

Inside Life

Issue 27
Your FREE Copy

Why would anyone
want to be a Christian?

Tell her you love her

I am RIGHT
and you are not wrong

What are
you sending out?



CONTENTS

- | | |
|----|--|
| 3 | Why would anyone want to be a Christian? |
| 4 | The girl in the picture |
| 7 | Going beyond science |
| 8 | I am right and you are not wrong |
| 9 | An alien hope |
| 10 | Who do you think you are? |
| 12 | Tell her you love her |
| 14 | What are you sending out? |

Inside Life

PO Box 304055, Hauraki Corner, Auckland 0750
Phone: 09 489 8910

Email: insidelife@gci.org.nz
Website: www.insidelife.org.nz

Editor: Rex Morgan
Graphic Design: Philip Baldwin
Printed by PMP Limited

Inside Life is a magazine of understanding. Rather than just reporting on life, **Inside Life** seeks to delve inside the marvellous mystery that is life, to discover what it is all about. What does life mean? Where did it come from? How can we make the most of it?

Inside Life provides insight and answers to life's deep questions and challenges, and aims to provide articles of lasting hope, help, and encouragement for successful living in today's fast-moving world.

Inside Life is published twice a year, free of charge, as a community service.

© Grace Communion International 2017.

All rights reserved.

ISSN: 1177-3693

Our Cover: Christianity no longer holds the central place it used to in our society. In the modern world of science and technology many feel it is out of date. Yet it still has millions of dedicated adherents. Our cover article examines some of the reasons why people are Christians.

Photo Credits

- Cover © Kevin Carden | 123rf image ID 11936327
- p.3 © Chalermphon Kumchai | 123rf image ID 55021424
- p.4 AP photo / Nick Ut
- p.5 framednetwork.com/
iconic-image-phan-thi-kim-phuc
- p.8 © Scott Griessel | 123rf image ID 15433206
- p.9 © sumikophoto | 123rf image ID 23244971
- p.10 © Vasilij Koval | Adobe Stock #51221014
- p.11 commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File%3AFrans_Hals_-_Portret_van_Ren
%C3%A9_Descartes.jpg
- p.12–
13 rustywright.com/articles/tell-her-you-love-her/
Used by permission.
- p.14 images-assets.nasa.gov/image/PIA17462/
PIA17462~orig.jpg
- p.15 images-assets.nasa.gov/image/
201309120010HQ/201309120010HQ~orig.tif



Why would anyone want to be a Christian?

by Rex Morgan

Christianity isn't nearly as popular in New Zealand as it used to be. Leading clerics have hit the news headlines for unchristian behaviour, including opulent lifestyles, adultery, and repulsive sex crimes. Aggressive atheists ridicule Christians for being naïve. Christians bicker amongst themselves and fight with Muslims and those of other religions. Churches are divided over current issues such as same-gender attraction and women in leadership. Christians in many countries are brutally persecuted and martyred. A new generation of young people is biblically illiterate.

In view of trends like these it's easy to question why anyone would want to be a Christian in New Zealand these days. But multiple millions of people around the world continue to hold firmly to their Christian faith,¹ and thousands more are becoming Christians every day. What's more, millions of these adherents consider Christianity to be so important that they are willing to die for it.

Why are these individuals so staunch in their beliefs? Have they been duped into believing a fairy tale? If you think so, can you *prove* it is a fairy tale? It's patently unfair to dismiss anything without even examining it. Are you willing to take a few moments to consider the reasons people believe in Christianity? Then you can make an informed judgment on the matter.

The main reason people become Christians is that they believe in Jesus Christ. They believe he lived, died, and rose out of the grave.

Living and dying is nothing special, but being resurrected—that is certainly unique!

To determine if this claim is correct, we need to look at the evidence as to whether Jesus lived or not, and the credibility of his resurrection.

The historicity of Jesus

Actually there is overwhelming evidence for the existence of Jesus Christ, both in secular and biblical history. The Jewish historian Josephus referred to him around AD 93, and the Roman historians Tacitus and Pliny both wrote about Christ and the Christians around AD 115. Unless his life was significant or the movement he started remarkable, we wouldn't expect to read a lot about an itinerant preacher living for a short time within a small community in one corner of the vast Roman Empire. However, a number of non-Christian writers of the time made reference to him, and his life is recorded in some detail in Christian writings. The Christian writers were his followers, so they could be classed as being biased. But it is notable that there are thousands of manuscripts of their works dating as far back as AD 100, so these are valid evidence of Christ's historicity, too.

The Wikipedia article on the historicity of Jesus, citing many corroborating references, says: 'Nearly all modern scholars of antiquity agree that Jesus existed and most biblical scholars and classical historians see

the theories of his non-existence as effectively refuted. There is no evidence today that the existence of Jesus was ever denied in antiquity by those who opposed Christianity'.²

Craig A. Evans, American Professor of the New Testament, stated: 'No serious historian of any religious or nonreligious stripe doubts that Jesus of Nazareth really lived in the first century and was executed under the authority of Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea and Samaria.'³

Renowned German scholar Rudolph Bultmann noted: "Of course the doubt as to whether Jesus really existed is unfounded and not worth refutation. No sane person can doubt that Jesus stands as founder behind the historical movement."⁴

Historian Michael Grant wrote: "In recent years, no serious scholar has ventured to postulate the non-historicity of Jesus—or at any rate very few, and they have not succeeded in disposing of the much stronger, indeed very abundant, evidence to the contrary".⁵

The evidence we have for the life of Christ is much stronger than we have that Plato ever lived, or Homer, or many historical figures that we take for granted.

There is also abundant historical evidence of Christ's death by crucifixion.⁶ But what about the resurrection? Can that be proved?

Virtually all scholars who have studied the resurrection, whatever

their school of thought, agree that three things were true:

1. the tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered empty by a group of women on the Sunday following the crucifixion;
2. Jesus' disciples had real experiences with one whom they believed was the risen Christ; and
3. as a result of the preaching of these disciples, which had the resurrection at its centre, the Christian church was established and grew.

