opportunities to share his faith. Jeremy Smith sat down with Guy, the co-founder of Torpedo7 (he started the business with his son Luke), 1-day.co.nz, and most recently “cycling's new frontier” - the world's first hydrofoil bike, the Manta5, to discuss his love of thinking deeply about many things.**

**Have you always had a bit of an entrepreneurial streak?**

Yes I guess I have. I left school when I was 16 and eventually got a job at the age of 17 on cross-channel ferries as a young deckhand. I learnt so much about business from those early days from the older deckhands. For example, how you looked after a passenger on the ferries by adding value and making their experience memorable - that's one of the principles I've used in business ever since.

**You grew up in England, so, why the move to New Zealand then?**

My wife Gina and I got married when we were 19. We had previously met when I was 17 after I had a serious motorbike accident and I was in the hospital for two-and-a-half months.

This young girl, who I didn't know very well, would come and visit me every day. Even though I was in a lot of pain at times, she still came to see me and was good company. When I got out of hospital we went out together, became boyfriend and girlfriend and eventually got married. I loved her very much then and I still do. In my early 20s, we'd had three daughters, but sadly, one of our daughters - Lucy - died, which really changed both Gina and I significantly. It was about that time that I really started to question my life on the boats, where I'd spent 12 years. I didn't want to become like the older deckhands - there were many who were alcoholics and who had broken relationships. So, I wanted a new life and I looked around at where I could start one and chose New Zealand. That's probably just about as far as you can go to start a new life.

**Tell me, how did you come to know Jesus?**

Well as I said, I'd come to New Zealand looking for a new life - but not expecting this was the life I was going to find. I eventually got a job working in the caravan industry, which wasn't far from where I lived. I really enjoyed the work there - it was contract work where I had good systems and I earned quite good money. But you know, while I was there there was a chap I worked with - who was also from England - who told me that his wife was going to be baptised. He asked me if I would come to the church and see his wife get baptised. I said, “Look, I don't do church.” But he said, “neither do I, but would you come with me?” And, being a friend, I thought I'd go with him. But, I did ask him, “what's baptism anyway?” And he explained the little he knew - that there was an area in the church with a false floor. When you moved it away, there was a pool underneath. And his wife would get into that and they asked if she believed in God and ‘pushed her underwater’ I said, “you're joking!” So, I went to see something I hadn't seen before.

But it was at that service when the young pastor preached that he said one thing which unsettled me a lot. He said that because of my sin, I had separated myself from God - and I didn't think I was a bad person and I really didn't like the sound of that at all. I would go back to church in the evenings, it was in the

## AUTHENTIC | FEATURE

winter and it was dark, I'd sit in the back of the church and listen for a while. As soon as the service was over, I'd be out that door like a shot. On one occasion a young Māori high school teacher - who was 10 years younger than me - came out and introduced himself. He said to me, "my name's Peter, would you like to do a Bible study?"

He just stared at me, waiting for an answer, and I couldn't think of anything to say, it was the last thing I wanted to do. I didn't want to do a Bible study, I didn't like reading for a start! But I couldn't think of anything to say and eventually I said "that's a wonderful idea." And as it happened it was. Peter became a very close friend of mine. We would meet together once a week and do a Bible study. With everything I asked him, he wouldn't tell me what he thought, he would show me what it said in the Bible. It was quite a few months afterwards that I really began to feel that the weight of sin in my life had to be dealt with.

At work in the caravan industry, when everyone had gone away for lunch, I sat there by myself and I prayed and accepted Jesus into my life then. The relief was almost instantaneous. I felt that God had entered my life in a way I hadn't experienced before. I wanted to tell someone. I went to an older Māori man who I worked with and I told him I'd become a Christian. I knew he'd spoken about how he went to church as well. He dropped his tools in front of everyone, embraced me and told me that all the angels in Heaven would be rejoicing. That had a profound effect on me at the time.

### **Did Peter have quite a big influence in encouraging you in your walk with the Lord then?**

Yes he did. Once I became a Christian that wasn't the end of the Bible study - in fact that was just the beginning. You see, we continued to read the Bible and he showed me how to study it and how to read books about the Bible and he taught me how to memorise verses. I told him, "I can't remember anything". He said, "yes, you can, you can remember your parent's names and where they were born, so you can remember the Bible."

We learnt two verses a week on little cards and then he taught me how to have a quiet time. I didn't know what a quiet time was, but he came around to my house every day before I went to work and we had seven minutes alone with God.

And then he took me to evangelise, to speak to people about my faith. We went to Garden Place in Hamilton, for example, at lunchtime and spoke to people about our faith - which I instantly enjoyed. Peter disciplined me in a way that set me off to do the same things for many other young men, who I have since disciplined also. You can't expect a person to become a Christian and just sit in the church and grow. You need to be disciplined by someone who will take a personal interest in your spiritual growth. Peter had a profound effect on me - he went on to move to Australia where he became a Baptist Pastor.

When I became a Christian, I had never read a book. I was in my early 30s and I wanted to read the Bible, books about the Bible and, in fact, any books. I took adult reading lessons, only to discover that I was Dyslexic. Not only could I not spell the word, but I'd also never heard of it.

Reading lessons from a retired school principal helped me immensely, I have since read hundreds of books and reading is now my passion. It's just that I'm really slow - although, I do remember most books I've read.

### **How did you make the decision to move into business?**

I like that question. It's very interesting - I tell everyone that the Prime Minister of New Zealand at the time - Robert Muldoon - helped me into business. They always ask "really? How did he do that?" I tell them I got made redundant from the caravan industry I was working in. The Prime Minister put a 25 percent sales tax on luxury items like boats and caravans and other things and it killed the industry. When I was made redundant, I was forced out into either looking for another job - which I was looking at - or starting my own business. So, I started my own business.



In my basement at home I made Scandinavian furniture. At that time there was nothing much like that in New Zealand. I made a table and six chairs and put it on a trailer - I took it up to town to a furniture shop in Hamilton. I showed the lady who owned the shop and she said "yes, I'll take that, can you please send me an invoice?" I had to go home and ask my wife Gina what an invoice was. I went into the shop and bought an invoice book and when I got back home the shop owner phoned me and said "I've sold that one, can you make another one?"

That was the start of getting into business. I was making a whole range of furniture. I learnt so much in those days.

The first company that I started was called Alpine Design Furniture. After doing a trip to Germany, I saw these flexible slat beds and I came home and introduced the idea to New Zealand. I stopped making the dining furniture and totally focussed on making these designer flexible slat beds. We changed the name of our company to Restwood Beds.

### Has your family also been involved in your business?

I sold my furniture business after owning it for about 22 years, which is quite a long time.

It's really interesting because when I started that furniture business my son Luke was born - and roughly 20 years later he had just got his business degree from Wintec. Luke was an average student at school - but he just excelled when he went to Wintec and had to learn for himself. He got his business degree before he was 21. When I sold Restwood Beds, we started a little business together. We bought a little engineering company which made a high-quality downhill bike - it was called Keewee. Both Luke and I were interested in cycling - Luke loved downhill biking and mountain biking and I like road cycling. So it was an industry we sort of understood. We made many other frames for bikes - mountain bikes, jump bikes and others. When we came to buy the components, Luke found that you could buy them from Taiwan and other countries at a third of the price you could buy them for in New Zealand.

So, we started this online business which we called Torpedo7 - and once we got it going it went really well. We wanted to sell the products really really cheaply, we didn't spend any money on marketing. Our marketing budget was filtered into lowering the price of our products. So, we sold products at unbelievably low prices. Word of mouth grew and that's how the company grew too. During the whole time we owned Torpedo7 we never advertised or did any marketing at all - we didn't need to. The customers did it for us. It was interesting. My wife Gina has never been involved in the business, but she's always been there for me to help me. She's never stopped me from coming up with any of my crazy ideas - I wish she had done sometimes! (Haha!)

You always need a good wife behind you so you can keep moving. At times, we went without and worried together. Interestingly enough, when we got really busy with Torpedo7, my son-in-law Ray was one of the ones who started with us in the beginning. I'm still working with him now. I make jokes that each time I sell a company, I sell Ray as well and then I have to buy him back because he's good value. I have worked with my daughter, my grand-daughters and Luke's brother-in-law.

It was never intended to be a family business as such, but that's just the way it ended up.

### Let's talk about some of the other businesses you've been involved in?

Well I've already mentioned Restwood Beds, that did grow to a sizable company. When I sold that and we started Torpedo7 it was 2004. It wasn't long before it grew to a size that was quite meaningful. But then, we had this idea to start another company. At Torpedo7 we used to do this promotion called 'first in, first served'. You had 24 hours to buy items with really

low prices. There was always a frenzy of customers within those 24 hours. We applied that same idea to everyday items like chocolate, clothing and iPhones. We called that company 1-day. We started that company in 2007. The interesting thing about 1-day was that even though Luke did a forecast of the fact we would

maybe sell 50 to 100 of a particular item each day, it was never like that. We sold thousands of products daily and that meant we would sell out, often in two or three hours. I can remember that on some occasions we had just loaded a product and almost instantly it would be sold.

1-day's selling online actually grew to be twice the size of Torpedo7, which was quite surprising. People often say to us "having three products on promotion each day, how easy is that?" But really it was quite difficult because finding three products that people wanted took a lot of searching.

### What sort of things were you selling on 1-day, Guy?

We sold everything - clothing, running shoes, everything. For example, on one occasion, just in a few hours, we sold 6.5 tonnes of marshmallows. I'll leave to your imagination just how many pallets that would have been. We sold 50,000 cans of Red Bull in half an hour. We sold literally truckloads of Cadbury chocolate and even 2500 pairs of women's shoes. But, to be fair, women do really like shoes!

### Tell me, what is the Manta5 hydrofoil bike and how on earth did you get into riding a bike on water?

You know that cycling has always been a passion of mine and so has swimming. It always bothered me why you couldn't ride a

**“I pray daily that God would give me boldness and a courageous heart. I often say too that I’m an entrepreneurial evangelist.”**



bike on water. You could say a jetski is equivalent to a motorbike, and a boat is equivalent to a car. But there's never been anything like a bike that you could ride on water. I had this idea for quite a while, the thought would just go around in my head and stay there. I drew pictures of it, I'd think about it at night. I went to a Business Edge conference and a creative speaker asked some questions. The first question was, "how often do you get an idea which you think about for months or years and then you see someone develop it and bring it to market and you tell everyone 'I thought of that.'"

The other question which really bothered me was "do you want to get to the end of your life and be left wondering whether an idea or a dream you had would have worked?"

So, I'd had this idea of riding a bike on water and I'd already figured out that the only way you could do this was to have hydrofoils on the front and the back. Then, I made a deliberate decision and I was subsequently on the lookout for someone who could help me do this - and I prayed that God would lead someone to me and He did!

He led the perfect person to me - Roland Alonzo. I met him and I understood that he designed and made bikes and I asked him if he would make this hydrofoil bike for me. I showed him all my drawings and he loved the idea. He could see it straight away. He said, "yes, this is something I could do, but it's not for me." I said, "why's it not for you?" And he replied, "...because I can't swim - how can I design a bike that rides on water when I can't even swim?."

I had to explain to him that NASA engineers don't get to go up to the space station, and Formula 1 engineers don't actually get to drive the cars. Eventually, Roland started with us.

But it wasn't easy - I thought this whole process was going to take about six months - it's taken eight years. Roland has not only become instrumental to designing the bike, but he's also become a good friend - and a Christian friend at that.

**I read somewhere that there are plans to cross Cook Strait on a Manta5 - are you seriously going to do that?!**

Well, I'm not! But one of the young chaps who works for us - Hayden - has said he is going to do it and has been training already. The distance across Cook Strait from the North Island to the South Island is 26km, and he can comfortably ride - in less than three hours - 24km. We have someone in Wellington who takes swimmers across and we're just waiting for the right conditions. It will be a world first too, so who knows - he might even get into the book of Guinness World Records.

**Looking ahead, what's your vision for the Manta5 bikes?**

We started off with our first bike and it rides really well. We're just designing our second bike, which is going to be lighter and faster and we've also got a pro version which is being developed now. That's going to be a manual bike and a manual bike means

that you can race it. And if you can race it, then it becomes competitive and if it's competitive it could easily become an Olympic sport. That's always been my end goal and dream.

**So, what's it like to ride a Manta5?**

That's a very interesting thing. I told someone recently that you use all five senses to ride the bike. There's the smell of the water, the feel of the wind, the sound of the water lapping. I've never ridden on a cloud, but I imagine it feels like that. It's so smooth and you can go at a reasonable speed. That makes it so exciting! Now that we've put an E-bike motor on the hydro bike it's opened the range up so that almost anyone can ride it. Seriously Jeremy, grab your togs and try to foil for yourself!

**Now then, why do you have a passion for reaching the lost? And how would you encourage others to do so?**

I guess because I recognise that there is sin separating us from God. And I just have a deep longing to see people understand that. One of the things I learnt when I first became a Christian was that there seemed to be a language between Christians and then another language between non-Christians. So really, I talk to my non-Christian friends the same way I'd talk to my Christian friends. I pray daily that God would give me boldness and a courageous heart. I often say too that I'm an entrepreneurial evangelist.

I think of all the most creative ways of speaking to people, and I ask myself, "what are the right questions I should be asking?" I think you have to be deliberate. If I'm in a car driving to Auckland with someone I can talk about anything. And, generally speaking, if you're not deliberate about what you want to talk to a person about - around your faith - then quite often you just won't do it.

My encouragement to others is to think of creative ways to talk to people - you may not be someone who feels that they are bold. But I challenge you to pray for boldness and for a courageous spirit every day for a month and you watch what happens and what God brings before you. You'll be surprised.

**How do you deal with some of the difficulties you have faced in life?**

I guess like most people I've had a few difficulties in life. The loss of our second child was one of the hardest difficulties we've been through. We were non-Christians then and we had to just deal with it the best way we could, and the way we dealt with it was never to talk about the loss of our child because it just brought up the memories and it hurt. When I first started off in business it was really going well and we had a fire in the business and it destroyed everything I had. I had to start from the beginning all over again.

I can remember the day after the fire, I found a quiet place and I prayed and asked God not saying "...why have You done this to me?" - but rather I asked Him to help me through that. The events which happened from there - which are an interesting story - just gave me faith and trust in God, that He does see you through these things.

Unplanned things do happen and you can't stop them. But I guess to trust God, and continue doesn't mean you sit back and wait for God to act. It does mean that you pray and ask God to act, but you act at the same time. I believe in the providence of God - God's overarching plan over your life. It doesn't mean all the best things are going to happen when something bad happens, but God does have a plan for your life.

It says in Psalms 139 "...in My Book were written every one of them - the days that were formed for you when as yet there were none of them..." God clearly has a plan for your life and I connect with that and I understand that.

**It sounds like you've had a pretty interesting life then?**

Yes I have. On some occasions when I've spoken publicly, people have said it was really inspirational. And my wife Gina constantly says to me that before I reach the end of my life I have to write a book about the things I've done and the lessons I've learned - and I've started to work my way through that. I'm not a writer, so I record it all and I'm looking for someone to help me write the story. Even if it's only for my family's use - that could be enough.

**Do people ever suggest that some of your ideas might be a little bit crazy?**

Yes they do, but I know that it's much different to be actually playing the game than it is to be standing on the sidelines with people telling you how to play the game. One of the best compliments someone has ever given me was from my wife Gina. I read an article on anti-gravity and I couldn't quite understand it. I was explaining it to her and she just stared at me and listened. I asked her afterwards "what do you think?". After a while she just said, "you know, you're really not normal are you?" That was one of the best compliments I've had. I don't want to be normal, haha!

**Thanks so much for chatting to us Guy! | **

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





**For most of the culture today, it appears that joy is elusive. Turning to entertainment, impurity, drugs, sports, relationships, shopping, or whatever else – all in the hope of finding deep soul satisfaction.**

Perhaps it is the confusion that joy is an emotion – a desire to find continual happiness – and thus always on the search for the next emotional high. But the only way we are going to experience joy is when we realize the source of it is not in circumstances, situations, or emotions. The source of joy is God Himself. He is the fullness of joy.

Psalms 16:11 tells us “You [God] make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

We must remember that the fullness of joy is found in the presence of God ... and we won't find it anywhere else. Paul tells us in Galatians that joy is a fruit of the Spirit (5:22). Joy is not something we produce or whip up – joy is something that comes as a natural outflow of having the Spirit of God residing within us. When we are IN Christ and He is IN us, we find the fruit of His Spirit being produced within us. Regardless of circumstance, situation, or trial – we can have joy within our lives because we set our gaze on Christ and declare our trust in

Him, no matter what we face. It was from a prison cell that Paul commands us to “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).

Again, joy is not about emotions, feelings, circumstances, or trials – it is about a steadfast trust in our God amidst the difficulties.

### Joy Amidst Suffering

Paul often talked about rejoicing amidst trials, difficulty, suffering, and persecution.

- » 1 Thessalonians 1:6 – And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit ...
- » 2 Corinthians 8:1-2 – We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.
- » Colossians 1:24 – Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church ...
- » Romans 5:3-4 – Not only that, but we rejoice in our

sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope ...

- » Romans 12:12 – Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

And three times Paul explicitly commands believers to rejoice.

- » Philippians 3:1a – Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. ...
- » Philippians 4:4 – Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.
- » 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 – Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

In all three verses above, the main verb (“rejoice”) is in the present, active, imperative. An imperative is a command – so we are commanded to “rejoice always.” The active voice tells us that we are responsible for the action – we are commanded to choose joy and rejoice always. And the present tense in Greek is the idea of the “ever-present tense” – in other words, whenever you live in the present this action should happen (and though many of us dwell upon the past or future, we live in the present).

So Paul commands us to choose joy every moment of our lives. We are to rejoice regardless of circumstance, situation, or emotion. Yet, how can we practically “rejoice always” in all situations, every moment of the day? Here are twelve reflections and ideas how ...

## 12 Reflections on Paul’s Command to “Rejoice Always”

### 1. We must know the source of joy

We will never experience joy if we don’t know where it comes from. True joy (and the fullness of it) comes from God alone. He

is the fullness of joy as Psalm 16:11 tells us. Though I quoted it above, read it afresh: “You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

You can see this idea in our passage in Philippians 4:4. The command is to rejoice “in the Lord.”

Our joy and rejoicing comes from and is found in Jesus. He is the source of all joy. And if the fullness of joy is found in His presence and He does not change (see Hebrews 13:8), then the only place we should ever seek joy is in Him.

William Barclay (a biblical commentator) said it this way: “Christian joy is independent of all things on earth because it has its source in the continual presence of Christ.”\*

### 2. Joy is a fruit ... the natural outflow of the life of the Spirit within us

As I mentioned earlier, joy is not something we produce within us, nor is it a facade or smile we put on to make people think we have joy. Joy is an evidence of the life of Christ within us. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, what comes out is His “fruit” – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). We don’t have to strive to replicate or produce it, it will naturally bear itself as long as we remain (abide) in Him.

Just as a healthy tree doesn’t have to work, strive, or grit its teeth to produce fruit – if it is a healthy tree, at a certain time of year, it is guaranteed to produce fruit – because of the life within it.

We are told in John 15, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ... Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing (John 15:1, 4-5).



The job description of the branch is not to produce fruit (that will come as a natural result of abiding) – the job description is staying/remaining/abiding in the vine. For it is only in the vine that the branch receives life. And when that branch abides (remains) in the life of the vine, it will bear fruit.

In the same way, God, through His Spirit, wants to produce (and be) the joy in our lives. Joy will be evident in our lives when we abide in the source of life: Jesus.

### **3. Joy is not about circumstances but a purposeful response amidst the circumstances**

Being joyful doesn't mean you need to be ignorant or ignore what is going on around you, rather it is about having the proper perspective amidst whatever life throws at you. Joy is the set of the sail of the soul in the wind of circumstance.

**“Joy has an interesting quality about itself – the more pressure we experience, the more joy should be produced.”**

Joy is living from a new heavenly perspective. When Paul commands us to rejoice always, he is not giving us a cute phrase that we can put upon our refrigerator – he is writing this with a beaten back sitting in a prison cell. Paul knew great suffering. In 2 Corinthians 11:24–28, Paul recounts his struggles by saying, “Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned.

Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.”

Yet it is the same man who despite all those painful struggles, commands from a prison cell, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice” (Philippians 4:4).

Paul wasn't ignorant of his situation or the pain he experienced, but rather determined to “leap for joy” no matter what he faced. Jesus gave the same commission in Luke 6:22-23, “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.”

### **4. Rejoicing doesn't have to make sense ... but it does need to happen (always)**

It encourages me that “rejoicing always” doesn't always have to make sense. But whether joy makes sense in the situation or not, I am still called to do it.

Because joy is not an emotion like happiness, you can rejoice even with tears in your eyes and sorrow in your soul. So whether you feel happy or sad, you are still called to rejoice. We must decide to rejoice in every moment – good, bad, or ugly – even if it doesn't make sense ... perhaps especially if it doesn't make sense.

To rejoice is a command. We must obey. There are times when we must command our minds or souls to come in alignment with truth. In the Psalms, you find that the Psalmist will do that very thing. For example in Psalm 42:11, the Psalmist asks himself, “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?” Rather than live in self-reflection or despair, he commands his soul in the second half of the verse, “Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.”

Regardless of how we might feel, let us choose to obey the command to rejoice always, in all circumstances.

### **5. Joy increases with the increase of pressure (suffering, trial, persecution)**

Joy has an interesting quality about itself – the more pressure we experience, the more joy should be produced. My friend Eric often talks about Christians being “cheerios in milk” – utterly unsinkable. Have you ever tried to sink a cheerio? Every time you push it down into the milk, it pops back up to the top. Or imagine jumping on a trampoline. The harder the bounce, the higher you soar. When life presses you with pain, suffering, trials, hardships, or difficulty – that added pressure should only cause our joy to leap all the higher.

There is a classic illustration of the toothpaste tube. When you squeeze a tube of toothpaste, what comes out? Obviously toothpaste – but why? Some might say because the tube was being squeezed ... but that's not the question. The question is why does toothpaste come out? The answer – because that is what is in the tube. The issue is not the squeezing (you will be squeezed, guaranteed!), the real question is WHEN you are squeezed, what will come out of you?

Can you imagine living in such a way that the harder you are squeezed, the more joy bubbles forth?

Sound crazy? Perhaps. But it describes the life of a Christian. One commentator on Philippians 4:4 said it this way: “Lest there be any detractors or recalcitrant members of the church who resist the encouragement to rejoice in the Lord, Paul repeats the command, I will say it again: Rejoice! He doubles the command in case there are those who object that rejoicing in a time of suffering is inappropriate. A time of suffering is a time

when rejoicing in the Lord is the only way to survive. In no way is Paul simply advocating a positive mental attitude or urging his readers to “cheer up” and “have a nice day.” His double emphasis on joy comes from his own experience of knowing the resurrection power of Christ and participation in his sufferings (3:10) in his Roman prison.\*\*\*

## 6. Joy is a present declaration in our future hope (we rejoice because we know the future)

When we rejoice, it is our present declaration in our future hope. If we know the end of the story, and the hope that awaits every believer, we can rejoice regardless of what happens around us.

Jesus said, “Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). When we know where we are going, we can rejoice! What if we lived with an eternal perspective – looking at our “momentary afflictions” in light of eternity?

1 Peter 4:13 – But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

1 Peter 5:10 – And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

Romans 8:18 – For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

2 Corinthians 4:17 – For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

Hebrews 12:11 – For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

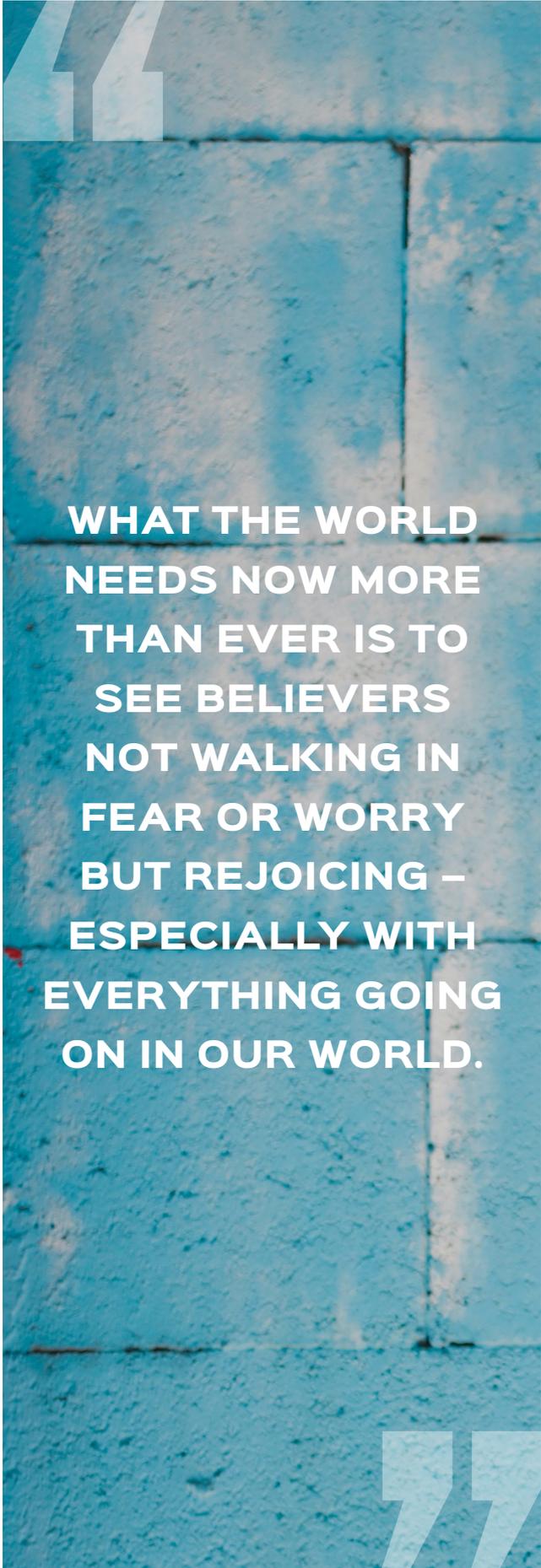
Hebrews 13:5b-6 – For He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

## 7. Joy exposes and declares our focus and trust in God

What we rejoice in declares our focus. When we experience God’s joy in our lives, it reveals that our focus is Jesus but that we trust in His provision and timing (even if we don’t see the results immediately).

## 8. We rejoice because we know trials and difficulty lead to maturity

When you see the end result of difficulty, you find yourself joyfully enduring it. James tells us, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that



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the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4).

Similarly, Paul says in Romans 5:3-4, "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope ..." When we face trials and difficulty, it produces steadfastness, endurance, character, and hope. In short, trials and hardships develop maturity in our lives.

### 9. Joy is most evident (or seen more clearly) in our trials, sufferings, hardships, difficulties, and weaknesses

The best place to see if we are rejoicing is not during times of ease. It is easy to have joy when things go well ... but joy is proven in difficulty. As we mentioned in number five, as pressure increases in our lives, so too our joy should expand and be seen more clearly. Paul rejoiced in his weaknesses because it was in his weakness that the power of God was made more evident (see 2 Corinthians 12:9).

What if we saw trials, sufferings, hardships, difficulties, and weaknesses not as something to dread but something to rejoice in. What the world needs now more than ever is to see believers not walking in fear or worry but rejoicing – especially with everything going on in our world.

### 10. We rejoice because we know God is King ... and He has overcome the world

There is always a reason to rejoice because our God is King of kings and Lord of lords and He has overcome the world! He is the victor! He is the savior! He is King!

Psalms 97:1 – The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!

John 16:33 – I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

### 11. We rejoice because God is a God of Joy

God is a God of joy.

Psalms 16:11 – You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Zephaniah 3:17 – The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

Nehemiah 8:10b – And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

John 15:11 – These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

God does not want us to be conformed to the pattern and image of the world (Romans 12:2), rather we are to be conformed to the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29). Since He is full of joy, so too our lives should ever be rejoicing!

### 12. Joy is to be a distinctive mark of a Christian

Gordon Fee wrote, "'Joy,' unmitigated, untrammelled joy, is—or at least should be—the distinctive mark of the believer in Christ Jesus."\*\*\*

Another scholar said it this way, "this command calls for the development of a cheerful attitude in every circumstance to be the dominant theme in the Christian life. The fulfillment of all other goals in the Christian walk flows out of the practice of rejoicing in the Lord."\*\*\*\*

Is joy one of the distinctive marks in your life?

We know Christians are supposed to be known for love (John 13:35) and Peter says that we are to wear the clothing (the mark) of humility (1 Peter 5:5). In fact, all the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) are to be the evidence of the life of the Spirit within a believer – which means joy should be one of the "dominant themes" bearing itself out in our lives.

Paul reminds us that the Kingdom of God is one of joy (remember, He is a God of joy and thus His kingdom bears His nature) – "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

### Let Us Rejoice Always

If joy isn't an emotion nor based upon circumstances, then there is every reason to "rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice!"

Is that true in your life?

Would you allow God, in Whose presence is the fullness of joy, become your joy and bear that fruit in and through your life? As Isaiah wrote, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10). | 

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# Being and Doing

BY MAJOR W. IAN THOMAS

**This is a divine vocation into which you have been redeemed, as "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that you should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10) can only be fulfilled in the energy and power of the One who indwells you now by His Spirit, as He walked once only in the energy and power of the Father who indwelt Him through the Spirit.**

Of Himself He said, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:19), and of you He says, in John 15:5, "Without me you can do nothing." How much can you do without Him? Nothing!

It is amazing how busy you can be doing nothing! Did you ever find that out? "The flesh everything that you do apart from Him "profiteth nothing" (John 6:63), and there is always the awful possibility, if you do not discover this principle, that you may spend a lifetime in the service of Jesus Christ doing nothing! You would not be the first, and you would not be the last but that - above everything else - we must seek to avoid! So, you discover that the life which you possess as a born-again

Christian is of Him, and it is to Him, and every moment that you are here on earth it must be through Him of Him, through Him, to Him all things! "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1).

The Lord Jesus Christ claims the use of your body, your whole being, your complete personality so that as you give yourself to Him through the eternal Spirit, He may give Himself to you through the eternal Spirit, that all your activity as a human being on earth may be His activity in and through you; that every step you take, every word you speak, everything you do, everything you are, may be an expression of the

Son of God, in you as man. If it is of Him and through Him and to Him, where do you come in? You do not! That is just where you go out! That is what Paul meant when he said, "For me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). The only Person whom God credits with the right to live in you is Jesus Christ; so reckon yourself to be dead to all that you are apart from what He is, and alive unto God only in all that you are because of what He is (Romans 6:11).

It is for you to BE it is for Him to DO!  
Rest fully available to the Saving Life of Christ. | 

*From: The Saving Life of Christ. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. ©1961.*

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# A Changing Work Culture...

By Paul Curtas

**So much has happened over the last few months to the corporate world. Business, both big and small, that once flourished are now suffering. So what are we learning from this, and how will it change us and our company?**

It's obvious to all, that a company is not fail-safe, and the success that makes people feel safe and secure can change in an instant. The Christian faith tells us that we live in a world that is constantly changing (2John 3:16-17).

Just consider the contrast between what was important six months ago to what is important now.

The loss of revenue companies have experienced is having a purging effect, by exposing what has been greedy and wasteful. The employee special interest groups that promoted diversity and were funded by companies will now struggle to survive in these lean times. Diversity groups are good and work well

when preference is not shown, and all are encouraged to work together for the common purposes of the workplace. But any dividing wall that have been create will probably crumble.

The strength needed now to sustain a company comes from a unified workforce (Matthew 12:25).

Hopefully companies will start to see more the value of their employees, and show appreciating based on the merits of their work, instead of personal views that have little to do with a dedicated effort of collaboration within the company. Though the future of work and business ideals will certainly undergo changes, the principles, value,

and purpose of work given to us by God remain the same (Ephesian 6:5-9). Now is the time for all of us, both employees and company leaders, to evaluate ourselves.

It is in difficult times such as these, we learn our greatest lesson, which make us reflect on our views and actions, and can compel us to make needed changes. But for now remember,

*"Better a little income with righteousness, than great revenue with injustice." (Proverbs 16:8) | *

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# It takes practice

BY STEPHEN WHITWELL

**This subject can be the making of our lives.**

**That's a sweeping statement but one I believe. Over the years of my Christian pilgrimage, now nearly fifty years, I have seen this to be true. I have observed ones who have established a regular routine and rhythm of setting time aside to read God's Word, meditate and pray.**

Their lives seem to be more ordered, peaceful and purposeful. Not without trial and strife, but there definitely is something different about their lives. But it does take practice, and this is my story.

When I was about fifteen years old I went to a Boys Brigade camp at Maitai Valley near Nelson. A youth band was playing on the Saturday night and I gave my heart to Christ. In fact,

I wept my way to the Cross! I will never forget that night. Something started then. I don't remember too many details but I do remember doing, by correspondence, a few Bible courses. That wet my appetite for more. In fact my personal devotions habit started then and has largely been a regular part of life ever since.

By definition devotions, and practice, can be explained by the meaning of the words. Devotions, means adherence, adoration, affection, allegiance, attachment, dedication, deference, faithfulness, worship, consecration, constancy, and devoutness. Practice, means the habit, method, process, rule, system, tradition, custom, or manner. <sup>1</sup>

So for me personal devotions means the regular habit and custom of reading the Bible, prayer, journaling, thinking, pondering and mulling over the Bible and the things of God, at a usual time and in a usual place.

A new Prime Minister was being interviewed and presented to the country. I was impressed by something she still did. Every morning at 6am she was in the gym, working out. It was her regular practice and had been for many years. Becoming Prime Minister did not change her regular practice and routine of physical exercise.

Before she was the Prime Minister, she was in the gym at 6am. When she became Prime Minister she was in the gym daily at 6am. When she transitioned into another role, she was in the gym at 6am every day. Her role, whatever it was at the time, was made to fit around her regular practice of a daily 6am workout.

It made quite an impression on me. It solidified my resolve to do what I do, and maintain my regular morning routine. There's been days and seasons where I've missed my morning convocation, but it remains my goal.

My time is the morning. First thing in the morning. Before the day gets going and the demands of the day present themselves. I am by nature a fowl. Someone once said that we are either an owl or a fowl. An owl is not a morning person, but a fowl is. I am definitely a morning person. So, for years my regular practice has been to rise before others in my household, go into my office, and there read, study, meditate, pray and write.