The Jewish nation in which Jesus lived had long been anticipating the appearance of a Messiah, but they expected that he would be a powerful leader who would take over the government of the nation, and

indeed the whole world. According to their belief, anyone hung on a tree was cursed by God,⁵ so there was no way they would accept that the Messiah could be shamefully executed on a stake as a criminal. After Jesus' death, even his own disciples gave up hope in him⁶ and went back to their previous occupations.⁷ It took something really special to cause people to follow him after his ignominious death. If he had not been resurrected, it's very difficult to see how Christianity could possibly have started.

The fact that literally thousands of Christians in the first century AD, including the twelve apostles, were willing to give their lives as martyrs for Jesus Christ is very powerful evidence that he did exist and was resurrected. People will die for what

they believe to be true, but no one will die for what they know to be a lie.

What Jesus taught

So, people become Christians because they believe Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected, but the main reason they follow him is because of his teachings. They are as unique as the fact that he was resurrected!

Jesus emphasised qualities like love, mercy, faith, forgiveness, and honesty. He taught gentleness rather than violence, generosity rather than selfishness, doing good rather than evil. He respected all people; even those looked down on or despised by others. Jesus touched lepers, welcomed children, and treated women and foreigners with dignity and care. Even many



Nine-year-old Kim Phuc, centre, fled a napalm attack.

The Girl in the Picture

On June 8, 1972, at the height of the Vietnam War, one of the most famous photos of all time was taken.

A group of villagers was sheltering in a temple in the village of Trang Bang, near Saigon, when they heard planes overhead. Afraid they would be bombed, they ran outside to find safety, just as canisters of napalm detonated all around the temple.

A 21-year-old Associated Press photo journalist, Nick Ut, took the unforgettable black and white photo of children fleeing the burning

temple. It won the Pulitzer Prize and was chosen as the 'World Press Photo of the Year' in 1972.

Napalm, a thick jelly of gasoline, clings to human skin, causing horrific burns when ignited. As the screaming nine-year-old girl who had torn off her burning clothes approached Nick, he could see

parts of her skin peeling off. He put his camera down, gave her a drink and poured water over her. 'So hot', she kept saying, 'So hot'.

He drove her to the hospital in his jeep, and found that her name was Kim Phuc, which means 'Golden Happiness'. She spent 14 months in various hospitals and underwent 17 painful skin grafts and surgeries. Kim had suffered serious burns over a third of her body, at a time when most people who sustained such injuries over 10% of their body died.

For years afterward, Kim was just an anonymous teenage girl who always wore long sleeves to cover

her twisted scars and worried they were so ugly that no one would ever want to marry her. She became so depressed that she wanted to die.

Then Kim began spending time in a local library, where she read The New Testament, and discovered a portrait of Jesus Christ that differed radically from what she had learned about him in her family religion of Cao Dai. Eventually she began attending a Christian Church, and at the age of 19 she became a Christian.

'It was the fire of the bomb that burned my body, and it was the skill of the doctor that mended my skin', she said, 'but it took the power of God to heal my heart.' In 1986 she married a fellow Vietnamese student named Toan, who told her that her scars only made him love her more. Kim and Toan now live in Canada, and have two adult sons, both of whom have studied at Bible Colleges.

In 1996 Kim agreed to speak at Veteran's Day ceremonies in Washington, DC:

As you know, I am the little girl who was running to escape from the napalm fire. I don't want to talk about the war because I

non-Christians regard Jesus as the supreme example of a selfless life.

All of his teachings are positive axioms of wisdom, truth, and love, and countless lives have been transformed for the better after reading and following them. Jesus lived the things he taught. His character was flawless—he embodied an exemplary life of humility, service, and outgoing love.

Central to his teaching was that he was God. He said he was one with his father,¹⁰ and that he had come from heaven to reveal God to humankind.¹¹ He claimed to be ‘the way, the truth and the life’,¹² and that anyone who instilled his teachings in their life would be satisfied spiritually in a very special way.¹³ People become Christians because they are convicted by this promise, and when

they practice what Jesus taught, they find that it works. Millions of individuals have experienced amazing inner changes in their lives when they have become Christians. The accompanying article about Kim Phuc is an example, just one amongst stories too numerous to count.

An important aspect of Christ’s teaching was his prediction that he was going to be put to death and resurrected after three days.¹⁴ In fact, he claimed that he was fulfilling prophecies that had been uttered hundreds, even thousands, of years earlier.¹⁵

Books proved to have been written centuries before Christ’s birth state that a Messiah was to come who would be a Jew,¹⁶ a descendant of King David,¹⁷ and would be born

to a virgin,¹⁸ in Bethlehem.¹⁹ Other predictions stated he would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey,²⁰ would speak in parables,²¹ and would be betrayed by a friend²² for 30 pieces of silver.²³ Yet other prophecies recorded that he would die with criminals, pierced in the hands and feet, with his executioners gambling for his clothing,²⁴ that none of his bones would be broken,²⁵ and that he would be buried in a rich man’s tomb.²⁶ One of the prophecies written by King David about 1000 years before Jesus was born stated that he would be resurrected from the dead.²⁷

There are more than three hundred such predictions in the Old Testament, and Jesus fulfilled every one of them. Professor Emeritus of Science at Westmont College,

can’t change history. I only want you to remember a tragedy of war in order to do things to stop fighting and killing around the world.

I have suffered a lot from both physical and emotional pain. Sometimes I thought I could not live, but God saved my life and gave me faith and hope. If I could talk face to face with the pilot who dropped the bomb, I could tell him we can’t change history, but we should try to do good things for the present and for the future to promote peace.

Many of the veterans were in tears as they applauded her moving remarks. One of them said: ‘It’s important to us that she’s here. For her to forgive us personally means something’. One man scribbled out a note and asked for it to be given to Kim. ‘I’m the man you are looking for.’

Kim agreed to see the man right away, and held out her arms to hug him, the same arms she had held out in agony as she ran along the road with her skin burning.