It has enabled me to follow ideas, explore words and phrases, research information, write what I discover my heart is really saying, and connect the dots of ideas and themes I previously didn't make the effort for. The benefits have been extraordinary. Direction, encouragement, articles and books have come from it.

It is my most important part of the day. It is an appointment I look forward to, a meeting I can hardly wait for. My regular Bible reading plan is my own system. I have never been a big fan, for me personally, of following someone else's daily reading plan. I'm not sure why that is. I know they work well and are ideally suited to some people. However, early on in my Christian walk, I just started reading three chapters a day; and I started in Genesis, Psalms and Matthew.

So, I generally read a chapter in each of those sections, Genesis to Job, Psalms to Malachi, and Matthew to Revelation. I have continued on that plan all these years.

I confess – I am a lover of God's Word, the Bible. Over the years I have read it from cover to cover numerous times. Yet in these days, at my morning meetings, I am seeing things I have never seen before. I am writing insights and allowing my heart to express itself better. I am amazed time and again at the ability of God, through His Word, to directly address issues my family

and I are facing, and to bring encouragement and perspective for life.

One thing I am sure of is the influence of two of my mentors in my early years. My neighbour Rex (I grew up on a farm in the Wairau Valley, Marlborough), was my Bible School teacher, and also my Boys Brigade captain. His input into my life when I was an impressionable teenager was invaluable. I remember to this day travelling somewhere with him many times in his old Citroen car, and having discussions about God, the Bible, faith, girls, work, holiness, and relationships.

He was an example. He lived what he talked about – he walked the talk. He often spoke of things he'd read, learnt, or spiritual insights he'd received during his own personal devotions.

The other was my pastor of the church I went to growing up, and in my early years of working. Ian was a great leader, incredible speaker and Bible teacher, and he became a mentor and friend. He took our wedding and sent us into the ministry! His influence on my life and my own pastoral work (I served as a pastor for 30 plus years) is almost immeasurable.

He too often spoke of Biblical principles and even confirmations for a leadership decision he'd received from his personal devotions.

Their influence in my life was shaped by their own practice of a commitment to regular time spent in Bible reading, prayer and meditation –

personal devotions. Jesus says "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3 NKJV<sup>2</sup>).

One major joy in this journey of mine is that in recent times, my connection to the Lord has become more close and intimate. I believe God loves us, and sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for us, so that we can come to the Father! Jesus came to give us eternal life – yes! But He also came to bring us to the Father.

Jesus is the way, the Father is the destination. A relationship with God the Father is the major reason Jesus came to the Cross. In my readings over the last few months a theme was developing. Each time I came across it I would journal with the heading, 'It's Personal'. It's about how we can know God personally. For example, in the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, there seems to be a shift in their faith and understanding of the promise (Genesis 12), when they had come to a place of knowing God personally.

Another surprising thing that has developed from my morning devotions is journaling. I used to think if I journaled it would be too dark, too negative and dreary. But the opposite has happened. I have written from my heart about the issues we

**“Jesus is the way, the Father is the destination. A relationship with God the Father is the major reason Jesus came to the Cross.”**

face, and some of it is pretty raw and painful. However, I have found a great freedom in expressing exactly as I am at the time, plus thanks to the Lord, praise to Him for the things we have, for His guidance and provision, for my family and for His grace that helped us in times of need.

I look back on those entries now and sometimes I am amazed; at what I wrote, at the encouragement it was, and I remember how I felt then but how we have moved on from there.

One morning, I was just reading the next chapter in my reading plan – nothing special about the morning – but there it was! A Word from the Lord. A very clear promise of what He was going to do. It was amazing. It included these verses; “He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. Then they are glad because they are quiet. So He guides them to their desired haven. (Psalm 107:29-30 NKJV). That was wonderful.

Then we found ourselves in a difficult season. Financially we were going backwards. I had had a good job but the business eventually closed. My health had taken a turn for the worse which meant I was unable to work. I'd had another heart attack, and was recovering. So, you could say some things were against us.

But I'd heard the Word of the Lord for our situation. I knew Psalm 107 was God speaking to me. The storm would be calmed. There would be quiet. We would be in a Haven. In the painful months of waiting that followed, the promise I'd received gave us hope. It encouraged us. It lifted our spirits.

I had it printed out and in pride of place in my office. It calmed our hearts with the knowledge that God was up to something, He was going to work and change and do Divine stuff on the human level, even though life was far from easy.

Long story short – we moved house into a new place. The Word of the Lord came to pass. It is wonderfully quiet. I tell people that in our new place the quietness is deafening. The financial storm is now gone. It is a Haven. A safe, quiet, restful, refreshing place.

I can't imagine what life would have been like during those months of waiting, if we didn't have that word to lean on. A Father's promise to one of His sons.

We all have many desires, but maybe our greatest should be this; To know God and enjoy Him forever. These seven words have become my personal vision statement. They express the core of my heart, but I believe it is what the Lord wants for all of us. At this time when all around the world we're facing the COVID-19 crisis, we're being told regularly to, keep in contact,



and stay connected. Because relationships are powerful and vital to personal survival in tough times. So to face everything that might be against us, to be at peace and not living in fear, to survive and thrive in these times, to hear God's Word on the issues, the best thing we can do is to keep in contact, and stay connected to the Lord. How do we establish and build and strengthen our relationship with God and stay connected to Him? It's pretty much the same as any human relationship. Time is the big one. And quantity time always leads to quality time. We can know God better!

James writes in the New Testament; Draw near to God and He will draw near to you... (James 4:8a NKJV). That's exactly what's happening in my world. God the Father loves us, and wants to commune with us. He wants a relationship with us. I recently wrote, Oh how we need to be people of the Word. Regular readers, with a resolute rhythm, disciplined delvers, prevailing purveyors, systematic students, and perpetual pupils of God, His Word, His will and His ways.

The best, first, most important, the highest priority thing we need to do as men, is to get with God! Everything flows from there.

There's phenomenal jewels waiting to be discovered. There's insights for our eyes to see. There's words of life to be read and devoured. There's health for the heart, blessing for our businesses, vigour for our ventures, and clarity for our context. It takes practice but the rewards are exponential.

All waiting for us in that amazing place of our own personal daily devotions. | 

<sup>1</sup> [www.thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com)

<sup>2</sup> NKJV refers to the New King James Version of the Bible.

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**I think I am really guilty of this...During the course of my life doing all I can to help others follow Jesus, I have regularly asked the question "what is your favourite Bible verse?".**

I asked people, mostly in group settings, to share with said group what their personal favourite might be.

Some are ready to answer really fast... Others have a look of horror clearly on their faces, as though they didn't realise they should have one. And others just say "mine was the same" hiding the fact they have drawn a blank.

Now, I am honestly wondering whether it was such a wise move?

Please bear with me as I explain... And I welcome you replying with your own thoughts anytime.

My reason for this possible conclusion is based on the concept of 'camping' on one verse or passage. The idea of where you base your faith, ministry or outlook on life on a key favourite verse. We have a natural proclivity to stick with what

we know and what makes us feel good. While this can provide comfort at some point, I am not convinced it is conducive to continued growth.

While the verse "for God so loved the world..." (John 3:16) is super cool and important, it is not enough. There is more to learn and grow in my friend.

I am fully convinced that God's Word is as advertised by heaven itself.

It is so real, so alive, so relatable to each of us on a personal level (Hebrews 4:12). It won't tell you what colour car to buy or what style of sunglasses to purchase, but in regards to anything personal and what is really most important - it has got you more than covered!

Here are some simple examples...

I have heard people in good faith say they only give to God when it makes

them happy. Because as God's word says "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7)

What else does God's word say about giving? The same chapter talks about not being reluctant, which to me is not always the same as cheerful.

It talks elsewhere about being generous. It talks about sowing seed.

I have heard people say that God loves them just the way they are. 1 John 4:16 explains passionately about how God loves us. It is awesome!

What else does God's word say about God and our relationship to Him? God disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12:16), He is also a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).

Personally, I believe firmly that "God loves you just the way you are and also loves you too much to leave you that way".

I also love how the Apostle Paul summarised his life and ministry in one of his amazing letters.

For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Acts 20:27 NIV

When I marry this sentiment with what the Word of God says it is, the last thing I want is a mere favourite! I want all of it. I want to swim deep in it. I want to chew it completely over. I want it to speak to me in any way I need. I want it to change me more and then some more again.

I want to encourage you most strongly today and especially in this season of time, to maybe consider moving on from a mere favourite one verse to embracing all the Word of God, one piece at a time. Because when you approach it like this you will not limit God in your life and you will not have hamstrung your faith.

So what do you think? Has this been an issue for you? 

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# Whose Hat Are You Wearing?

BY JEREMY SMITH

**Kids - or in this case - kid's books - say the darndest things. It's an expression perhaps many of us are familiar with. And yes, interestingly, it was through a children's book I recently came across that I was reminded of a simple truth.**

It's one which - at least in my case - has since been helpful in my walk with Christ. As simple as this sounds, the reminder was that true lasting peace that passes understanding, as

Jesus promised His followers in John 14:27, can only be found in Him. He is the only place we find our true identity. The story I read, penned by Max Lucado, is called A Hat for Ivan. It's essentially about people pleasing and how we try to fit 'moulds' that others - whether intentionally or otherwise - think we belong in.

By way of synopsis, it goes like this. In it, the tale is told of how the grown-ups in Ivan's village, Hatville, wear a hat which shows what they love most or do best. Ivan's father is the

village hat maker, who assigns the right hat to each person. Ivan is often privy to the process his dad goes through to create a hat that is perfect for each person, a decision solidified by the answer to the father's question, "So, what do you love to do?"

Those specially crafted hats are bestowed upon each boy and girl in Hatville on their 'hat day', held when they reach the age of 10. When Ivan's own hat day comes, all the other residents of Hatville have their own ideas of what type of hat Ivan should wear. On that day, as Ivan makes his way to school, Mr Felix the baker gives him a baker's hat. Surprised that his hat hadn't come from his father, the hat maker, Ivan tries on Mr Felix' suggested hat, but it's far too big and obscures his vision.

Further along the journey, Ivan subsequently encounters Miss Anita at her piano studio, followed by Bruno the firefighter.

Both also suggest respective hats for Ivan, but neither Miss Anita's ill-fitting music hat, nor Bruno's heavily laden firefighter's hat fit Ivan well.

Truth be told, Ivan is not comfortable wearing either of them, but he doesn't want to hurt anyone's feelings. Throughout a day then spent at school, Ivan is given a wide variety of hats by several other people.

On his way home from school Ivan can barely carry all of the hats he's been given, let alone wear them all. Coupled with this is the fact he sees Mr Felix, Miss Anita and Bruno along his journey home - and has to make sure he is wearing the right hat in front of the right person, so as not to disappoint them. Simply put, it's an exhausting process - and one Ivan can't do in his own strength. At the end of our story, Ivan's father finds him looking down-trodden amongst all the hats he's received - wondering how he'll ever manage to keep up appearances.

"It's exhausting trying to carry around all the hats people think you should wear isn't it?," the father asks.

As the story ends, Ivan agrees that there's no way he can please everybody, before taking his father's suggestion to discover what hat will best fit him. As the pair walk off, the father asks, "...so Ivan, what do you love to do?"

The suggested take away from the book is that while it's nice for people to give you ideas as to what hats they think you should wear, or what moulds you should fit, ultimately it's the hat maker - who represents God - who knows the plans He has for you and where you best fit.

See, I don't know about you, but for someone like myself, who can at times be prone to falling into the trap of pleasing

people, this little illustration was a timely reminder. If maybe you're like me then people pleasing can at times leave you feeling somewhat worn out.

However, the lasting peace Jesus spoke of in John that we mentioned earlier can only be found in Him, by listening to the Father's voice which brings clarity in confusion. It's not found in chasing particular things we think will satisfy, a job, money, whatever. Don't get me wrong, those things in and of themselves are not inherently wrong. And suggestions from others can sometimes be good and set us on a path towards what is for us. God-given dreams and aspirations are amazing and we should strive to work towards those.

But if our sense of security, safety or even self-worth comes from anywhere other than in Jesus, then it is misplaced. Nor can we afford to have any thoughts about ourselves that God doesn't have towards us.

We shouldn't try to fit moulds, or wear hats, just for the sake of trying to fit in - or to not disappoint people. I suppose though, there have been times when we have all done that - I know I have. In recent times, as God has begun working on my heart in terms of what is 'of Him' for me and, as I slowly begin to feel

released from the need to please people, two passages of scripture in the Bible have been helpful as I intentionally listen for His voice and His calling.

In Matthew 14:22-33 we read of Peter walking on the water to Jesus in the midst of a storm. As the disciples row across Lake Galilee, just before dawn, Jesus

approaches them, walking on the water. The disciples are initially afraid, but as Jesus confirms it is Him, Peter asks to walk to Jesus on the water.

"Come," Jesus says. It was Peter's idea to get out of the boat and, according to the passage, as he looks to Jesus he makes it to a certain point on the water. Then though, at the point Peter starts to notice the wind and the waves, he becomes afraid and begins to sink. Of course Jesus stretches out his hand to save him, but here's an interesting thought here - while His focus was on Jesus he stayed afloat.

Have you ever felt like you're stinking under the weight of everything you're trying to do, or the perceived expectations of others? At times I feel as though suggestions of "Jeremy, what about this?" or "Jeremy, how about you try this?" or even "happiness is found in this Jeremy..." are analogies for me, like Peter, having taken my eyes of Jesus.

If I chase those suggestions too much, I can lose sight of what it is that God has actually put before me. They become potential distractions that cause me to look at the waves. And in chasing all the other things, I need to remind myself 'wait,

**“We shouldn't try to fit moulds, or wear hats, just for the sake of trying to fit in - or to not disappoint people.”**



what does Jesus say in this situation?" It's my heart's desire that I do less and less looking at the waves - being pulled to and fro - and set my focus on Him more and more - because in the process of re-aligning our focus on Him, it becomes clear where we should be heading. And we become more and more secure with who He's made us to be. That is the perfect peace Jesus spoke of.

In the moments where I feel overwhelmed or bogged down, in my mind's eye I picture myself in Peter's shoes and raising my eyes back up, shifting my focus off the waves, and back onto Jesus.

It's a helpful reminder, at least for me, to stay intentional. The other passage I have found useful is found in Luke 8:43-48, where we read of the woman with the issue of blood. As a crowd jostled for Jesus' attention - pushing and shoving - she reaches out and touches Jesus' clothing.

"Who touched me?" Jesus asked. The response was "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you."

But this was different, above the hustle and bustle of the crowd Jesus felt the woman's desire to be healed and would say to her, "your faith has made you well".

Scripture tells us that Jesus did nothing apart from what he saw and heard the Father doing. So, even above the hustle and bustle of the scene we read of here, Jesus heard his father's voice and acted. Let's face it, life can be so distracting sometimes.

Reading that passage - my prayer was "Lord, in my life too, over and above the 'noise' and business of life and everything that vies for my attention, may Your voice be the loudest one I hear."

In situations where you can feel pulled in too many directions - as people pleasing can do, it's His voice that brings clarity. So my prayer is that we would, like Jesus, hear the Father's voice over and above all other things.

For me, as God begins to speak to me about freedom from people pleasing, and as I learn to simply rest in who I am in Him despite situations where I could potentially feel 'tossed about', there is a simple question I am asking in prayer to help make sure I keep the main thing the main thing.

That being, keeping my eyes fixed on Him.

"Is that my hat to wear?" | 

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





# A 'FRANK' DISCUSSION

BY JEREMY SMITH

**Rev. Frank (Francis) Ritchie, a familiar voice to many, wears several hats. The Wesleyan Methodist Church minister, radio personality and media chaplain loves a good coffee and chat. He sat down with Jeremy Smith to discuss what it looks like to be salt and light in New Zealand's media landscape.**

**Tell us about your family...**

I've got an amazing wife, Melva. We've been married nearly 17 years. We have a 14-year-old daughter, Selah.

**Love your daughter's name!**

It's from the Psalms. My full name is Francis Anderson Ritchie. Growing up, I fell in love with what my name means. Francis means 'free', Anderson means 'courageous' and Ritchie means 'powerful ruler'. Growing up in a single parent home with a mother on the DPB, I didn't have much of a sense of what my life could be. My name helped provide a sense of identity.

God naming people in the Bible is a big deal. In doing so, He gives identity. So, I think names can be significant. When my wife and I were coming up with names, we thought about it long and hard. She loved the word 'Selah', which appears throughout the Psalms. Traditionally, Selah is understood to mean "an invitation to pause, be silent and reflect on what has been". Selah's middle name is Grace.

Her full name means "pause and reflect on the grace of our powerful ruler". My wife and I are a little proud of that.

**How did you come to know Christ then?**

I grew up around faith, but my early life was really, really hard. My father was an alcoholic who left when I was a few months old. Mum lived with mental health conditions which weren't initially diagnosed. In the early 1980s, mental health was poorly understood. Due to her particular mental illnesses, she struggled to read social situations, which led to her moving from church to church.

That meant that when I was young I experienced the breadth of faith - Catholic, a short stint in the Mormon church, and Baptist and Presbyterian to name a few. In my very late teens, some circumstances and a question from me led to some older Christians I had been spending time with encouraging me to read the Gospel of Luke. I remember thinking there wouldn't be anything new in there because I'd grown up listening to sermons, reading the Bible and going to church stuff. But this time as I read it, and I can only put this down to the Holy Spirit, I began to see Jesus as I'd never seen Him before.

I had put myself out on the margins of life. But I saw Jesus intentionally directing Himself towards people who were there too. The passages about the Garden of Gethsemane and the crucifixion and resurrection led me to process the idea of what God would put Himself through in the midst of the human struggle - it hit me. In the Gospel story, the people Jesus had

pulled in from the margins were now the centre of the Kingdom and I thought "wow, if He's going to do that for me, I'll follow". It was that simple.

**So, you went on to study theology?**

When I made that decision to follow Jesus I knew that it meant committing myself to a Christian community. I lived in Te Aroha at the time and Eastside Apostolic Church - now called Activate in Hamilton - had planted a church in Te Aroha called Mountain View Apostolic Church. I walked in there for their second Sunday.

Essentially, through conversations with the Minister, he eventually encouraged me to think about studying Theology. That totally changed my trajectory and I did a diploma in Theology through the Bible College of New Zealand in Hamilton. I failed everything in high school, but did extremely well in Theological study because I think it opened up another part of my brain that lit me up. When I finished the diploma the

dean said to me, "You should think about doing a degree - you think like a theologian". I have no idea if he knows how much that statement impacted me, but saying that to someone with my background that was significant. I then did a degree in Applied Theology at Carey Baptist College.

**“We live in the paradox of having been found by God, but we need to cultivate our seeking of Him as well.”**

**As a kid back in the day, I heard you on Life FM's 'The Green Room' on Sunday evenings...**

Yeah. I'd dreamed of being a radio announcer during high school. But I thought I'd stuffed around too much so that dream fell off the table.

A friend from church in Te Aroha had gone through broadcasting school, moved to Auckland and was producing the Green Room. They used to have a rotating panel, so initially he asked if I would come up and join one show as a guest, talking about men's issues. Then, they asked if I'd be a regular guest and, eventually, one of the hosts. When the show shifted to one personality they asked if I would be willing. I still think I was a little bit crazy! There I was in my early 20s and they gave a microphone with a nationwide audience to someone with no radio experience.

I was still living in Te Aroha, studying, and milking cows to pay my way through the Theological studies. It was an internship, so I was also doing hours for the church. The show was on a Sunday night in Auckland from 9pm until 11pm - then I'd drive home and get up early on Monday mornings to milk the cows.

## AUTHENTIC | FEATURE

I did the Green Room for about eight years. During that time we moved to Auckland and I hosted the night show on Life FM for two years, and then the drive show with Di Campbell for two years.

### **And you fielded some pretty difficult listener questions didn't you?**

Definitely. For the vast majority of my time there, I loved it. There were of course some people who didn't like the show, and there were regular complaints.

My aim was to direct the show towards people who were University age - those in their late teens or early 20s.

As they encountered critical thinking, many of them for the first time, my sense was that they were probably applying that to their faith and that for some, that was a difficult experience.

I wanted the show to speak to the space they were in - to be a safe place to flex critical thinking and to ask questions they maybe felt they couldn't ask elsewhere. But, they needed to know that the host had a solid faith and we could have the discussions and still land back at Jesus, even if there was a diversity in what we were thinking. A lot of the complaints were probably because some people didn't like the tough questions, or simply disagreed with what I was saying. I'm hugely grateful for that time because it built resilience in me.

### **You're still in radio - on Newstalk ZB's Total Recall - what do you most like about being on the airwaves?**

Radio gets everywhere – into plenty of places I wouldn't normally be. Listener interaction makes it one of the most personal forms of media.

I've done music shows, but I adore talkback. During lockdown level four, the listener engagement on our short show on Newstalk ZB shot through the roof. There were a lot of lonely people, and radio was right there with them in a way no other medium really was.

Jax van Buuren and I host our Newstalk ZB show every Sunday night from 6pm. It's a lot different from the Green Room - which was all about faith. What we do on Newstalk ZB is a lot lighter. Faith still does come out simply because that's who we are. The audience knows they're interacting with a minister – but hopefully one that doesn't match some of their preconceptions.

### **Is it different working in radio in both Christian and non-Christian environments?**

The difference is vast. If I'm talking about faith on Newstalk ZB for instance, particularly when we do our Christmas and Easter shows, I've got to be mindful of the fact that I have an audience for whom faith might not be their thing. I'm not

interested in 'crowbarring' Jesus into conversations, but where my faith may be relevant to a conversation, I want to communicate it well. So, I'm constantly considering how it gets communicated whenever faith comes up, so that it's not foreign to the audience. That challenge encapsulates much of my life, both on the microphone and away from it.

### **Good segue. These days you have a unique role as a media chaplain with Media Chaplaincy New Zealand, a service of the Christian Broadcasting Association, (CBA). How would you describe your role?**

Towards the end of 2014 myself and some of the team at CBA sat down, took a look at the media landscape and asked "what's needed here?"

We could see a serious lack of care. And we, as people in the media ourselves, believe in the media. We believe in its importance and its significance in shaping New Zealand's sense of identity. We believe that healthy media personnel create a healthy media industry - but we could see a lot of people struggling.

Journalists would do hard stories and move on. So, we asked ourselves, "what would it look like for Christians to reflect Jesus in the media space – to serve without trying to influence? To genuinely love, serve and to bless the media, even if, at times, we disagree. In my mind that approach of love and service reflects the one who went to the cross for me.

The work just started with me identifying media personnel I thought were struggling, getting in touch and saying "hey, want to have coffee?" and then genuinely listening and seeking their wellbeing, regardless of how Christians might be feeling about their work

### **Talk to us about the experience of being in Christchurch after the tragic mosque shootings...**

I flew down the following morning and, wearing my clerical collar, simply walked into a couple of media huddles near the mosque where they were waiting for information.

I went to the media huddles because I know that journalists in many cases in that situation - in that instance it was both New Zealand and some international media - won't eat or drink because if they duck away they might miss some important information.

So I knew that one of the simplest ways to serve them was to simply ask if they had had food or water - and if not, I offered to get it for them – Media Chaplaincy New Zealand would cover it.

A few people took me up on the offer, others didn't, but just wanted to talk. I think there was a lot of good will built by simply having a Christian presence there with no agenda other than to help and to serve.

**Wow. What an amazing opportunity you have to speak into the lives of people in the media. How do you prayerfully approach that opportunity?**

My fundamental worldview is that God's Spirit is at work everywhere, all the time. He's whispering to every person in various ways. My job is to be so close to Him that wherever I am, I'm recognising, connecting, celebrating, naming, and participating in what God's already up to.

When I sit down with a person, my sense is that God is already there somehow and it's my job to be in tune with His voice. Sometimes, in conversation, that means naming a person's experiences as God at work, and sometimes it doesn't. But it always means listening well and putting aside any agenda I might have.

**We hear a lot that the media has a 'bias'. What do you think about that?**

Just as we know some people have perceptions of Christians because of what some do, the same goes for the media. Yes, some of the media is biased. But, by and large, what



I've encountered is good people trying to do a good job with limited and decreasing resources. They are wholly interested in truth and see a cause in what they do. But they are under the pump, and when you're under the pump the work may not be as good as it could be.

That doesn't mean that all media personnel are perfect – just as we Christians aren't - but it's not my job to stand up and critique them. My job is to get alongside them in support. It's my job to demonstrate love and care. I'm not there to correct everything others have a problem with.

**Are there hard parts to your role then? What about when you do media interviews?**

I mean, research has shown that the least trusted people in society now are politicians, religious leaders and the media - and I hit two of those! I like to think I can be trusted though. I've had to get to the point where I don't feel like I need to speak for the whole Christian community. We're too diverse for anyone to represent the breadth of our community.

I do know that because I'm a different voice to some other high profile Christian leaders there are people who, at least in their head, set me against those other leaders. I don't like that so much, even though I will at times be a different voice to some of what other Christian leaders might say. I prefer to be known for what I'm about rather than how I differ from others.

My biggest challenge though, is not measuring the strength of my faith by the work that I do – God's work. It's too easy for us 'professional Christians' to think we've got it covered through what we do. The whole point of the faith is our unity with God – everything else flows out of that. So my biggest challenge is constantly coming back to the space I have with God away from microphones, conversation with others and the limelight – and being reminded that His love for me and my love for Him are the chief aims and the foundation of my life.

**How important are strong Christian 'voices' in the media?**

There's something here we need to grapple with. I think many of us need to realise we're only one voice among many in a very diverse culture. We can't expect that people should simply listen to us. We need to be willing to offer that respect to others even when we strongly disagree. In New Zealand the table has many varying voices present, we're only one of those voices.

When we first started media chaplaincy, one of the things we knew was there weren't many voices representing faith publicly in the media sphere. So one of the things I think we have accomplished is just simply having another voice in that space. It has been an outcome of seeking to serve.

Behind the scenes now, from time to time journalists will come to me with questions if there's a story about faith that they don't understand. It still won't lead to perfection, but it

## AUTHENTIC | FEATURE

demonstrates their desire to get it as right as they can. Talking of Christian voices, there are quite a number of people of faith working in the media. CBA runs a group called Salt. Through Salt we aim to encourage them in their faith and vocation.

### I read that you also worked for Tearfund?

Yes. My role was to help educate Christians and churches regarding a deeper theology of justice and how Tearfund's work related to that. And then also to help Tearfund understand, use and apply the Bible in everything the organisation did. Interestingly, the speaking engagement opportunities that came with the role allowed me to encounter much of the silent majority for whom the Green Room had been really formative. I have an ongoing deep respect and love for the work of Tearfund and many other Christian organisations working in the area of community and global justice.

### You have a very full plate, what's your advice for Christian men living busy lives who want to be intentional about slowing down and carving out time to spend with God?

We need to find those places where we set aside the noise and remember that the foundation of our life is our unity with God – we need to be pursuing that. We live in the paradox of having been found by God, but we need to cultivate our seeking of Him as well.

In 2012, I was in the Holy Land with Tearfund.. I remember sitting in the Church of the Nativity towards the end of that trip - it's one of the greatest churches on the planet - the place where tradition holds Jesus was born. As I sat in that space, in the middle of conflict, I remember thinking I should pray about the conflict, but I had nothing. So, the moment became what it was - just sitting in silence with God. It's probably one of the



most powerful things I've done and it re-orientated my whole faith as I encountered my own 'uselessness' and inability to change the problem. That encounter with my uselessness, frailty and mortality was extremely healthy and drew me deeper into God. It made silence and prayer central in my faith journey.

For me, silence as intentional time with God is now such a big part of who I am. My wife would tell you that she knows when I've gone too long without those moments with God. My irritability and lack of calm and patience will surface more when I don't do it for a while. My life also feels a lot busier when it isn't happening. The ability to cope with my many hats decreases. I may not see anything changing, but my wife does.

**Hamilton was recently voted Most Beautiful Large City in the Keep New Zealand Beautiful's 2020 "Beautiful Awards". What do you like about living there?**

Rightly so I reckon. It's often known as the city of the future, but it's the city of 'now' these days. My wife and I lived in Hamilton - before we shifted in 2004 - we returned in 2016 and it has certainly been in an identity shift of sorts in that time. It's becoming a vibrant, humming city in its own right.

I think a big part of that is thanks to a guy called Matt Stark - he has a real vision for the CBD and re-shaping it. He's had a hand in things like Victoria on the River - an amphitheatre style park in the CBD, the new inner-city Kmart, a whole lot of vibrant stuff. Tainui is also playing a significant part in shaping the city for the better.

Then there's the Waikato River - and the sense of identity that comes with being a river city. I love getting up early in the morning and walking along the river. There's a spirituality to being able to walk along the river that I really appreciate. I love visiting lots of other cities in New Zealand, but in terms of calling one home, Hamilton's definitely it.

**You also pastor a church - tell us about it...**

I was ordained as a Wesleyan Methodist minister in 2012 and we planted our church community, Commoners, in 2016 as a prophetic response to a noisy culture.

We use liturgy - spoken call and response - and there's silence in our services. The intent is to slow down for a moment.

For me, it was taking my DNA and what I learned out of the 2012 trip to the Holy Land and asking "what does it look like for me to plant a church that is faithful to that, rather than simply doing what's usually expected? What does it look like for the church to provide sanctuary for people, to help them slow down and reconnect with the presence of God, rather than trying to cut through by being 'noisier'?"

We don't do live music and I don't write sermons. Rather, we discuss a Gospel passage of the day determined by the Revised Common Lectionary. I probably sit with the passage of the week in a more devotional framework. It's not a model that works for everyone - and I don't expect it to - but it works for some people. If people want great singing and soaring sermons, there are other wonderful churches in Hamilton doing that. I felt a need to try something different - something simple.

**What does a perfect day off with your family look like?**

My wife works Saturday, so I look after my daughter. I work Sundays with our church service and my radio show, and my wife and I take Monday's off, but Selah is back at school. So actually, a day when we're all off together is rare.

Those rare days will sometimes include trips to Raglan, little day trips here and there, and we really like Waihi.

I love tramping, but my wife and I have a slightly different DNA when it comes to recreation! My daughter is a bookworm and devours books so we regularly go to Browsers Bookshop on a Saturday morning, or to a cafe somewhere together.

**Thanks Frank. Lets pray for him and others who work in media chaplaincy seeking to be salt and light in New Zealand's media landscape. | **

**“I think many of us need to realise we're only one voice among many in a very diverse culture. We can't expect that people should simply listen to us. We need to be willing to offer that respect to others even when we strongly disagree.”**

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





# Euthanasia Law Will Be A Danger To The Vulnerable

BY BOB McCOSKRIE

## **The End of Life Choice Act – aka the assisted suicide law – will be a danger to both the vulnerable and society in general.**

It is one thing to say yes to a nice sounding phrase around having 'choice', but assisted suicide is not a simple yes no answer.

Some people will be euthanised on account of a disease they thought they had but did not. Prognosis is an uncertain procedure. Others will request assisted suicide because of coercion either internally or from relatives, or concerns around costs of treatment, and others will be struggling because of a terminal disease prognosis and actually just need appropriate support.

They may come to feel euthanasia would be 'the right thing to do'; they've 'had a good innings' and do not want to be a 'burden' to their nearest and dearest. This law now means that vulnerable people facing a terminal illness will be asking themselves – why should I not be accessing euthanasia?

There is also concrete evidence from those countries which have authorised euthanasia that the availability and application of euthanasia expands to situations never initially envisaged as indications for it. The Netherlands has recently backed plans for euthanasia for terminally ill children under 12, is considering euthanasia being automatically available for healthy people over 75 years old, and a champion of the Dutch euthanasia system has admitted that assisted dying is a slippery slope to 'random killing of the defenceless'. And a kiwi pro-euthanasia campaigner is already calling for an expansion of the criteria to qualify for assisted suicide.

Nothing in this Act guarantees the protection required for vulnerable people, including the disabled, elderly, depressed or anxious, and those who feel themselves to be a burden or who are under financial pressure.

How many euthanasia mistakes are we willing to accept? | 

*For more, see [www.familyfirst.org.nz](http://www.familyfirst.org.nz)*

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





# The Honesty Road

BY RAY COMFORT

**The modern message of the gospel is “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” However, our idea of “wonderful” and the world’s, may be a little different. Take a sinner through the pages of the Book of Acts and show him the terrifying scene of boulders breaking the bones of Stephen. Then smile and whisper, “Wonderful...” Listen together to the sound of a cat-o’-nine-tails as it rips the flesh off the back of the apostle Paul.**

Follow together the word “suffering” through the Epistles, and see if you can get the world to whisper, “Wonderful!” After such a ride down Honesty Road, they may think the pleasures of sin are a little more attractive than the call to “suffer affliction with the people of God.”

John MacArthur said, “We need to adjust our presentation of the gospel. We cannot dismiss the fact that God hates sin and punishes sinners with eternal torment. How can we begin a gospel presentation by telling people on their way to hell that God has a wonderful plan for their lives?”

## Who Will Listen?

Who in the world is going to listen if we are so blatantly honest about the Christian life? Perhaps not as many as are attracted by the talk of a wonderful plan, however, the answer to our dilemma is to make the issue one of righteousness, rather than happiness. This is what Jesus did. He used the Ten

Commandments to show sinners the righteous standard of God (Luke 10:25,26; 18:18–20). Once the world sees the perfect standard by which they will be judged, they will begin to fear God, and through the fear of the Lord, men depart from sin (Proverbs 16:6). They will begin to hunger and thirst after the righteousness that is in Jesus Christ alone.

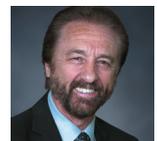
## The Key to Reaching the Lost

If you study the New Testament you will see that God’s love is almost always given in direct correlation to the cross: herein is love, for God so loved, God commended His love, etc. (See John 3:16; Romans 5:5,6,8; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:4,5; 5:2,25; 1 John 3:16; 4:10; and Revelation 1:5, among others.) The cross is the focal point of God’s love for the world. How can we point to the cross without making reference to sin?

How can we refer to sin without the Law (Romans 7:7)? The biblical way to express God’s love to a sinner is to show him how great his sin is (using the Law—see Romans 7:13; Galatians 3:24), and then give him the incredible grace of God in Christ. This was the key to reaching so many on the Day of Pentecost. They were “devout” Jews who knew the Law and its holy demands, and therefore readily accepted the mercy of God in Christ to escape its fearful wrath.