‘I am sorry, just so sorry’, he sobbed. ‘It’s okay. I forgive. I forgive’, said

Kim Phuc, recalling her favourite Bible verse, ‘Forgive, and you will be forgiven’ (Luke 6.37).

In 1997, Kim started a foundation to help other child victims of war, and became a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for Peace. Since then, she has travelled the world telling her story of love, hope, and forgiveness. She says her Christian faith brought her physical and emotional peace in the midst of hatred and bitterness, loss, and hopelessness when the pain seemed overwhelming: ‘When I became a Christian I gained a wonderful connection with God, and from that point I learned to forgive’. Now she says that terrified little girl in the photo is ‘not running anymore. She’s flying’.

‘Forgiveness freed me from hatred’, she wrote in her biography, entitled *The Girl in the Picture*. ‘I still have many scars on my body and severe pain on most days, but my heart is purified. Napalm is very powerful,

but faith, forgiveness, and love are much stronger. There would be no more war if everyone were to learn to live with true love, hope, and forgiveness.

‘If the little girl in the photo could do it, ask yourself, Can I?’



Today Kim Phuc reflects on the effects that the iconic photo and her faith have had on her life.

You are invited to come and meet the sponsors of *Inside Life!*

Grace Communion International services are held weekly in the following locations:

Auckland: Mt. Eden Senior Citizens' Club Hall, Balmoral
(corner Dominion Rd and Brixton Rd)
Saturdays at 2.00 pm
Contact: Rex Morgan, ph. 09 489 8910

Rotorua: Contact Peter Lindop, ph. 07 349 2272

Wellington: Thumbs Up Hall
5 Elizabeth Street, Petone
Saturdays at 2:30 pm
Contact: Dennis Gordon, ph. 04 386 2094

Masterton: Solway Primary School
302 Ngaumutawa Rd, Solway
Sundays at 10:00 am
Contact: Manny Ornejas, ph. 06 370 1249

Invercargill: Contact: Les Evans, ph. 03 218 7020

Other NZ locations: Small groups meet regularly in other cities nationwide.
For details, contact Dennis Richards,
ph. 06 353 6224 or visit www.gci.org.nz

Peter Stoner, enlisted the aid of 600 students to carefully calculate the probability of anyone conspiring to fulfil these prophecies. He conservatively estimated that the chance of one man fulfilling just 48 of the recorded predictions was one in 10 to the power of 157, an almost inconceivably large number.

The fulfilment of those remarkable prophecies provides further evidence for Christians to be believers.

Why did Jesus die?

The necessity for Jesus' death is another key factor in people becoming Christians. It is obvious that every human being has done wrong, or sinned against God's law of love, many times. God loves us and wants to have a relationship with us. Jesus showed this by becoming a man so he could die for us, thereby paying the penalty we owe for our sins. So people become Christians because they want to accept this sacrifice to forgive their sins, and his promise to live in them and give them eternal life.²⁸

When all these reasons are put together, you can see that Christians have quite a lot of cause to believe

what they do. Especially when they pray to God and find that he answers their prayers!

If you have looked carefully through this list of factors, you are now in a better position to make an informed choice on whether or not Christianity is valid. If you are not persuaded by all these points, it is worth considering what you do believe and why. Everyone has got to believe something about God. Either he exists or he doesn't.

Christians are often asked to explain why evil exists if there is a God. But those who don't believe in God need to explain both why evil exists and why *good* exists. If there is no God, then how did goodness, love, and moral or spiritual qualities like those arise from a physical universe?

If you would like to know more about being a Christian, please feel free to write to *Inside Life* at the address on the inside front cover of this magazine, and we will be pleased to be of assistance to you.

Notes

¹ The Pew Research Centre in 2015 estimated 2.3 billion Christians

worldwide [<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/>].

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicity_of_Jesus

² Bart D. Ehrman (22 March 2011). *Forged: Writing in the Name of God—Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*. HarperCollins. p. 285. ISBN 978-0-06-207863-6.

³ C.A. Evans & N.T. Wright, *Jesus, the Final Days: What Really Happened*. Westminster, 2009, p. 3.

⁴ Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*. Collins/Fontana, 1958, p. 13.

⁵ Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels*. Charles Scribner & Sons, 1977, p. 200

⁶ The Wikipedia article 'Crucifixion of Jesus' states: 'The baptism of Jesus and his crucifixion are considered to be two historically certain facts about Jesus', and cites references for this.

⁷ Deuteronomy 21:22–23.

⁸ Luke 24:21.

⁹ John 21:3.

¹⁰ John 10:30.

¹¹ John 16:28; 17:25–26.

¹² John 14:6.

¹³ John 4:14.

¹⁴ Matthew 20:18–19.

¹⁵ Luke 22:37.

¹⁶ Genesis 49:10.

¹⁷ 2 Samuel 7:12.

¹⁸ Isaiah 7:14.

¹⁹ Micah 5:2.

²⁰ Isaiah 62:11.

²¹ Psalm 78:2.

²² Psalm 41:9.

²³ Zechariah 11:12–13.

²⁴ Psalm 22:16–18.

²⁵ Psalm 34:20.

²⁶ Isaiah 53:9.

²⁷ Psalm 16:10.

²⁸ John 6:40; 14:20–21.



Rex Morgan, the editor of *Inside Life*, and his wife Marilyn live on Auckland's North Shore. Rex has worked in Christian ministry and office administration for over 30 years and has contributed articles to a number of international publications. Rex can be contacted at rex@gci.org.nz

Going beyond science

By Joseph Tkach

At one of the many conferences I have gone to, I enjoyed discussing Albert Einstein's historic work with a meteorological scientist friend.