When you use the Law to show the world their true state, get ready for sinners to thank you. For the first time in their lives, they will see the Christian message as an expression of love and concern for their eternal welfare, rather than of merely proselytizing for a better lifestyle while on this earth. | 

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





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# Temptation Can Be Good for Us

BY CHARLES PRICE

**C.S. Lewis said that no one knows how bad he is until he tries to be good! That throws out of the window the idea that good people don't know what temptation is really like. We think it is we, poor, failing, strugglers who know the force of temptations power.**

We look enviously at people we think never struggle with the issues we struggle with and never battle the temptations we face. But it may be that good people know the power of temptation more than anyone. Bad people give in easily, good

people fight - and the harder you fight the stronger you know the battle to be. We don't know the strength of temptation until we fight it fully.

The writer to the Hebrews was not being cynical when he said of Jesus, 'For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin' (Heb 4.15). We are inclined to think: Are you kidding? Tempted in every way like me? I doubt it! He had resources I don't have and the difference between His battles and mine are more like contrasts than comparisons.



But in fact, the writer says that far from being easy for Jesus, resisting temptation cost Him a high price in suffering, 'Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted' (Heb 2:18). We don't know details of battles He fought through his growing years, except it was 'in every way, just as we are'. So, we can guess. His temptations therefore weren't light and casual, to be dismissed with a shrug. In fact, the writer of Hebrews challenges the soft nature of our feeble attempts to battle temptation: 'In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood' (Heb 12:4). That is some battle! The 'blood-letting' image is graphic if not literal. That tells us battling temptation successfully is not for wimps!

The temptations of Jesus played a crucial role in His development as a man and in His preparation for ministry. We have one specific incident recorded, when He was thirty years of age, just before beginning His ministry. He was 'full of the Holy Spirit' and 'led by the Spirit', into the desert for the purpose of being tempted by the devil. Orchestrated by the Holy Spirit, for forty days He was alone, without food and with the devil on his back. But at the end of this time something was different, 'Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit ...' (Luke 4:14). Now for the first time He performed miracles, engaged with people as the Messiah and preached His message.

Two parties had vested interests in the temptation of Jesus. The Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the situation, and the devil

who was there to meet Him. But though it was the same event, it was with completely contrasting purposes. The devil's intent was to tempt. The Spirit's intent was to test. (It's the same word but has a contrasting purpose). The devil's intent was to disqualify Him from His ministry. The Spirit's intent was to qualify Him for His ministry. The devil's intent was to weaken Him. The Spirit's attempt was to strengthen Him. The event Satan would destroy Him with, was the event the Holy Spirit would equip Him with. This is why temptation, appearing to us as our enemy, could also be a friend in disguise. The thing that would destroy us, may be the thing that will make us. Power corrupts, even spiritual power, so Jesus was tested by His Father before being entrusted with power.

The temptations of Jesus were, like all temptation, instant and selfish. They were to satisfy His physical hunger, (by turning stones into bread), to satisfy greed, (by showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and offering them to Him prematurely), and to pride, (by telling Him to jump off the temple and survive by angels catching Him, garnering publicity and getting Himself well and truly on the map).

The very fact they were temptations means they were attractive ideas. Temptation by definition is attractive. I am never tempted to walk in front of a moving truck because it has no attraction to me. I might be tempted to push someone else in front of a moving bus, depending who it is, as it might be attractive! That is why every sin we commit is because at the time we wanted to do it – let's not kid ourselves otherwise.

We may regret it deeply very quickly, but it met an instant illicit desire within ourselves. We must be careful of blaming the devil for our sin. The New Testament reminds us that, '...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed' (James 1.14). If the devil were to take a holiday, we would still struggle with temptation, for it comes from within.

Jesus said, "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean' (Mark 7.20-23). The question is, why do these things come from inside me? There are no fast track solutions without understanding why the darkness of our own hearts cause us to act the way we do. That is the hard and painful journey we have to make into our own souls.

We have three especially vulnerable areas. 'For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world' (1 John 2:16 KJV). The 'lust of the flesh' are natural physical appetites that are intrinsically good, but out of control. We probably think of sex as the big one, but in the Bible, food was too! The 'lust of the eyes' is immediate gratification, wanting what is not legitimate for us. Advertisers harness the power of the lust of the eyes. The 'pride of life' is what it says, pride, the sin through which Lucifer fell.

Jesus was invited to satisfy physical appetite for food at the wrong time (the lust of the flesh). He was taken up a mountain and shown 'in an instant all the kingdoms of the world' and offered everything He could see, (the lust of the eyes). He was invited to make Himself known and be publicly recognized (the pride of life). The pattern was the same in the temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden. 'When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food (appealing to the lust of the flesh) and pleasing to the eye, (appealing to the lust of the eye) and also desirable for gaining wisdom,(appealing to the pride of life), she took some and ate it.(Gen 3.6). Once all three doors were left open by her, she was beyond hope. Adam joined her in the seduction.

To each temptation in the wilderness, Jesus replied, 'It is written...' He didn't enter into discussion about the merits or demerits of the temptation, nor offer a personal opinion, but said 'It is written...'; passing His response to a higher external authority. There was no intrinsic power just in quoting

Scripture, but the truths He quoted revealed the resources of Jesus. These were not just laws to obey or a plumbline to measure by, but more profoundly, a revelation of the nature and moral character of God. This is the 'image' in which humanity was created, and the resources on which we are invited to draw.

Each of Jesus' answers had to do with something about God. 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'. Then: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only'. Then: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'. Fundamentally, temptation appeals to deficiencies in our own relationship with God. When G.K. Chesterton said, "Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God", he is expressing that very thing. The Scriptures Jesus quoted expressed areas of His relationship with His Father that met the needs the devil was offering alternatives to.

When I was a young preacher, I once made a list of all the areas of temptation in which I was vulnerable and likely to fall. I then put the rather long list into a short list of key

areas and tried to find a verse of scripture which addressed every one of these sins and the needs they expressed. To my surprise, I found one for every sin. I had thought I had probably invented one or two of them and no

## “The temptations of Jesus played a crucial role in His development as a man and in His preparation for ministry.”

one was dealing with them like I seemed to be. I kept the list in my Bible until an occasion when I was speaking at a youth weekend and after the Saturday morning session, I left my Bible in the conference hall. Someone found it, was curious to know whose it was, opened it up and found my list. Even more curious, he passed it around, and my list of sins became public! I never kept it there again.

To quote a scripture doesn't make the temptation go away, nor does the devil take flight with his tail between his legs. But it expresses the needs of our own heart to find significance, love, meaning and delight in God. Immediately before his temptations in the wilderness, Jesus had heard the voice of his Father, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased'.

These are three things any child needs to hear from their father: You are mine. I love you. I am pleased with you. Here the deep need of Jesus' human heart for love, significance and security was met. His temptations invited Him to meet these needs elsewhere. Jesus passed the testing and was entrusted with power. |A

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# Does Good Parenting Safe-Proof My Kids?

BY ERIC LUDY

**I'm a guy who's written many books on sexuality, and I've spent a lot of time thinking about this topic. So what have I done with my kids? I'm going to give you an example with one of my boys. What I feel is important for one of my boys to be solid sexually isn't necessarily what everyone else would think about.**

They think I need to give them a book to help them understand this concept. And I'm not saying that those things don't help, but there are central core issues that, if they're not addressed, will cripple them and make them a slave to their own desires. My desire is for my child to be set free spiritually from the power and the control of sin so that they can see straight and live straight.

I've shared this list many times in my training with fathers and sons. I always go through the three things that I desire for my sons. So I would desire it for my daughters too. It would just change slightly. But I desire my sons to know that they know that they know that they're in Christ. How do you get in Christ? By faith. And there are a lot of people whom, if I asked, "So are you in Christ?" would go, "Yeah, I'm in Christ." "How do you know?" "Well, I believed." Okay, that's good. But do you know that you know that you know that you're in Christ? See, I want my boys to be solid in their faith so that when the devil pushes and knocks and the winds and the rains beat, there is a foundation. And that foundation needs to be concrete in the Word of God, which tells a soul that if you believe in Jesus, you put your trust in Jesus, you are in fact clothed in His work that He made on that Cross. What He accomplished is yours. It's

your clothing, which now gives you access unto the heavenly realms. That's so thrilling, right? So I want my sons to know that they're in Christ. Secondly, I want them to know that Christ is in them. When they have access into the heavenly realms, what do they have access to? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is actually intended to now live inside of them. Jesus Christ came to accomplish something and that is to bring us to the Father, so now the Life of the Father can dwell inside of us.

That's how this life works. A man can't function as a man and can't succeed sexually if he's trying to do this in his own strength. He needs the muscle of Heaven inside of him. So I want my sons to know that they know that they know that they know that the Holy Spirit is inside of them. I don't want them just to have a "churchy" understanding of this and casually say, "Oh yeah, the Holy Spirit's inside of me." I want them to know that they know that they know that they are indwelt by the Living God.

And then third, it's very simple. I want them to know that they're men, and I want them to know what that means. If they have that composite, yes, they do need more. It's not like I'm just going to impart those three principles and leave him alone. However, if they have that, they have a foundation that can go the distance. Because they are in Christ, Christ is in them, the Holy Spirit is working in them. Then they have a vision for what they're here for. I mean, that's just exciting. That's the foundation. And that's what leads to healthy sexual outcomes as opposed to the derangements that are so common today. It does not spare them from the challenges, but it gives them the right power and the right impetus to make this work. | 

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# CHRISTIANS AND BUSINESS

BY STEVE PARKER

## **Beyond paying bills on time, being nice to staff and having finances to support Christian ministry, what more is there to work for the Christian business owner?**

It seems that many Christian business owners do not operate their businesses as if there is more, if even they are able to do all the three things mentioned above. To be fair, business is tough and it's easy to end up chasing one's tail paying bills, following up invoices, organising staff, keeping on top of workflow and doing all that needs to be done.

But that is also true of other parts of our lives and yet we don't let business be the final word, we strive for what should be (eg: parenting, exercise, spiritual disciplines, etc). But as a second concession, there is not a lot of guidance from the average local church for business owners. So what should business be like, if it were on the front foot? What more is there more to work than paying bills on time, being nice to staff and being able to support a Christian ministry?

The short answer is that there is much more, work has enormous intrinsic value; it is a matter of human dignity, it

displays the nature of God and thereby brings Him glory. Moreover, through our work we fulfill his explicit will for our lives and become a means by which He provides for and nurtures His world.

But short answers need longer answers to both back them up and show how they are applied to the real world. This longer answer needs to begin with locating where this intrinsic value of work comes from and for that we must turn to Genesis 1 and 2. The first thing to notice is that man was made in the image and likeness of God and that one of the clearest things we see about God in the preceding verses (ie; all the way up to the start of the book) is that God is a worker. He is a creator, a bringer-out-of-nothing-er. That we would be like that too; creating things, bringing forth things yet unseen (innovation), working, was inevitable... that humans work is a reflection of our design.

To co-opt a famous line from the first letter of John; we design because He first designed us. Our work is a key component of what it means to be human. Indeed, modern psychology recognises that having something to contribute is a matter of human dignity and wellbeing. Being a business owner –

bringing something of value to the market – therefore carries a great amount of dignity, what could be called “healthy” pride. Now that is some intrinsic value “right thur”.

But that we work is also a display of the nature of God. Now when a created thing displays its creator that display serves to make much of its creator – as statues make much of the person they are made in the image of. “Making much of” means to elevate, to exalt, and... to glorify. Our work displays something of the nature of God and thereby glorifies Him. The Westminster Catechism claims very boldly that “the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever,” we can now say that our work is one of the key ways that we do this. Especially when it is done well, done in love and done for the good of all.

Our work makes a part of the invisible God visible (more on that later)... the intrinsic value points just got doubled. Hot on the heels of the creation-of-man verses we read that he has been made for a purpose; the cultural mandate (Gen 1:28) was God’s “what to do now” briefing. Humans were instructed to rule, subdue, have dominion over and fill God’s newly created. Given the state of creation at the time (unfinished, Gen 2:5) this essentially meant to carry on the process of creation; whereby through our work we would “extend the garden.”

It is called the cultural mandate because as humans would increase to fill the earth, specialize in their work, and come up with all sorts of ways of helping one another extend the garden, we would create culture. And so we note that work was ordained by God before the fall – it is part of what God called “good” and that as humans work, they are fulfilling God’s will for them. This is a significant point given how many Christians ache to know more about what God’s will for their life is. It is also important to observe that as humanity was going to fill the earth and fulfill the mandate it would have a growing demand for its basic needs; food, water, shelter, clothing, etc. Moreover, because of the benefits of specialization and economies of scale, that humans should form dedicated workplaces to provide a specific one of these needs was always going to happen. And as mankind would keep growing, the need for supply chains, innovation and further specialization would also keep growing, eventually we would even need a sales and marketing industry (!).

Actually, there are two important observations here... firstly, that specialization was always on the cards. In other words, our modern workplaces were in the mind of God way back in the original cultural mandate – albeit without the effects of sin. These days many of us do not work in an industry directly related our basic needs (food, water, shelter, etc) – but this doesn’t mean our work is not important to God or humanity.

Second, our helping one another with greater and greater specialization is actually an extension of God helping us. This observation was first really emphasized by reformer Martin Luther as he expounded Psalms 145 and 147; God has promised to sustain His creation and how humans provide

for one another through their work is a key part of his way of doing so. Tim Keller in Every Good Endeavour also takes up this argument and makes clear that this is the other side of our cultural mandate; through our work God is fulfilling his promise to care and nurture his world.

So by now “work” should have quite a lot of intrinsic value points. To summarise, so far we have that;

- » Being able to work – to contribute something of value – is central to what it means to be human.

It is a matter of human dignity

- » It displays the nature of God and thereby brings Him glory

We are made in His likeness - we design because he first designed us. The more that our work is excellent, the more that it is done in love, and the more that it is done for others the better.

- » By working we are fulfilling God’s explicit will for us

To those who want to know God’s will for them; it is that you would work.

- » By our work God keeps His promises to care and nurture for his world

Our work to provide for one another is an extension of the work of God.

But what about The Fall?

Well yes, that does muddle things a bit, obviously there are bunch of professions that could never be counted as God glorifying no matter how “excellent” they were (take slave trading for example). There is much to say about how the Fall changes things but here I will direct our attention to the point that even in a fallen world, the cultural mandate still stands; we are still meant to rule, subdue, have dominion and fill the earth... We are still called to fulfill our purpose to work and create [good and right] culture.

Actually, mankind has continued with the mandate but tragically so – in a sin-broken way. This harm needs to be undone and

**“A significant part of our day to day life as Christians is to be dedicated to fulfilling our cultural mandate properly; in the manner exemplified by our Christ rather than our sin-broken default.”**

put right, and as a consequence we now have new and more work to do of a redemptive kind. A significant part of our day to day life as Christians is to be dedicated to fulfilling our cultural mandate properly; in the manner exemplified by our Christ rather than our sin-broken default. We are ambassadors of a kingdom that is coming, we are an advance party spreading God's love and good will for man. Our sanctification journey is not just so that we would sin less, but also that we would do more "good works."

Interestingly, lay Christians have often asked a similar question to the one introducing this article namely; "what more is there to the Christian life past going to church, not swearing and trying to be nice to your neighbour?" The answer is; fulfill your cultural mandate properly – do great work; do it with excellence, do it in love, do it to serve others and... do it on purpose to glorify God.

And what about the Great Commission, isn't that the central purpose of work? Sort of. In a sin-broken world we have redemptive work to do that is of ultimate importance. But this work sweeps across everything we do – from parenting and marriage to local sports club membership and 9-5 work. Yes work affords evangelistic opportunities, particularly if it is done well, done in love, etc but this is not the intrinsic value that work itself has, it is not our work's ultimate fulfillment or purpose. Anything that brings you into contact with other humans shares this point of value. To put evangelisation as the central purpose of work will lead to all kinds of workplace mishaps that will in turn undermine our witness, and indeed this has happened far too often.

The authentic way to evangelise through work is first to do a good job of whatever you are doing (parenting, marriage, work, etc) – or at least be seen to be trying to do a good job. And obviously, the better you understand what you are doing, the better you are set up to do a good job. For this discussion, this amounts to a call to Christian business owners to understand the intrinsic value of work and live out the implications. And yes, because of the situation we're in (ie; a fallen world, post Gen 3), one of those implications is that we aim to be

an agent of God's redemptive work as well as his cultural mandative work. But it is a matter of order, the cart never goes well before the horse, but a cart horse without a cart is not fulfilling its proper potential. So this really should not read that the task of evangelism should be locked in the back office until we've got everything right or because the central purpose of work lies elsewhere. The point I'm trying to make here is how to evangelise within the work context – with integrity to the original intrinsic value.

Implications...

The implications are significant; first that generally speaking our work has incredible value and this should thereby motivate us. How to make that specifically true for your workplace depends on how much your workplace strives for excellence, does its work in love, and does it to genuinely serve others (ie; without tricking them into needs that they actually do not have).

But finally – and ultimately – that for the Christian business owner, that bringing glory to God through and in the work be done on purpose (remember what the chief end of man is).

Interestingly, amongst leadership and management literature, helping staff see meaning in their work is taught as key to raising staff engagement. The point here is that this is no smoke and mirrors attempt to motivate staff – work really does have meaning. Especially when it is done well, done in love and done for the good of all (yes that sentence has been repeated a fair bit). Furthermore, because of this importance, workplaces should see it as a matter of duty to actively facilitate greater individual and team performance – their work is important and glorifies God.