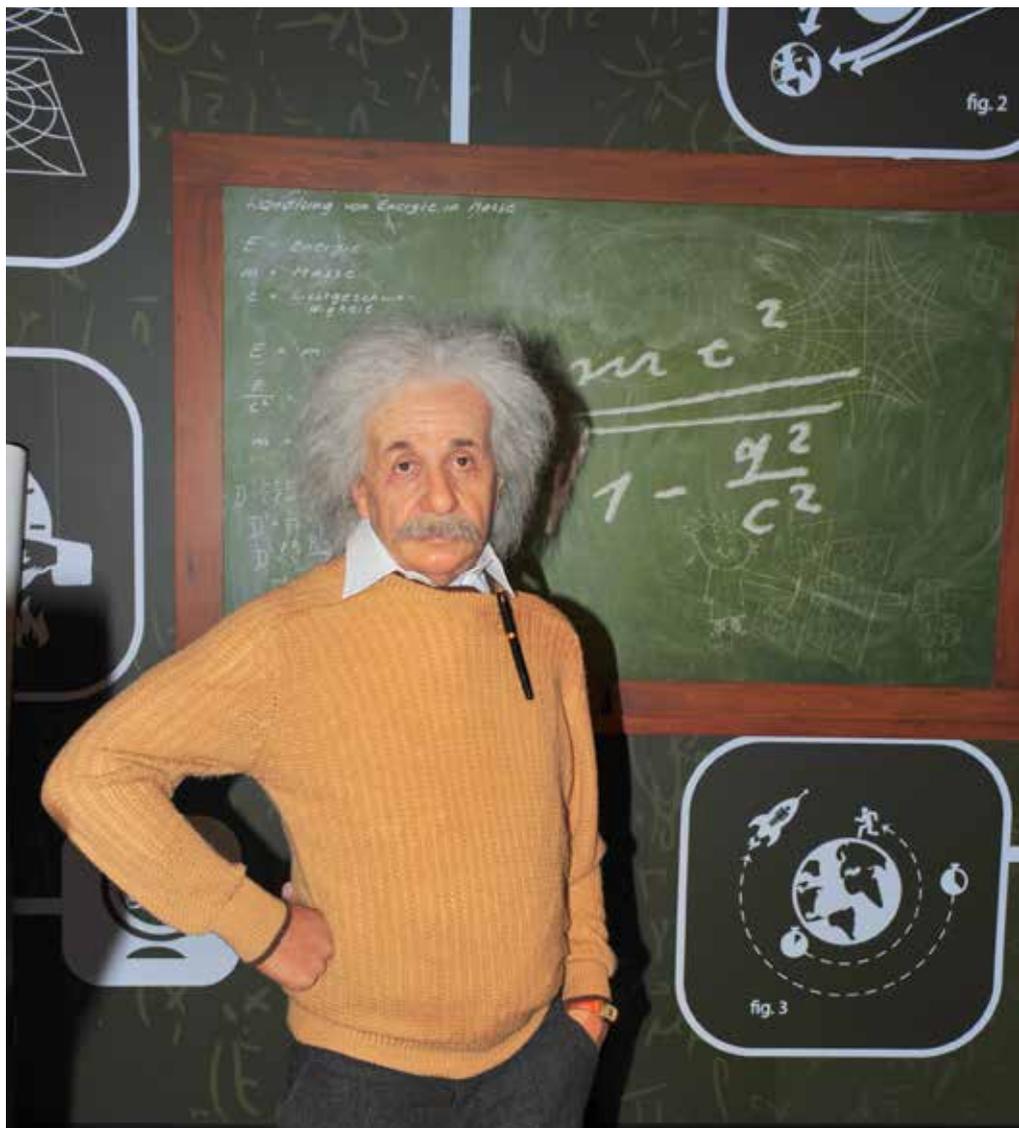
I mentioned how I'm enchanted by Einstein's well known statement that 'God does not play dice with the universe'. I also noted my amazement that Einstein's predictions about our visible universe, made over 100 years ago, have been verified by science through empirical measurement.

One of Einstein's predictions was that there are speed-of-light gravitational waves traveling through space. Einstein considered them too small to be measured and thus unverifiable.

Though Einstein was right about the existence of gravitational waves, he was wrong to think they would never be discovered. In fact, they were detected and measured by the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO). LIGO analysed and merged multiple sources of light, using technology that can detect distortions one million times smaller than the width of a hydrogen atom. LIGO's measurements suggest that these gravitational waves originated with a cataclysmic event in the primordial universe.

Why was Albert Einstein so advanced in his thinking?

Personally, I believe it is because Einstein included in his thinking the reality of a creator of the universe. Though some claim he was an atheist or agnostic, it's clear that Einstein did not exclude God from his thinking in the way many scientists do. His metaphor that God does not play dice with the universe continues to cut through mysteries



concerning the universe that baffle many scientists. Natural science is fundamentally about discovery, which includes coming to realise that we lack explanations for many of the things we observe about the natural world.

Acknowledging this limitation of science is important in that it helps us understand that, if we are to have an ultimate explanation for nature (and for science itself), we will have to turn to a higher, more comprehensive level of explanation.

Our study of nature (of inner and outer space, particularly) has, seemingly, brought us to the point

where we must recognise that nature raises questions that, in principle, science is unable to answer. Therefore, shouldn't we look beyond the natural sciences to answer the very questions that this field of study raises?

In searching for answers, perhaps we could re-visit our ideas about God.

Let's not exclude God from our thinking.

This is a transcript of the weekly 'Speaking of Life' radio programme by Joseph Tkach, President of Grace Communion International. For more information visit www.gci.org.

I am RIGHT and you are not wrong

By Keith Hartrick

Arguments are a huge problem. They can fracture families, friendships, business, and all kinds of relationships, thus creating long-lasting division and damage.

But why? Usually because both parties are convinced they are right, and the more heated the argument gets, the more defensive each becomes of their point of view.

For example, my mother and my older brother had an argument that led them to not speaking to each

other for fifteen years. Both were stubbornly convinced they were right and neither would give an inch to resolve their differences.

can be almost impossible to break down. Just consider how this attitude has played out in two of the most significant political results of the last year. We have all seen the anger and hostility of many people who object to the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States (and he continues to divide opinion, almost diametrically). Also, consider the anger and hostility of some prominent people in the Remain and Leave camps in Britain's European Union referendum in 2016.

We can believe that we are right, while at the same time accepting that someone else, who has a different point of view, is not necessarily wrong!

We should be able to defend our position in a gentle, unhostile, and friendly way. While we may be passionately and sincerely convinced we are right, can we not also allow someone else to believe passionately and sincerely that he or she is right? Does it always have to end in confrontation? Surely, sometimes we can listen rather than assert.

We need to have the wisdom to avoid getting into an argument with someone whose position is absolutely fixed and who won't give an inch. But also, we need the wisdom to know when an individual is prepared to listen to another point of view, and to be able to express our position in a sincere but caring manner. Admitting we are wrong is one of the hardest things for human beings to do, so let's be gentle with ourselves and with others who are faced with that same problem.

Love is expressed in different ways, one of which is giving others space and time to change at their pace, not ours. God sets the example for us by being patient and loving us constantly, even when we are mistaken.

So, are we up to the challenge of loving others enough to allow them to have a different position or belief to us?

We may be right but they might not be wrong!

This article was first published in the June 2017 issue of *Because* magazine (www.because.uk.com). Reprinted with permission.



This 'I'm right, you're wrong' attitude happens often when celebrities divorce and get into a disagreement about their property, finances, or worst of all, children. Two people who once professed to love each

other, each believe that they are right and their former partner is wrong!

Sadly, even churches can do it when they insist their doctrines or beliefs are right and those of other churches are wrong.

How can we, as individuals, avoid falling into the trap of believing we are always right? And also, avoid alienating family, friends, and others when we defend our own beliefs so strongly?

The answer is in our headline above!

other for fifteen years. Both were stubbornly convinced they were right and neither would give an inch to resolve their differences.

I also had a close friendship with someone until I got promoted and he did not. We never had a heated argument about it, but his anger at the promotion of someone he considered to be less capable than himself fractured our close relationship.

Sadly, the 'I am right and you are wrong' attitude creates barriers that

If the human race discovered other intelligent life, would the discovery change us?



By Ian Woodley

Recently I watched a science TV programme which visited a radio telescope that searches for signals from alien civilisations. In his enthusiasm for this project the presenter commented: 'If alien life was discovered, it would change everything'.

Without thinking, I immediately responded back to my TV: 'Would it?' Now, this presenter is not alone: many people believe that, if the human race discovered aliens, then our outlook would completely change overnight. Suddenly, humanity would work together towards a new cause, a new purpose—to reach out and relate to this different life form.

My question, however, still stands. Would such a discovery change our behaviour? When the Americas were 'discovered' in 1492, Europe encountered new cultures and civilisations. This did put our world in a new light, which Europeans then decided to exploit and conquer. Many science fiction films create

An alien hope

a fear of contacting alien life—as those beings then try to enslave us, or worse, eat us! But maybe these films have got it wrong. Perhaps the aliens are the ones who should be afraid!

I do understand why these scientists hope to change the hearts and minds of humanity. They recognise that the world can't go on like this. As I write, tensions between the United States and North Korea appear to be worsening. Could the frightening idea of a nuclear conflict be back on the world's agenda? Given this, the desire to make humanity focus on something 'bigger than ourselves' does make sense.

Yet, my question continues to haunt me. Why would the discovery of other intelligent life change us? If being alone in the universe doesn't prompt us to stand together, why would finding alien civilisations make any difference?

The question, of course, is not new. All periods of history have been full of wars, started for all sorts of reasons. Around 2,700 years ago, a man called Isaiah lamented over the state of the world: 'The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths' (Isaiah 59.8).

Interestingly, this same Isaiah was not all doom and gloom. He looked forward to a time when the world would see the arrival of someone he called the 'Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9.6). Is it possible? Could someone arrive on this planet that could make such a difference?

Some 700 years after Isaiah, a man called Paul picked up this train of thought. But instead of looking forward, he declared that this Prince of Peace had already arrived! Paul stated that Jesus Christ had brought peace into the world. More than that, he insisted that this Jesus is the only

source of true peace and hope for the world.

Given that the last 2,000 years have seen no halt to our warmongering ways, perhaps Paul's pronouncement of peace seems very premature. After all, World War One was fought between nations that called themselves Christian. They all seized the opportunity to heap death and destruction on each other. Perhaps, though, the problem is that not many have really taken Jesus seriously.

In 2016, a project called Breakthrough Starshot was announced that hopes to explore the stars and search for alien life. It seeks to raise \$100 million; among the project's backers is the British physicist Professor Stephen Hawking. I find this project very exciting. The endeavour of discovering more about another solar system would be wonderful. However, can we really say that the same level of resource has been put into proving whether Jesus can be the true source of peace?

Hope is a fragile commodity. A project that offers to supply the world with hope is always worth investigating. I look forward to seeing whether Breakthrough Starshot ever becomes a reality. The downside is that the spacecraft will take 20 years to reach its goal—and it hasn't even been developed yet!

But while we wait, we can test out whether Jesus is worth looking into. The records of his life are freely available on the internet and the good old fashioned book of his life can be bought very cheaply. So, why not check out whether Paul was right, that Jesus can be our source of hope for today.

This article was first published in the June 2017 issue of *Because* magazine (www.because.uk.com). Reprinted with permission.

Who do you think you are?



By Roy Lawrence

Here am I, writing these words. There are you, reading them. We know we exist, or we could not do either of these things. But precisely who and what are we? And what about all the people we see around us? Who and what are they? Just what is involved in being the human entities which we are?

A chemist might answer: analysis shows that you are mostly made up of water, about ten gallons of it. There is a lot of carbon in you, too. In fact, enough to fill about 9,000 pencils. There is a quantity of fat that would make seven bars of soap, and if you are overweight, there could be much more. Another of your ingredients is phosphorus. It could put heads on more than 2,000 matches. And you contain enough lime to whitewash your garden shed. There is enough iron in your body to make a medium-sized nail, and some magnesium and sulphur, too.

All the chemical bits and pieces in us are worth less than a day's pay.