This also is a significant implication; business owners have the incredible privilege of helping God's people (ie; all mankind) fulfill their calling.

Another important implication is that originally there was never meant to be any such thing as "secular" work, it was all ministry. From Adam's gardening to Jesus' carpentry, in a God-based



economy it is all helping, it is all serving, it is all ministry. The secular/ministry divide has plagued the church for quite some time, but it was not till Martin Luther came along that anyone had a real go at dismantling it. In his attempt to raise the value of 'secular' work he famously quipped that "the work of a milkmaid is just as important to God as the work of a priest."

We need to learn to see the importance of our 'secular' work and business owners need to lead the way with that. But probably the most jarring implication is that work's highest end is to fulfill its core service promise (ie; the way it helps mankind), and not to make a profit. This is in direct contrast with what is taught in business schools; the Friedman doctrine is that the chief end of business is to maximize shareholder value.

But we must not belittle the place of profit either because without it we won't be able to offer our service next year or improve our service offer. Perhaps an analogy would help make clear the place of profit; without enough fuel a car will not make it to its given destination. But fuel is not why you are driving to that destination. It would be irresponsible to set out on the journey without enough fuel to arrive – one needs to aim and strive for profit – but it would be deceptive to set off for some destination while not really valuing the destination itself but rather the profit (fuel) you will make along the way.

Potentially, the more fuel you have (the more fuel you are able to produce), the more vehicles you can put on the road but let's keep first things first, the reason you would put more vehicles on the road is so that you can help more customers get to the destination(s) you offer. Truly cultural mandate-oriented people are "shrewd" with the profit they make; if they end up with lots of it, they do more and more generous acts of service (Luke 16:1-15). In our world, money really can fuel quite a lot of things – oh the joy in having money to give away (to support Christian ministry or any good cause). That workplaces should emphasize how they serve has become a focus amongst modern marketing guru's but our point here is that it was meant to be that way all along.

Following on from this last point, for Christians work is not a means to an end but an end in itself. We do not work hard so that we can have more money (more fuel) to buy nice stuff, go on nice holidays, or feel more financially secure, we work hard because that is how we get to help people and how we get to glorify God, and doing both of those brings us great joy.

In conclusion, an exhortation to Christian business owners Firstly, thank you for doing the hard work of owning and running a business. It is not an easy ride; it comes with lots of responsibility and throws many curveballs. Here are my summary pointers for bringing into the here-and-now the intrinsic value of work.

- » Consider how your work helps fulfill the cultural mandate and tell your people.
- » Pursue excellence.
- » Let love reign in your workplace; how you treat your staff, suppliers, and customers. Let it influence your ethics, what products and services you offer, and how genuine you are with your offering.
- » Do what you can to facilitate your people's best – their work is important to both your business and to God.
- » As a workplace dedicated to the cultural mandate, let this emphasis influence how successful you think you are – it's about how well you fulfill your service promise, not how profitable you are.
- » And whatever you do [in and through your workplace], whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, bringing glory to God.

(a verse mash up of 1 Cor 10:31 and Col 3:17)

Finally, be strong and courageous. Do not shrink back from your calling (Heb 10:37-39), do not be discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you (Josh 1:9). Be steadfast, immovable, always trying, and remember that in the Lord your labour is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58). | 

#### References

1. Scott Rae (in *The Ethics of Business*) identifies a strong trend in Christian business owners to live in a state of dualism – two different sets of ethics; one for Christianity, the other for business.
2. All of the works I have read about the theology of work begin here.
3. For example; *Wellbeing* by Tom Rath.
4. Tim Keller (*Every Good Endeavour*) argues that one "even non-Christian" work glorifies the true creator.
5. see Andy Crouch, *Culture Making* for a much fuller mapping out of this.
6. And indeed it happened quite quickly; in the second generation of man, Cain was a gardener while Able tended sheep.
7. This is an overarching statement encompassing all of humanity and so can remain true even when an individual cannot make a contribution (from disability, illness, age, etc). Indeed, not being able to contribute is part of what makes these situations so difficult.
8. This point deserves a lot more fleshing out. There is much to say about the difference between ruling, subduing, having dominion and filling the earth in the Christ-like way to the sin-broken way. See NT Wright's *After you believe*.
9. This is a key thrust of Jeff van Duzer's excellent book *Why Business Matters to God*.

#### Author's note:

*This topic is of great interest to me since my own work is as a small and medium business advisor and also as a people and productivity advisor. I write in order to put my thoughts in order. I also hope to be helpful and from my observations it seems help is needed – both how to view our work and what to do after one believes seem to need bolstering in our post-Christian cultural norm. As Hosea lamented; my people perish because of a lack of knowledge (Hos 4:6). The points I've drawn out seem substantial to me but I encourage amicable reproof*

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■ Steve Parker is a SME business advisor with Business Success Partners and also as a people and productivity advisor with Human Excellence And Flourishing. From time to time he also delivers a character education programme to High Schools and is passionate that across all of these spheres of influence that people might come to a greater knowledge and experience of God.





# Are you wearing your glasses?

## Understanding the Christian Worldview

BY PAUL CURTAS

**How can I make sense of a hurricane, terrorist, pandemic or even the airline industry in such a distressed condition? Do you know that each person lives with a worldview that tries to answer questions like these? So what about your worldview? Whether a person can define it or not, or whether it is accurate or not, a worldview is like glasses we put on daily to see and interpret events and circumstances of our world. Some events happen in the world or in our life and we try to make sense of them.**

A worldview is a set of ideas and beliefs that we hold onto and use to interpret the 'Why's and Why Not', pertaining to things that happen in our world. These ideas and beliefs are used to find meaning and make sense of the events and circumstances that happen around us. Let me illustrate how a worldview can or cannot help us understand and live in this world.

Some years ago I went to Trinidad to speak and minister in some churches there. One of the pastors, whom I had known, was a former professional cricket player. We were passing by

a local cricket game when he asked me if I understood the game. I honestly told him that when I look at cricket it makes no sense to me. The only thing I understood was the tea break that transpired periodically during the game. In other words, for me cricket looked like a group of people running around on a field sporadically after hitting what looked like a ball with a flat looking bat. I did not understand how they scored or when they changed field position. Watching cricket being played without knowing its strategy, purpose and goal made no sense to me. Many people living life in this world do so with little or no

understanding of the rules, strategy and purpose of the world they live in. When an event happens that directly affects their life they may interpret it through emotional hurt, or they may use facts and figures to calculate and somehow make sense to gain meaning.

An example of this is when things are perceived as going well because stocks are up, or the company is making a profit, or I am going to be promoted. In these conditions people assume that the world makes sense. However when storms and adversity come in their life and bring loss and turmoil, many people's worldview is shattered and destroyed. They become disillusioned and even depressed because it all does not make sense anymore.

The Bible describes the total truth of Christianity like an anchor for the soul in a storm (Hebrews 6:19), one that gives us hope to persevere through the storms of life. Jesus gave a profound parable in Matthew 7:24-27, that described how our beliefs (worldview) will impact our life. He made a comparison between two different people.

The one person who built their life on a solid rock that Jesus said was the truth of His word. The other person built their life on sand, which was likened to build on ideas and beliefs that are not God's. Interestingly, both faced the same adversity, rain, wind and flood bursting upon their house.

The one who built their life upon God's truth held up through times of adversity. But the one who did not hold to God's truth or worldview, collapsed in the hard times. Our Lord is telling us here that the real reliability of a man or women's worldview will become evident in the storms of life.

That being true, what is your life built upon? Have you built your life on the promises of your company, or on the truth and promises of God? For some, the difficulties now in the airline industry have brought a stark revelation regarding the foundation they have built their life on, sadly like sand. For others, these adversities have driven them to find peace and stability in the caring hands of God in the midst of the storm.

The Christian worldview does not give us every answer to satisfy all our questions. But, God does promise to give us the truth needed for understanding the condition of our world and ourselves.

He has revealed Himself, describing His character and His purpose and goal for working in our world, and personal working in those who trust Him. We may not know why things happen, but we can be sure that God is up to something greater than our own comprehension (Ephesians 3:20), and that He will work together for good all things (Romans 8:28).

The Christian worldview understands that in order to make sense of this world, we must live in it with God's definitions and wisdom that identifies His purpose and goals. This does not mean that grasping this makes life easy, but it does make life more understandable, guiding us along the way.

When the patriarch Job, (from the Old Testament book of Job) wrote and described his humiliation while going through some devastating trials, he likened it to going through a horrible storm, where he felt he was riding on the winds like a piece of straw (Job 30:22). The idea here is that the wind had swept everything away and driven him about like a helpless object being ruined in a great storm.

Job goes on to say that God allowed this experience to bring him to the threshold of death, an appointed place in time where everyone living will face someday (Job 30:23). But it was there, in this place of adversity in the face of death that he stretched out his hand and cried out to God for help. Job later recorded that God answered him from out of the storm (Job 40:6). Though we do not know all the reasons why God allows the storms of life to bring loss and hardship, we do know that from this experience people, like Job, who cry out to God will find Him in a way like they never have in life before.

Certainly Job experienced this because, at the end of his book, he confessed that having gone through great stormy adversities he said "but now my eyes see you, oh God." After being purged and refined, Job's worldview finally became centered on God, the creator and Lord of the universe. He discovered a deeper fulfillment with the Lord that even the things of life could not provide when he possessed them. But in the face of losing such things, it was there where he truly found God.

How have you responded in the adversities and trials of life? Has it been a humble realization that your life has been on things like sinking sand, that aren't lasting and will perish? Then like Job, turn to God in the storm and humbly put your trust in Him and His word. Know that God has promised to guide and provide for you even through the "valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:4).

At this time in the airline industry adversity and perplexity seems to permeate many of the workplace. We must not forget that it is in the storm where we have the opportunity to experience God in a deeper and renewed way. And it is also here where the Christian worldview should be displayed with a most profound and exact simplicity to those around us. **IA**

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■ Paul M. Curtas is the General Director of FCAP. He is also the author of the book "When God Shows Up at Work", which is now available in German and Spanish, as well as English. Visit his website for more details - [www.godinwork.com](http://www.godinwork.com)





# Reaching the Community for the Kingdom

BY JEREMY SMITH

As he stands at the front of a recent Saturday morning breakfast hosted by Christian Community Churches of New Zealand (CCCNZ), an organisation he was part of helping establish just a few short years ago, Stuart Bay's passion is clear. With a sharp business acumen, he loves God, people and has a heart for reaching the lost.



**Authentic Magazine sat down with the Trinity Lands chairman to talk about the balance of business and faith and his desire to see young people come to know Christ.**

**Have you lived in Manawaru all your life?**

Yes. Well, most of it has been within about an 8km radius really. I was born and bred in Ngarua. From four years of age, I was raised up under the Kaimais and we attended church at Manawaru. Then I headed off to university in 1970 to do an agricultural science degree. That's actually where I met my wife Beth - then we came home to the family farm in Manawaru, where we still farm today.

**Describe what your ideal time spent with family looks like for you...**

We've got six lovely grandchildren, all beautiful kids. They come up to the beach with us and we have a wonderful time. It's a lot of fun. In the evenings we have devotional times with them, those are very special.

**The intersection of business and farming kind of runs in the family doesn't it?**

Definitely. In 1971 my dad, David, was on the New Zealand Dairy Board and very heavily involved in industry affairs. We developed a family partnership with my parents and my siblings - the objective being to get each family member onto their own economic unit. My siblings went off in the world to further their careers and Beth and I assumed the responsibility of running their properties and ours.

**So, Beth and yourself obviously make a good team then?**

Yes indeed! Being a maths teacher, Beth was able to run all the farming accounts and rear the calves and we worked really well together. Actually, during our more hands-on farming days, Beth and I won the 1987 Dairy Farmer of the Year (DFOTY) competition. From there, by God's grace, others noticed our farming skills I suppose. Prior to and after that win, we used to have a lot of on-farm visitors and we would talk a lot about the dairy industry "breeding index". The magic formula was

## AUTHENTIC | FEATURE

high breeding index cows with high breeding index pastures, combined with high breeding index management. Put simply though, in whatever you do, it's just about using your God-given talents for His glory.

### **You've also held a myriad of other governance roles in the business world too. How did you begin stepping into that realm?**

Well, when others began to notice our farming skills it led to those invitations to be on trusts and in governance roles, and in a way those roles took us outside the farm gate.

I was elected to be a farmer representative on Livestock Improvement (LIC) in 1988, the year after we won the Dairy Farmer of the Year competition, and then onto the New Zealand Dairy Group Co-operative board the following year in 1989. I was with the dairy company until the formation of Fonterra in 2001 and came off the board at that time.

I also spent 24 years on the LIC board - eight as deputy chairman and eight as chairman. They were busy jobs representing fellow farmers. In addition, I was also involved with several companies - AFFCO New Zealand, and TrustBank Waikato, among others.

### **Those are well-known, large scale companies you've mentioned. What is it like being a Christian in those work environments?**

Well, here's an example from my experience. I grew up without partaking in alcohol - that continued during my business days with the dairy company. We also raised our children in an alcohol-free home. So in the work environment, or at work functions, people would see straight away that I was drinking something different instead, which opened up opportunities for conversations.

I became known for who I was as a Christian. My father was the 'grace-sayer' at work events, so I took over that role at dairy company functions and events. But that's overt - that's easy. Many times though I had guys apologise for swearing in front of me, but it wasn't me convicting them, it was the Holy Spirit.

There were situations in which I could stand strongly for my Biblical beliefs, while being firm with a bit of backbone, but with grace. Simply put, God will use you because you're there - if you are prepared to be used and show honesty and integrity in working with and serving others.

### **You're in the unique position of being involved with all three of the trusts which came together to form Trinity Lands - which now blesses so many Christian organisations and initiatives in New Zealand. Can you**

### **talk us through that formation process and the work Trinity Lands does?**

Trinity lands is owned by three charitable trusts which were started by Waikato dairy farmers in the 1950s and 60s. They wanted to use their collective farming and business acumen to fund Christian community work. Those trusts are Hillview Trust, where I'm the current chairman, Lichfield Lands Inc and Longview Trust. I'd grown up with Hillview Trust, as dad was one of the founding trustees from our local church.

My father, who also was involved in all three organisations, saw the merger but passed away in 2015. I then became the only one who was still on all three trusts. In terms of the formation of Trinity Lands, because I'd been involved in lots of industry companies as I mentioned, I'd seen the process of mergers and so on and it made me think of the trusts and ask myself "could we combine our resources as trustees and go even faster, harder and smarter?".

Each individual trust owned land and other assets and it took two or three years to get the groups unanimous agreement to bring our businesses together, but then once we got going it just took off. Trinity Lands officially began in 2011. I was the inaugural chairman and currently still have that responsibility. Back then, there was about \$100 million in assets across Hillview Trust, Lichfield Lands and Longview Trust combined. Now, through God's grace, there's about \$500 million. Trinity Lands has grown as a charitable company to become a major player in New Zealand agriculture and horticulture. Through its work, the company is

able to give many hundreds of thousands of dollars to a wide variety of community organisations every year. We recently donated a new ambulance to St John Te Puke for example. Substantial dividends are paid annually to the shareholder trusts to distribute to their own beneficiaries.

The whole reason we are here is to grow the Kingdom of God and share the Gospel. We want to see more and more people learn in different and creative ways. Each of the trusts has different ways in which they do that and we've got different segments of society that we're working across - from academia and Christian colleges right through to youth work and Christian camps, sporting endeavours and the music industry. As another example, this also includes chaplains - they are in high demand across all segments of society.

### **In amongst everything that makes life busy, how do you keep the balance right?**

I suppose I've never really kept time. I'm not very good at that balance to be honest. The people closest to you are the ones

**“There were situations in which I could stand strongly for my Biblical beliefs, while being firm with a bit of backbone, but with grace. Simply put, God will use you because you're there.”**

who often have to give the most. But then again, maybe they're also the most forgiving.

**Talk to us about your involvement with CCCNZ...**

Just a few years ago I helped with the formation of that organisation. It's called Christian Community Churches of New Zealand in full, it's a movement of independent local churches and the regional camps and national ministries that support them. One of the prime drivers of getting that going was praying about seeing if the Lord, to use digital terminology, would help to 'reboot' a movement that was seen by many as struggling. We studied the Australian example and long story short, what the Lord is doing here in New Zealand now is so amazing.

With His leading, we've tried to strengthen our whole movement - up until the 1960s, it was a powerhouse in New Zealand as an evangelical witness. There were about 200 churches in the network by the late 1960s. Actually, about 24 camps in the CCCNZ movement were set up during this era we're talking about.

**You have a real passion for Christian camping don't you?**

Yes, I really do. It's something that's always been in my blood and close to my heart because all of our holidays as kids were just that - going to Christian camps. My Dad helped establish both Totara Springs Christian Centre and Kauaeranga Valley Christian Camp. I was both chairman and on the board of Kauaeranga Valley for quite a while.

Beth and I are in leadership at our church - Manawaru Bible Chapel - and as a church, we have members on the boards of both of those camps. I believe that if you don't have a church linked in with a camp, children are missing out in so many ways.

Camps essentially develop kids as leaders - it broadens a whole range of skill sets too. When I was young, I didn't particularly enjoy our only family holidays being my parents taking me away to those camps at that time in my life - but I look back now and can see how cool it actually was.

In those few short years, we now have about 70 churches as part of CCCNZ. About 300,000 Kiwi kids go through the 64 Christian camps in New Zealand every year. By comparison, I believe about 16,000 or so belong to Scouts.

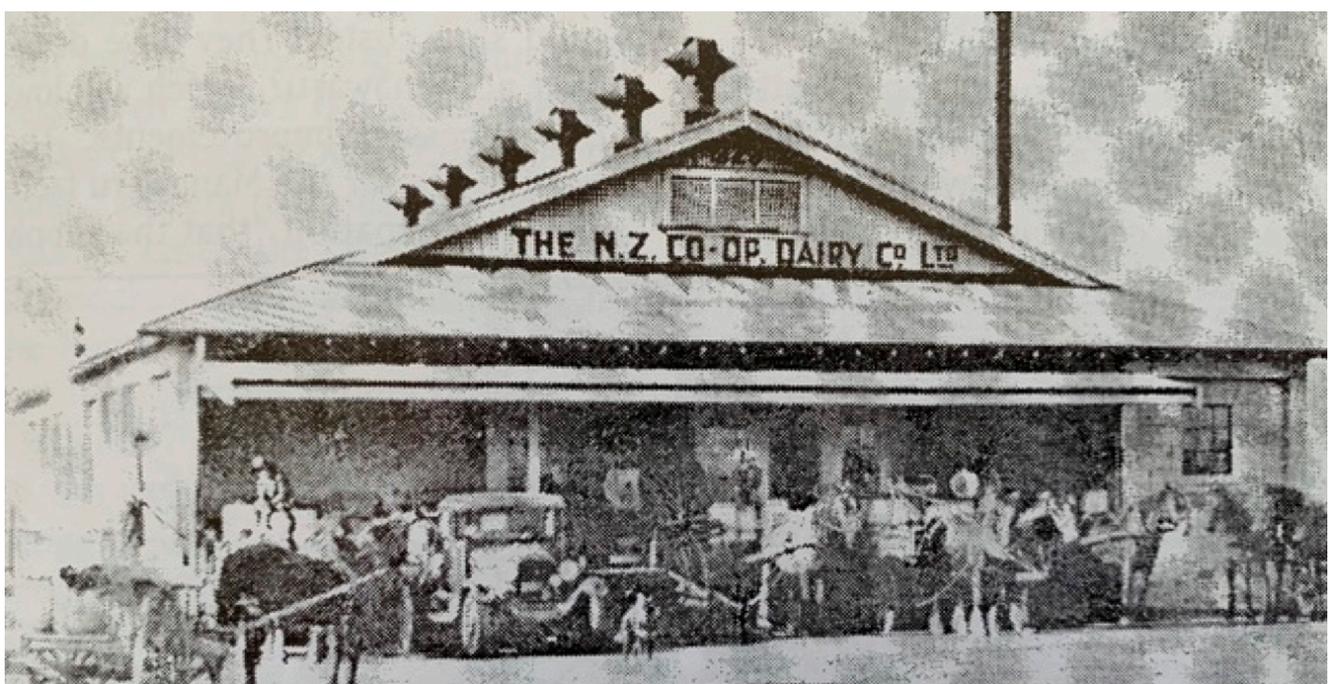
**Can you tell me about your journey of learning to speak Te Reo Māori?**

During my time with the dairy company, there were occasions when I'd be asked to say a karakia, or prayer. I began to think to myself, I've got to do this better - I've got to know the names of our people and place names in Māori, pronounce them properly and do them justice.

I wanted to connect with our Māori staff and our Māori farmers who were shareholders. Then, when I gave speeches, I wanted to use some Te Reo to share whakataukī, or Māori proverbs. So many of them are biblical. Being able to speak Te Reo just provides another point of connection with people - and to me that's what it's all about.

So, with that in mind I studied a three-year certificate in Te Reo at night school in Paeroa. As I drove to work every morning I would play tapes over and over. At our graduation ceremony on the marae at Huntly, out of a couple of hundred graduates, they asked me to speak. It was an extraordinary privilege.

I was also very honoured to be gifted a Piu Piu, or flax garment, befitting a Rangatira, or chief, when I retired from LIC.





**It sounds like you have a bit of a passion for languages?**

I do. I was in my 50s when I began my Te Reo journey, and I also set myself a goal to try to learn to communicate in Spanish. I'm in my late 60s now. Oh and between finishing University and coming home to the farm, Beth and I studied at a Bible College and I also learned a little bit of Greek. So, there's a challenge for you too actually - in your 50s learn some new languages!

**Okay then, any advice for other Christian men, either in the business world or otherwise?**

Put your heart and life into following the Lord and He will direct your path, there's no doubt about that. And save. Learn the time value of money, save it and make money work for you. Then overtime, money becomes another tool you can use to help you achieve things in the long term. Men who are busy and useful are those who were trained to be that way from a young age. I think it comes down to intentionality around families - and churches in our case - raising children. There's a saying "it takes a village to raise a child". Well, if you can involve a church family in that process of intentional discipleship of children, I believe they will be even better off.

A scripture verse and principle I learnt as a young kid is found in Proverbs 27:17 - "...iron sharpens iron..." In our Christian walks, if we're going to be sharp, we need to find some iron. Find somebody like a mentor and then you'll help sharpen each other. If you're working with rocks every day and you're an axe, you're going to get blunt. Leaders should not be out on their own all the time giving and giving and giving - they also have to regularly go to the well to fill up - part of that is going to God's Word, yes, but another dynamic is being fed spiritually by other people who are going to sharpen you.

**You're well known as a person who - if you're going to do something - does it really well. How do you go about bringing the things God has laid on your heart to fruition?**

I am a details person, I must admit. I have high standards of excellence in mind too. I guess it's a strong work ethic of

excellence and doing things well. I've grown up - even from a young kid - knowing Ecclesiastes 9:10 - "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." My father used to remind me of that verse.

**On that note, Hillview Trust's Community View project in Manawaru is a great example of that. Tell us a little bit about your heart for Manawaru and the idea behind the project...**

Well, of course it has been teamwork, but Community View is essentially a community hub which is the vision of Hillview Trust and is based right in the heart of Manawaru, on the old dairy factory site. The original dairy factory burnt down in 1929 and was re-built the same year. In recent times it was an eyesore, the front of the site was boarded up for 40 years.

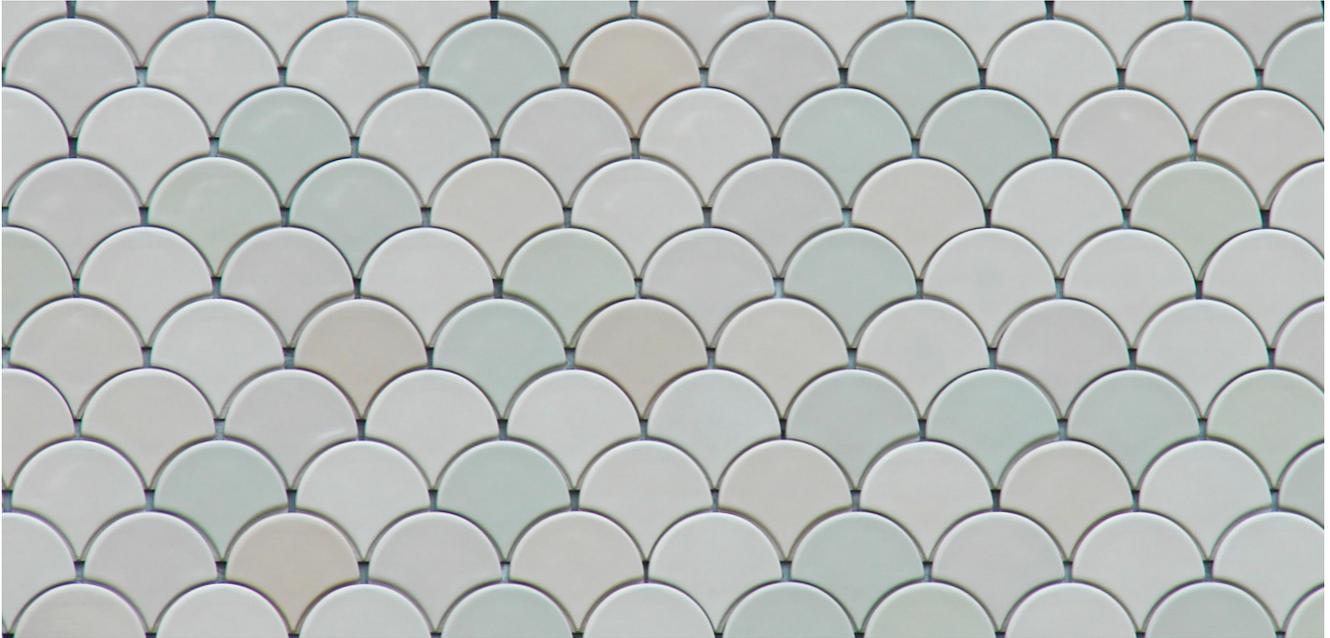
The Community View project has been underway for about three years and the vision is to see the community facility again functioning as a hub, just like the dairy factory was in its day. Among other elements, the facility includes Cafe 77 at its heart, an events centre with an inspiring rock climbing wall for kids, a function centre and a motorhome park, plus electric vehicle charging - that area is specifically designed to encourage people to come and stay.

Then, also as part of us, there is a heritage centre. Everything here is here by design - to create a sense of community right in the heart of a village we love. We've tried to think of including everything that brings people here and gives them a sense of ownership. We have a huge vision for our village, which is still growing. Looking back actually, December 17 last year was our miracle day. We saw the Lord move mightily and several key things which we were waiting on happened all on that same day. Right from the start, we've seen the Lord's hand over this project in so many ways, it's extraordinary.

**Thanks Stuart. Let's join in praying for the work of both Trinity Lands and Community View as the organisations respectively seek to grow the Kingdom of God and share the Good News of the Gospel. | 🙏**

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





# “Bat-Wing Dinosaur”— A Clumsy Flier?

*By Ken Ham*

About 10 years ago, I wrote about a new “dinosaur” discovery — a “non-avian theropod” with bat-like, membranous wings. In my writing then, I quoted paleontologist Dr. Gabriela Haynes, who studied the research paper and supplemental materials. Based on the actual documented evidence (and freed from underlying assumptions about evolution and millions of years), Dr. Haynes argued that this so-called “dinosaur” may have been a bird that may, or may not, have had “bat-like” wings. Well, this bird is in the news again.

This time around, *Ambopteryx longibrachium* and another presumed membranous-winged creature, *Yi qi* (discovered in 2015), are making headlines for being “clumsy fliers” and “failed experiments” on the evolutionary path to avian flight. According to a new analysis, “these two dinosaurs had vastly different wing structures from the feathered-wing fliers — proving that these two flight strategies evolved independently of one another.” They claim *Ambopteryx* and *Yi* could only briefly glide from tree to tree, rather than being able to sustain flight.

What should we make of this new update? Well, we should recognize what one researcher said: “the fossil record of this group is really bad.’ With so few fossils, many poorly preserved, any such calculations are going to be based on ‘very poor data.’” It’s important to keep the fragmentary nature of the fossil record — especially for certain species like these two—in mind.

It’s possible, as Dr. Haynes said back in May 2019, that this is a bird species or some previously unknown creature with bat-like, membranous wings.

But, regardless of what it ends up being, it tells us nothing about the evolution of flight (which evolutionists believe has happened multiple times in dinosaurs alone!). Instead it highlights the creativity of the Designer who has made many different creatures that glide through the trees (for example, Draco lizards, flying squirrels, and sugar gliders), perhaps including a membranous-winged one. The ideas about evolution are just an interpretation imposed on the evidence. | 

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■ Ken Ham is the founder and president of Answers in Genesis and pioneered the world famous Creation Museum and Ark Encounter attractions in Kentucky, USA. For more information from Answers in Genesis visit [www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org)





# How Can We Be Sure God Loves Us

BY ALAN STANLEY

**A book I read on how to love your children points out that even though parents may tell their children regularly that they love them unconditionally, this does not necessarily translate into children feeling loved - according to research and the experience of counselors working with children.**

As a parent who often tells my kids I love them, this has always bothered me. I want my children to feel loved when I say, "I love you." How could they feel otherwise? Then I stumbled on the answer. I was working on my computer and my son Jackson came alongside to talk. I engaged him in conversation, but all the while continued to look straight ahead at the computer. Then it hit me. I mean really hit me; like a bolt of lightning straight to the heart. I felt like I had discovered one of life's most perplexing questions.

You see, from my point of view I was doing what most men are incapable of doing. I was multitasking: working and conversing. But think of Jackson looking at the side of my head. Whether I intended it or not he was hearing: "I love my work more than you." That's how children can grow up being told that they are unconditionally loved and yet not believe or feel it.

This got me thinking about God. I know God loves me. But

honestly, all too often, I feel like I know this truth better intellectually than experientially. That's a problem for more reasons than I have time to explain here. But here's one: we can never experience God's presence, life, and power unless we first grasp his love for us in Christ in an experiential way (Ephesians 3:18-19).<sup>1</sup>

So why is it that God's love for us often seems to be something we know better in our minds than in our hearts? Is there something to be learned from my experience with Jackson? At first the answer would appear to be an unequivocal no.

If my children feel unloved because I have failed them in some way, then it's my fault. But if we feel like God does not love us, surely God is not to blame.

For He does not simply tell us He loves us, he has demonstrated it: "Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). But if God backs up his words with actions then why are we so often like children who, in spite of being regularly told that we are loved by God, don't always feel it?

Perhaps we even doubt it at times?

Some might say that we simply need to believe that God loves us. But is that enough? After all, I do not just believe that my

wife and boys, and close friends, love me; I know they love me.<sup>2</sup> Believing that God loves me must lead to that kind of knowing.

So what is the answer? This was a perennial problem for Israel it seems. God told them, "I have loved you." To which they responded, "How have you loved us?" (Malachi 1:2). They had interpreted the painful circumstances in their lives as the absence of God's love.

We are prone to doing the same. We might not voice it of course. We take it by faith that God loves us after all. But deep in our hearts where only God can see, if we're honest, we struggle. Mary and Martha also struggled. Their brother Lazarus became deathly ill.

"So the sisters sent word to Jesus, 'Lord, the one you love is sick'" (John 11:3). But Jesus delayed going to Lazarus and, as a result, he died. You can sense the sisters' struggle when Jesus finally showed up: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 1:21-32).

There is no question that Jesus loves this family. And yet it is because He loves them that He delays going to them. I know this sounds absurd, but look at how John explains things. "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was two more days" (John 11:5-6). Read it again slowly. The train of thought is clear: "it is in consequence of that love that He delays His departure by two days."<sup>3</sup>

Why would He do that? One commentator expresses the dilemma we are faced with here: "Humans generally interpret any delay in rendering help as cruel because of our perspectives on the avoidance of all pain and because of our general commitment to the immediacy of action."

In other words, if Jesus really loved them he would act now so they could avoid pain. To delay seems cruel. "But cruelty is hardly what this story is about."<sup>4</sup> Jesus loves this family.

Do we not struggle like Mary and Martha? "Lord, if you loved me, wouldn't you deliver me from this pain? Why the delay if you love me? Are you even listening?" But God is not multitasking, looking straight ahead at running the world while we speak to the side of His head wondering if He cares.

We have his undivided attention. He is looking into our face as it were. We know this because of what Jesus' delay meant for him. Jesus tells us in verse four, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory, so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

This may sound like Jesus is unconcerned about suffering as long as God gets glory. That is not the case. Jesus waits

two more days because He knows what his waiting will mean. Waiting will give Jesus the opportunity to raise Lazarus. But raising Lazarus will cause such uproar amongst the Jewish leaders that "from that day on they plotted to take his life" (John 11:46-53) - which is what will bring glory to God (e.g., John 12:16, 23).

So here's the point. We may see our pain as the absence of Jesus' love for us. Jesus, however, sees it differently. Our pain is a continual reminder to Him of just how much He really does love us. He could have avoided pain himself and provided Mary, Martha, Lazarus, us, the world, with a quick fix. But when you know that someone you love has an infection you don't give him or her an aspirin when you know only antibiotics will do.

Jesus saw Mary and Martha's pain. He sees our pain. But our pain, whatever it is, is symptomatic of a greater pain - namely the pain that comes with pursuing life in things that are not God.

Jesus knows that if He really loves us He must fix that pain because that pursuit will simply leave us thirsty. And so, He demonstrates just how much He loves us by deliberately choosing the path of greatest pain for Himself. His refusal to offer Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and us a quick fix eventually brings Him into a world of pain where He will be the one—not us—to cry out "I am thirsty" (John 19:28).

This solution does not end our pain, at least not for now. But it does show that we can know God's love; we are not looking into the side of his head while He focuses on the things that He really loves.

It's His people that He loves. And somewhat paradoxically we can be sure of that every time we experience pain. For the presence of our pain in this life serves to remind us that Jesus did not take the easy option and bypass pain for Himself in order to provide a quick fix for our pain.

He loves us more than that. So much so that he would deliberately put Himself on a path of pain so that we might never have to walk that path ourselves. | 

1. See e.g., Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 265.

2. This insight comes from David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2015), 26.

3. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 408.

4. This quote and the quote above are from Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11* (NAC 25A; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 351.