Yet, of course, there is much more to you and me than that. The fact that we can ask the question 'Who am I?' shows that along with the elements which make up our bodies, there is the mysterious factor of intellect. We are 'thinking beings'. Is that what shows us the essence of our humanity? Do we agree with the philosopher René Descartes, who wrote *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am)?

A chemical compendium? A thinking machine? We are both of these things, but we have not come anywhere near describing ourselves yet. What about our willpower? We would be nowhere without it. Without your willpower you might not have got out of bed this morning. We depend on willpower, if we are to see to life's necessary chores. In fact, without willpower there would be chaos.

But there's more. So far we have not mentioned the emotions and feelings which are so much a part of us. They colour our life at every level, and yet they are different from thought

and willpower. In addition there are individual aptitudes. For instance, from a very young age I found I could sit down and play the piano. It was an ability that was just in me. There are various things which I can do, but others cannot. To compensate there are all kinds of things which you can do and I cannot. And we have still only scraped the surface of our human nature.

And what about that indefinable quality which we sometimes call 'spirituality'? What about the capacity to have mystical experiences, which are probably much more common than we usually recognise?

The universe is a mysterious place and nothing in it is more mysterious than you and I. The more we think about ourselves, the more we should come to realise we are walking miracles. In the words of the biblical Psalm 139, we are 'fearfully and wonderfully made'. Moreover, each one of us is different. We are not made on a production line. We are all amazing in an individual way. You

are uniquely amazing; I am uniquely amazing.

But wait a minute! Though each one of us is a miracle, we are flawed miracles. Even when our powers of thought and will and spirituality lead us to know exactly what we should do and what we should be, why is it that we often end up by doing and being something completely different? For instance, most of humankind agrees that peace is desirable and that war should be avoided; that differences should be resolved sensibly and reasonably; and that it is best if people and nations live together in a spirit of mutual concern and respect. Yet what actually happens? World Wars One and Two happened; the Korean War happened; Vietnam happened; the New York twin towers disaster happened; terrorism happens; human rights are abused; men, women, and children are subjected to all sorts of horror. We talk peace, but we make war. And we do it decade after decade, century after century. It is true that we become increasingly clever, but that often just means that our fallibility becomes increasingly dangerous, and our weaponry becomes increasingly terrifying.

At a personal and individual level we have good intentions, but even our best intentions and resolutions often amount to nothing. If we become aware of a fault or a weakness and resolve to have done with it, it often continues to dog our steps. 'The best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley', writes Robert Burns. 'The road to hell', says the proverb, 'is paved with good intentions'. If we are to be honest about our human nature, if we are to see it in the round, it is a very mixed bag indeed. The undoubted wonder of human nature is tarnished by faults and follies, by waywardness and sometimes by downright wickedness. So, bearing all this in mind, who do you think you are?

The psalmist David in the Bible asked this very question: 'When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?'¹

Later, a New Testament writer quoted this passage² and added

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.³

Jesus, very God in heaven, came down to earth to die for each and every human being, so that we could have salvation and be brought to glory.

Whoever you are, you were created with infinite care, and you are loved very dearly. God gave his son Jesus to you and for you, and God calls you to be with him for eternity.

This is the answer to the question with which we began. It is an answer which can make a difference to each one of us. If everyone on earth were to accept it and make it their own, it would transform the whole world.