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# *The Fear of the Lord*

BY RAY COMFORT

It is around thirty AD. A Pharisee has invited Jesus of Nazareth to dine with him, but he is amazed beyond words that his special guest didn't go through the procedure of ritualistic washing before He sat down to eat. Jesus turned to him and said that those who went through the ceremony merely cleaned themselves outwardly, but inwardly they were full of wickedness and corruption. He even called them "fools," because they had no understanding of the God that created them (Luke 11:39-40). He said that they had angered Him by their petty traditions, while ignoring that which mattered...that they were proud hypocrites, likening them to dead bodies in a graveyard. This was all while He was an invited guest at the man's dinner table.

One of the lawyers then leaned forward to defend the teachers of the Law. Jesus then turned His fiery words to the lawyers and rebuked them for their hypocrisy, calling them the children of murderers, saying that they were accountable to God for condoning the evil deeds of their fathers.

Then He said, "from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation." Abel was the first person to be murdered. Although no physical Law had been given, Cain was the first man to transgress the Sixth

Commandment by taking the life of his brother. Zacharius was also murdered. In 2 Chronicles 24:20-21 we are told that when the Spirit of God came upon him, he immediately accused the children of Israel of transgressing God's Law. That brought about his untimely death. They stoned him in the court of the House of the Lord, and he died between the altar and the Temple.

A similar thing happened when Stephen told the religious leaders of his day that they had violated the Law. They also stoned him to death. The Law of God offends guilty sinners "because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

Jesus then accused the lawyers of failing to do what they should. They were lawyers—those who should have been teaching God's Law to Israel, and therefore revealing the exceeding sinful nature of sin. He said, "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered."

Jesus stirred up a religious hornet's nest. He hit it with the baseball bat of rebuke. The scribes and Pharisees began to urge Him vehemently. They provoked Him to say many things,

“lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.”

The attacking hornets attracted the attention of an “innumerable multitude.” So many gathered that they were trampling one upon another. This is the scene in which Jesus calls His disciples close to Himself and says:

“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.” (Luke 12:1-9)

## Think About What You Have Just Read

Many times I have read that passage and given a thoughtless “Amen” to it. Jesus said it, therefore I believe it. Amen to it. But think about what you have just read (I trust that familiarity didn’t cause you to skip over the verses). He firstly told His disciples to beware of the “leaven” of the Pharisees. Then He reveals that the “leaven” is hypocrisy.

Leaven (yeast) puffs up. That’s its function, and that’s exactly what hypocrisy does. Ask any one who professes to know God (but whose lives don’t match their claims), if they think that they are a good person. No doubt they tell you that they are morally upright. I have had many people say, “I’m a very good person.” One man even said, “I’m the best” (I was impressed that I had found the most moral man on earth). However, each (including him) proved to be liars, thieves, and adulterers at heart. They were puffed up with a sense of their own goodness, until the Law did its work in humbling them by showing their true state before God.

Then (in the above passage), Jesus began to bring in the detour sign. He said that God is the ultimate witness to every crime. He is the witness, the judge, and the executioner. Not even one murder – from Abel to Zacharias will go unpunished. Sin will be punished from A to Z. Even every idle word that men

speak, they will give an account of on the Day of Judgment. Nobody is getting away with a thing. Not even a lustful thought will go unpunished (Matthew 5:27-28).

After that He said that we shouldn’t fear him who can kill the body. Think about that for a moment. How can someone kill your body? He could come at you with a fifteen inch stainless steel serrated-edged meat knife, and plunge it into your chest with such thrust it comes out in the middle of your back.

Imagine seeing the unspeakably horrific sight of gushing warm blood surge from your chest as the final seconds of your life empties from your body. Thoughts of such a person attacking you are horrendous. But Jesus said not to fear him. What did He mean?

## Swallow the Gnat

The Master of teachers often used hyperbole in His teachings. He contrasted love with hate, gnats with camels, hot with cold. Extremes make points. Justified exaggerations paint powerful pictures on the walls of dull minds. This in essence was what He was saying: Does the thought of having a sharp knife thrust through your chest scare you? That fear is nothing compared to the unspeakable horror of facing the wrath of Almighty God on the Day of Judgment.

He said it would be better to drown with a millstone tied around your neck, rather than fall into God’s hands (don’t “amen” that without some thought). The Bible warns that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Words are inadequate to describe the terror of that day. Almighty God is going to tear guilty sinners from their graves and the Law will grind them to powder with eternal justice.

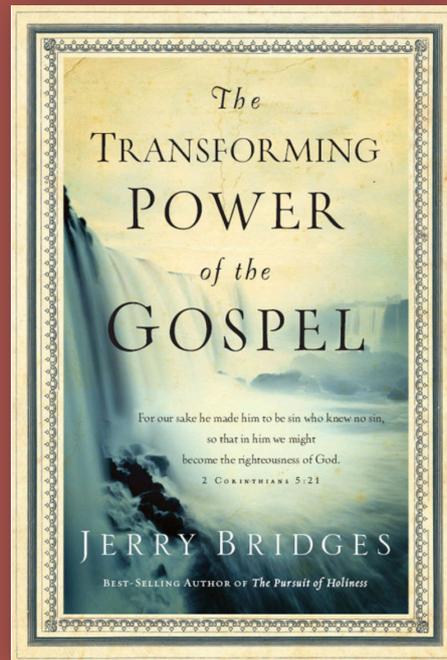
Why then doesn’t the world fear Him? Because they have been encouraged in their cultivation of their idols. The seed of idolatry is already waiting to germinate in the imagination, and modern evangelism provides a generous supply of man-made fertilizer to cause it to grow. It has come in the form of another gospel. It is one that runs alongside the true Gospel, but it has removed the very elements that produce the fear of the Lord. Gone is the terror of Judgment Day.

It tells sinners the lie that God isn’t mad at them. Who needs to fear God when He has no thoughts of retribution? It has minimized the exceedingly offensive nature of sin by removing God’s Law from its message. Sin has merely become something that separates, rather than what it is—an anvil for the justice of a holy God. “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:18) because we haven’t put it there. | 

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





# The Transforming Power of the Gospel

JERRY BRIDGES // REVIEW BY JOSHUA ENS

There is a common misconception among Christians that the Gospel is only for unbelievers. This kind of thinking recognises the Gospel as "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). Yet, somehow believers have matured beyond the 'simple Gospel' and must instead focus on more profound things for their spiritual growth and transformation. The Gospel is treated, therefore, like elementary Christianity, with 'advanced Christians' no longer needing it daily. In the opening chapter, Jerry Bridges describes himself as thinking this way; he is, therefore, personally motivated to tell others about the truth he has come to know regarding 'The Transforming Power of the Gospel'.

The book can be divided into two parts; the first part focuses on the role of the Gospel, while the second part emphasises the 'responsible dependence' that characterises the life of a believer. Part one includes four key truths which inform the rest of the book to come: God, guilt, Gospel, and gratitude. The book begins with the holiness of God, his moral perfection and 'otherness' as seen in Isaiah's vision of the Lord's throne

(Isa. 6). From this vantage point, the sinfulness of sin becomes clear, resulting in overwhelming guilt. It is at this, the lowest point, that the Gospel enters into the lives of unbelievers, telling them of the work done on their behalf by their perfect Saviour, and they, by faith are adopted as God's children. Finally, from this point, the entire Christian life is one lived out of gratitude to God for what he has done through the Gospel.

As mentioned earlier, the Gospel is not only for unbelievers; it is, however, only for sinners. Therefore, Christians are continually in need of the precious truths of the Gospel for the entirety of their earthly lives. It is one thing to convince people that they are still in need of the Gospel, but it can often be challenging to communicate just what that looks like practically. In the second half of the book, Bridges clearly articulates the means God has given to his church for their spiritual transformation, including the Word of God, prayer, hearing the Bible preached, and more. The author connects each of these gifts to his central theme, highlighting how the Gospel is both the power of change and the motivation for change.

One of the book's greatest strengths is that throughout the book, in both the first and second parts, Bridges reminds his readers of the foundational truths he laboured over at the beginning. It is as if he is saying, 'I'm worried you may have forgotten what I said earlier and will therefore misunderstand what I am about to say.' This style models precisely what it looks like to daily appropriate the Gospel.

This book is written with two types of people in mind, and the vast majority of Christians could fit into either or both categories. First, the person engaged in performance-based Christianity will be freed to honestly examine their sin without

worrying that their standing before God has been altered. Second, the guilt-ridden Christian will be comforted knowing that they now serve a loving Father, not a harsh judge. This book is not revolutionary in the sense that it gives some previously unknown secret to living as a Christian; however, it does recover a truth that modern evangelicalism has forgotten, and the church is well-served to remember.

**mana** This book is available from [Manna Christian Bookstore](#)



## Love Came Down at Christmas

SINCLAIR FERGUSON

Every December, familiar passages of Scripture come to mind when we begin to think about the incarnation, the greatest of miracles where the Son of God took on human flesh to save sinners. Typically, people use the time leading up to Christmas to focus on portions of the Bible which directly address Christ's birth, such as the narrative in Luke 2, or prophecies concerning His birth, such as those in Isaiah 9. In this advent devotional, Sinclair Ferguson unpacks another familiar chapter of Scripture, yet one which at first seems unrelated to the 'Christmas Story'. Over the first twenty-four days of December, readers will gain a fresh perspective on Jesus' arrival on earth through 1 Corinthians 13. The book borrows its title, 'Love Came Down at Christmas', from a nineteenth-century poem by Christina Rossetti. The first stanza of the poem reads as follows:

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas,  
Star and angels gave the sign.

The author interprets the poem through the lens of John 3:16. He writes, "the meaning of Christmas is found in the message of Christmas: 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life'" (p. 8). As he defines the centrality of love, the connection to 1 Corinthians 13 becomes clear. This chapter which focuses on the love believers ought to have for one another, was perfectly expressed throughout the entire life of our Saviour. As we read the verses "we need to keep our ears open for echoes of Jesus' life and look for his shadow falling on every line" (p. 10).



## Piercing Heaven

ROBERT ELMER  
(EDITOR)

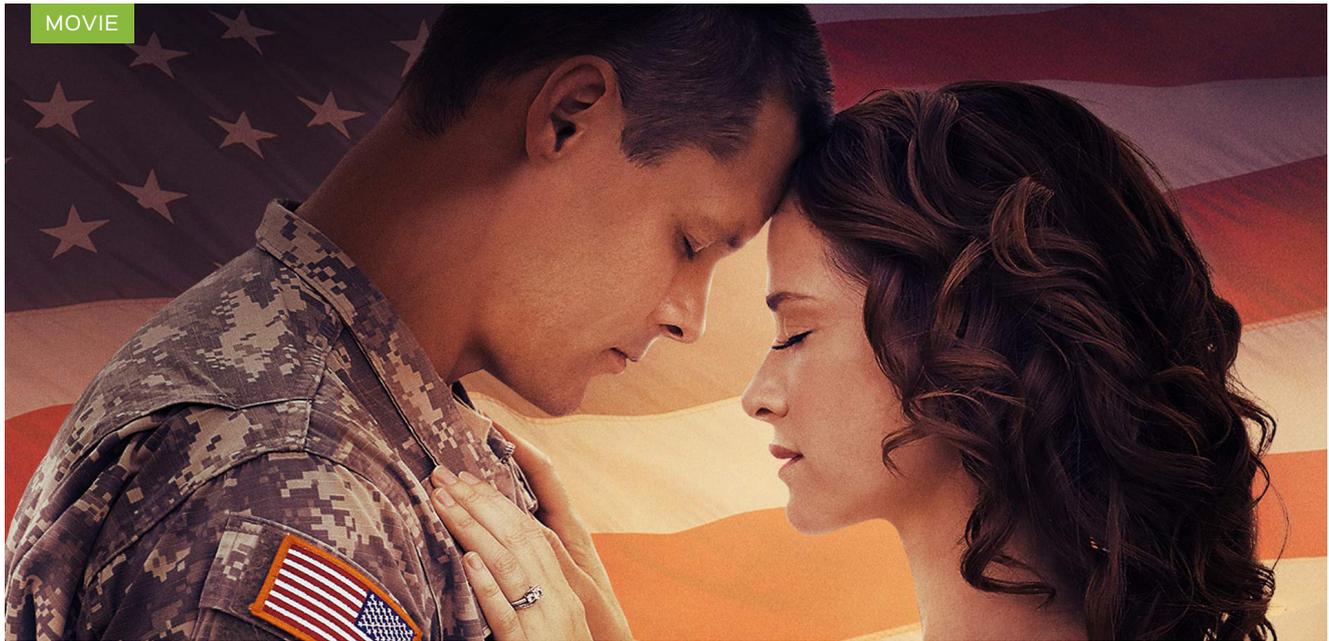
It would be nearly impossible to calculate the impact the Puritans have had on English-speaking Christianity. Originating in the sixteenth century, the movement's "followers sought purity of Scripture-based worship, purity of doctrine, and purity of prayer." These simple commitments unified a significant number of Christians across the Atlantic Ocean for close to two centuries. With the last of the Puritans living over two-hundred years ago, much of their writings have become inaccessible for twenty-first-century Christians. Sadly, this is not due to irrelevance, for the Puritans wrote and taught timeless truths for people everywhere, but because a language barrier has developed between their time and ours.

In his work as compiler and editor, Robert Elmer has given the church a vital gift by repackaging prayers from Puritan sermons and writings in a way that removes any obstacles that might have existed, and with them all excuses and reasons not to read these authors.

The editor has collected several hundred prayers from over thirty writers, most of them Puritans, and some later writers who carried on the Puritan tradition after the historic movement had largely ended. The topics addressed range from prayers for times of suffering, to those focused on resting in God's love, to prayers of preparation for Lord's Day worship. "Piercing Heaven" is at once instructional and devotional; for, even as the Scriptural prayers elicit praise and worship from the reader, he or she cannot help but have their prayer life changed to one with a more Godward focus and fervour.

■ Joshua Ens is a Canadian currently residing in New Zealand. As well as a book reviewer for Authentic he is a Youth Pastor at River City Bible Church and a full-time Secondary School Teacher.





# Indivisible

PROVIDENT FILMS // REVIEW FROM PLUGGEDIN

**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 on that note, parents - just for your consideration and to make you aware - given this film's depiction of elements of Darren's story, there are several scenes of warring violence on display.

Darren isn't afraid to pray for the men in his charge and to share his certainty that God is in control of everything. But on the battlefield, that conviction doesn't always sit well with soldiers who are losing friends and who see death all around them. 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.

Darren helps the soldiers he works with think about the things of greatest importance to them. They're all brave individuals, giving of themselves on the battlefield. But some of the hardest among them come to adjust their focus, and even turn their eyes to the grace of God, thanks to their chaplain's redemptive influence.

This poignant tale 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.

*For the full review, and details on the spiritual, sexual, violent content that may be in the film, go to [Pluggedin.com](http://Pluggedin.com)*

TV SERIES



# The Chosen

DALLAS JENKINS // REVIEW FROM PLUGGEDIN

In issue 11, we reviewed *The Chosen* and gave an overview of the first episode. In this issue, we continue the series by taking a look at episodes two and three.

## Episode 2: Shabbat

Lilith is now demon-free and calling herself by her birth name of Mary. She's nervously preparing to host Shabbat for the first time ever, and she receives a very special guest. Meanwhile, Simon continues to spy on his fellow Jewish fishermen (who are fishing on the Sabbath), while the suspicious tax collector, Matthew, dutifully reports his own suspicions of Simon to the Roman praetor.

As a Jewish tax collector, Matthew is reviled by both Romans and Jews. When he's preparing to report to the praetor, Matthew's repeatedly jostled by Roman soldiers, and he's threatened with death. Later, in his tax collection booth, another Roman soldier sees Matthew with a cut on his face and excrement on his clothes, which the Roman figures were "gifts" from some Jewish citizens who took issue with their taxes. Nicodemus, the "rabbi of rabbis" visiting Capernaum from Jerusalem, reads a book on demons and exorcism after his apparently failed cleansing of Lilith/Mary. When he learns that she miraculously was cured after all, he goes to investigate, and he hears from Mary of the mysterious stranger who cured her. "I was one way," she explains to Nicodemus. "And now I am completely different. And the thing that happened in between, was Him."

## Episode 3: Jesus Loves the Little Children

The story moves away from many of its central players and focuses on Abigail, a little girl who runs across a strange carpenter camping in the wilderness. She hides from him the first day, but the next she brings along Joshua, a friend of hers. We hear similar sentiments from other kids in Abigail's posse (which grows as the episode wears on). Some are concerned that Jesus (because, of course, it is Jesus) might be a criminal or a murderer. And Jesus himself tells them that it's good to be careful, because, "There are bad men around."

Jesus begins to teach them a bit about His work—both that of a craftsman and as someone bringing a startling new message to the world. He leads the children in prayers and encourages them to honor both their teachers and their parents, while reminding them that "many times, smart men lack wisdom." He gives some sage lessons on justice and encourages them to hold to their faith. And as He does so, Jesus begins to unveil His real purpose.

The humanity of Jesus is emphasized here. We see Him struggle to start a fire, cook His own supper and engaged in tearful, anguished prayer—all elements that could've been a part of Jesus' life. The only miracle He performs is through prosaic hard work—gifting Abigail a fabulous handmade toy set.

plugged'n

Movie & TV Reviews compiled from [PluggedIn.com](http://PluggedIn.com)

# AUTHENTIC

## MEN'S MAGAZINE

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