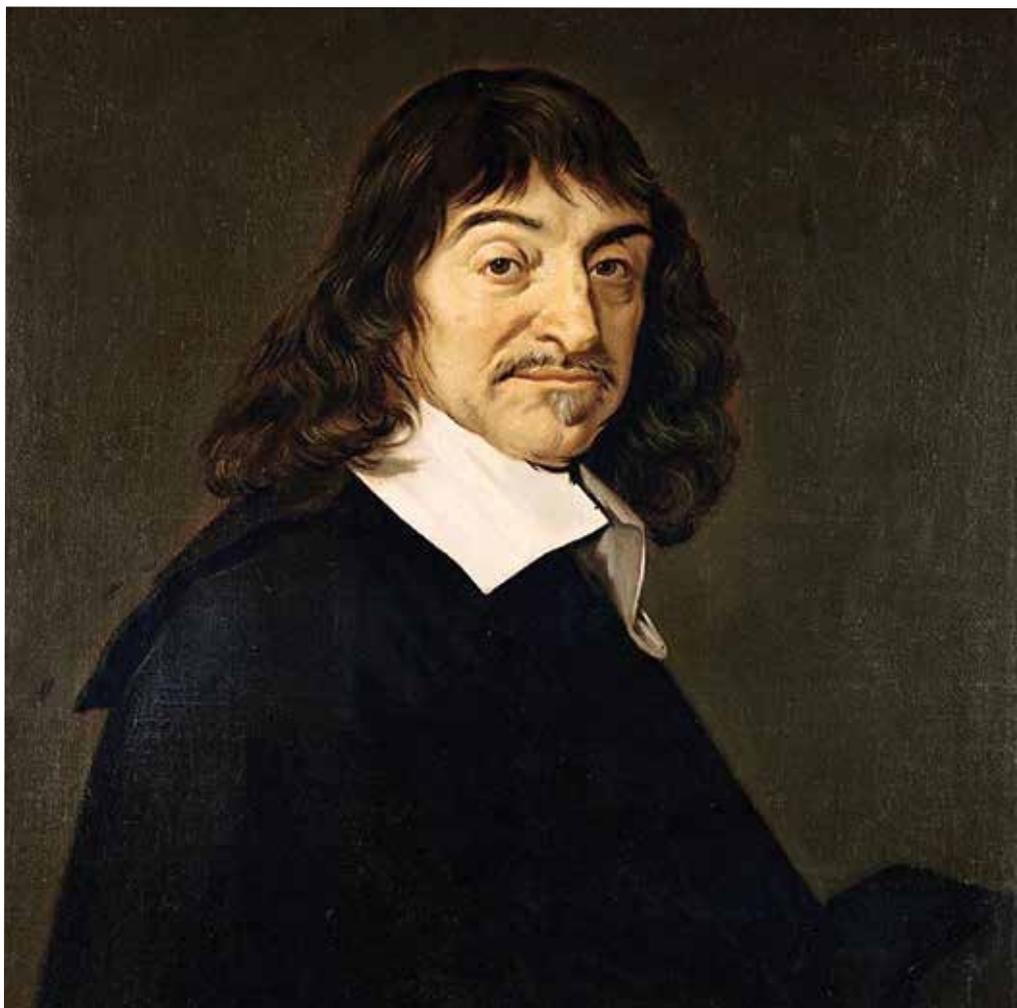
Notes

¹ Psalm 8:3-4

² Hebrews 2:5-6

³ Hebrews 2:9-10

Canon Roy Lawrence has spent most of his life in the ministry working in Anglican churches in the North of England, as well as serving as a hospital chaplain. A well-known Christian writer and broadcaster, Roy has authored fourteen books. This article was originally published in the Spring/Summer 2016 edition of *The Plain Truth* (<http://www.plain-truth.org.uk>). Reprinted with permission.



The philosopher René Descartes wrote cogito ergo sum (I think, therefore I am).

Tell her you love her

By Rusty Wright

Recently, when my wife, Meg, was dying of cancer, a long-time friend offered some advice that I'm really glad I heeded.

'Hutch' Hutchins told me I should write a tribute, expressing what she's meant to me and how much I love her. I should frame it, give it to her, and read it to her personally.

Meg was on home hospice care after a three-and-a-half-year struggle with ovarian cancer. I was her primary caregiver—a demanding, 24/7 responsibility—and was reeling with exhaustion. But his advice clicked. I read the tribute to her on 21 May 2016, our 16th anniversary.



Meg Korpi (1952–2016)
Wonderful wife, committed partner, faithful friend

It had a very positive effect—calming, soothing. She seemed at peace, contented, with brightened spirits. It was one of her last lucid days before dying a month later.

Tribute to a rare jewel

Meg was a rare jewel. In her wedding vows, she had said she wanted me to feel like 'the most blessed man alive to be married to her'. I did. In this tribute, I told her that in her, God gave me:

- ☆ a gorgeous bundle of fun, adventure, character, and faith,
- ☆ a godly woman who walks closely with Him,
- ☆ a faithful friend—my very best friend—and companion,
- ☆ a keen mind to help me think through life's sometimes perplexing issues,
- ☆ a wise counsellor with sound advice at crucial junctures,
- ☆ a determined spirit to prompt me to reconsider my course when needed,
- ☆ a sweet lover,
- ☆ a fun woman, whose sense of humour brings delight.

I love to laugh with you! Thank you so, so much for loving me unconditionally; for honouring and respecting me; for caring and encouraging; for listening to my heart; for sharing my joys and hurts; for looking out for my interests; for being there through good times and bad; for facing life with me as long as we both shall live.

I love you very much, and am eternally grateful to be your husband.

Lots of laughter

We loved to laugh. As world travellers, sometimes we laughed about language translation complexities.

Speaking through an interpreter, 60 Minutes television veteran Mike Wallace once asked former Russian president Boris Yeltsin if he weren't being a bit 'thin skinned' in his sensitivity to media criticism. The interpreter goofed, telling Yeltsin that Wallace had said: 'You are a thick-skinned hippopotamus'.

Shortly after we married, a speaker at a Miami meeting I attended told of efforts to translate a biblical love poem into the language of a Kenyan tribe. The phrase, 'Your beauty is like that of the lily', did not connect with the rural East Africans, for whom lilies were mere cattle fodder. Their culture highly esteemed the cow, not the flower. On the advice of tribesmen, the translators rendered the romantic phrase 'You are a black cow in a herd of spotted cattle'.

The speaker, in relating this tale, suggested I use that compliment on my new bride, without explanation. Since Meg was returning to California from Philadelphia that evening, I left the cryptic greeting on our home answering machine. A few hours later, my Miami phone rang. Her first words: 'And you are a thick-skinned hippopotamus!'

Most important lesson

At her memorial celebration, I presented all this, then briefly noted a conviction we shared deeply, the most important thing I've ever learned. I'm indebted in many ways to my Jewish friends and their heritage for it.



Meg and Rusty's wedding day 2000 on a Mount Hermon bridge

One ancient Hebrew book describes Job, who, despite his slew of troubles, affirmed: 'I know that my Redeemer lives' (Job 19.25). That gave him hope.

A sceptic in my youth, I didn't believe my Redeemer lived. I thought it was a fairy tale. Then, my first year at Duke, I heard a lecture about Jesus' resurrection evidences, given by Bob Prall, who later became my mentor. Jesus was executed and declared dead, wrapped like a mummy, placed in a tomb. A huge stone covered the tomb's entrance, which Roman soldiers guarded. Most of his disciples fled in fear.

Sunday morning, the stone was rolled away, the tomb was empty, but the grave clothes were still in place. Jesus appeared alive. Frightened disciples were willing to become martyrs because they believed he had risen.

Issue 27

Attempts to explain this away didn't work for me. The guard was too powerful, the stone too heavy, the disciples too timid. I realised it was true. Jesus had successfully predicted his own resurrection. If

I could trust him in areas like this where I could test him, I had grounds for trusting him in areas where I couldn't test him, such as eternal life and how to obtain it. He said: 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die' (John 11.25).

Comforting? True?

Is it comforting to me that I'll see Meg again and spend eternity with God? Absolutely. But it's only comforting because I believe the evidence also indicates it's true. If it weren't true, it wouldn't be comforting.

I realise this is a controversial subject, and you may not agree. If you've not examined the resurrection evidences, may Meg and I gently and politely encourage you to take a look? Lots of good books and websites present them. Our own site, which Meg designed and built, also presents them. Go to www.RustyWright.com.

We know our Redeemer lives. We hope you can as well.

And...I love you, Sweetheart.

Rusty Wright is an author and lecturer who has spoken on six continents. He holds Bachelor of Science (psychology) and Master of Theology degrees from Duke and Oxford universities, respectively. www.RustyWright.com



Meg nuzzling a rescue horse.

This artist concept depicts NASA Voyager 1 spacecraft entering interstellar space. Interstellar space is dominated by the plasma, or ionized gas, that was ejected by the death of nearby giant stars millions of years ago.

What are you sending out?

By Richard Fowler

I would like to talk to you about something which is at this moment travelling at a speed of approximately 63,000 kilometres per hour! Not only that but it is the furthest man-made object from earth—some 20 billion kilometres away!

What am I talking about? Voyager 1, a spacecraft launched in 1977 to explore Jupiter and Saturn.

In its 40-year journey Voyager 1 has passed the heliosphere (the bubble-like region encompassing the solar system) and has now reached interstellar space, the region between the stars.

Now, when this colossus of human endeavour was planned, someone asked the question: what if it finds intelligent life? Or, on the contrary, what if intelligent life finds it? This got NASA thinking. So, in anticipation of such an event someone suggested

a bright idea: why don't we load it up with an audio-visual device with messages from and about earth?

But, of course, this begs the question: exactly what information do you put on the record to represent earth and its global culture?

After, I'm sure, a few coffee-injected meetings, it was settled. It was decided the record would have greetings in over 55 languages, pictures of Earth's life forms, various scientific knowledge, and recordings of pieces of music and earth sounds. I can just picture it, an alien listening to the dulcet tones of waves crashing onto a shore.

This was earth's attempt to send out information from our part of the Milky Way neighbourhood to represent its collective community—us!

But, if we stop for a moment, there is something for us to consider in this astronomical adventure: life is out there! In fact, it is all around us! It's there when we step out of the front door, when we drive on the roads, and when we're in our workplaces.

I may have just stated the breathtakingly obvious, but there is a lesson that Voyager 1 illuminates, which I think is worth bringing back to earth! What is that lesson? It is the fact that, as each of us travels through our celestial surroundings, we too are giving out an audio-visual representation of our personal world. Through our interactions with those around us, our words and actions tell a story about us. Simply put, whatever we do and say gives out information to be processed by other intelligent beings—humans—and this will define what kind of person people think we are!

So the question is: what are you sending out?

It is amazing that each of us will potentially meet a whopping 80,000 people in our lifetime. That equates to interacting with three new people a day. So what information do we give to those three people? It is estimated that we speak enough in one week to fill a book. What kind of books are we writing for those 21

new people? What is our life saying about us?

Surely communicating who and what we are to other intelligent life forms is not rocket science. It certainly does not take a NASA mission into interstellar space. It just takes three things, and they will not cost you a cent!

First, smile! We communicate primarily through the face. It can say a lot about us, so let's not underestimate the power each of us holds in our 43 facial muscles. I'm not suggesting you go around looking like the Cheshire Cat, but cracking the occasional smile, which lifts the cheek muscles a little, actually makes you look more attractive, and will have the effect of making others smile and feel better. Try it!

Second, say 'Hello'. Actually, for that matter, just say something. You

don't know the conversations you are missing. Not speaking to people makes us less human. On one international flight, I had just taken my seat and was making myself comfortable when a man—much bigger than I—suggested I was in his seat. I decided not to argue the matter and moved quickly. As I positioned myself in my new seat next to a lady, I hoped, secretly, that she would not talk to me. It was a long flight and exiting conversations is always difficult when you are sitting next to someone. And then I heard those words which seem to be vanishing from public discourse: 'How are you?' My peace had been disrupted, but what I had not anticipated was that for the next two hours I would enjoy a conversation with a fascinating lady who shared so many of my passions and hopes.

Third, make room for one act of kindness a day. Before I sat down to write this article, something interesting happened on my weekly food trip to the supermarket. I happened to be on crutches at the time after an ankle injury, and as I 'crutched' down an aisle in the shop a man caught my eye, smiled, and said the heartiest 'Hello, how are you?' I immediately thought: 'Oh no! Someone who knows me but I can't remember who they are'. But as I scanned his face it dawned upon me that I had never met this man! His response to my obvious confusion was simply 'I know what it is like—your world changes'. It was a spontaneous expression of empathy, as he too had evidently been acquainted with my metallic arm extensions, courtesy of the Health Service. It's amazing how kindness can have an impact: I'm now writing about him and he has no idea.

Before we end...

The list of images that went up with Voyager 1 was a pretty comprehensive collage of human experiences. I think if intelligent life did come across the images, they (the aliens) would put earth on their bucket list of places to visit. After all, who would not want to visit such an interesting and beautiful place? But my worry would be whether they would get all that our 'brochure' suggested. You see, there were no pictures of what has characterised human history probably more than anything else: war, fighting, and division. Perhaps rightly, the images were a sanitised expression of what earth was, and is, all about—the best bits.

I would like to think that when we communicate with others, we are communicating those best bits. Who knows, maybe something, or someone, is watching?

This article was first published in the January 2016 issue of *Because* magazine (www.because.uk.com). Reprinted with permission.



Suzanne Dodd, Voyager project manager at NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab, holds a replica of the golden record carried on NASA's Voyager 1 spacecraft on Thursday, 12 September 2013 at NASA Headquarters in Washington. Voyager 1 is officially the first human-made object to venture into interstellar space carrying the Golden Record intended to communicate a story of our world to extra-terrestrials.

Visit our website:

www.insidelife.org.nz

to access the articles previously published in **Inside Life**

Important questions covered in previous issues of *Inside Life*:

- ❖ Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem?
- ❖ The Bible—Holy or Holey?
- ❖ What's It All About, Alfie?
- ❖ Why Does God Allow Suffering?
- ❖ Is Death the End?
- ❖ Jesus Christ—Superstar or Superstition?
- ❖ Who Are the Happiest People on Earth?



Back copies of these issues are available free of charge from
Inside Life, PO Box 304055, Hauraki Corner, Auckland 0750



Yes, please send me a **FREE** subscription to **Inside Life**

Please send your request to: **Inside Life**, PO Box 304055, Hauraki Corner, Auckland 0750

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please include back copies on the following topics:

