

# heartless cynics

working for Jesus  
the resurrection  
service to all

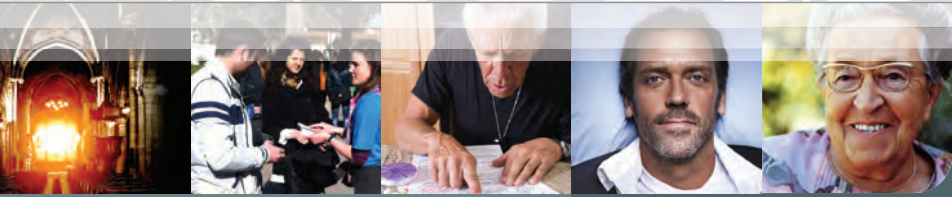
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the student journal of the christian medical fellowship



plus: sin, cross-word, Corrie ten Boom, Albania, what do you believe?

# NUCLEUS



A company limited by guarantee. Registered in England no. 6949436  
Registered Charity no. 1131658  
Registered office: 6 Marshalsea Road, London SE1 1HL

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**Cover:** HOUSE / Pictured: Hugh Laurie as Dr. Gregory House -- NBC Photo: Art Streiber / NBC Universal photo / Fox Broadcasting Co.  
**Design:** S2 Design & Advertising  
**Printers:** Partridge & Print Ltd.

**International distribution**  
If you are the leader of an overseas Christian medical group and would be interested in receiving multiple copies of *Nucleus* please contact the editor

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## CONTENTS

- 3 editorial  
*Laurence Crutchlow*
- 4 christian, what do you believe?  
*Dimity Grant-Frost*
- 6 our beliefs: our sinfulness  
*Giles Cattermole*
- 9 albanian adventures  
*Sarah Tresidder*
- 10 our values: service to all  
*Laurence Crutchlow*
- 14 apologetics 6: scripture and the resurrection  
*Chris Knight*
- 19 book reviews  
*Laurence Crutchlow*
- 20 studying and working for Jesus  
*Giles Cattermole*
- 25 cynicism  
*Alex Bunn*
- 32 heroes + heretics: Corrie ten Boom  
*Alexandra Roche*
- 35 cross-word  
*Lactometer*



**A**utumn may seem a strange time to publish a piece on 'cynicism'. Medical school lecture theatres are full to bursting in those early days when freshers attend absolutely every lecture without fail; the wards are covered in students with shiny new stethoscopes seeking their first patients to clerk, and FY1s are delighting in the first pay cheque received the month before.

Contrast this with January. Spare seats in lectures when freshers decide that bed is more inviting than a 45 minute journey to hear yet more incomprehensible immunology; frustrated clinical students having the third coffee of the day when yet another emergency leads to cancelled teaching; jaded FY1s having worked both Christmas and New Year because of inflexible rotas already planning an escape to Australia after FY2.

The transition from bright-eyed and enthusiastic new student to hardened cynic happens fast – and is rarely noticed because everyone around us is doing the same.

It is not just medicine that makes us cynical. Just since the last edition of *Nucleus*, we've seen further moves to try and legalise assisted suicide, worsening persecution of Christians in the Middle East, and continued conflict in many other places. Does anything we do really make any difference when things continue to go wrong? Giles Cattermole's article on *our beliefs* (page 6) reminds us that in a world where all are fallen and sinful, we should not be surprised at problems.

Sometimes cynicism is best cured by reading about an inspiring individual; *heroes + heretics* introduces Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch evangelist with an inspirational story (page 32). Stories from overseas such as Sarah Tresidder's recent trip to Albania (page 9) can also inspire us and blow away the cobwebs of cynicism.

At other times cynicism is dispelled by the manner in which we approach our work. *Studying and working for Jesus* (page 20) shows how things might look when we seek to do everything 'as working for the Lord'; *our values* (page 10) further explores how we can treat patients as he would, this time in the area of equality. Light relief can also help – and the cross-word is to be found on page 35.

Surely the ultimate antidote to cynicism must be to consider again the central truths of our faith. *Christian, what do you believe?* (page 4) uses the ancient Apostles' Creed to remind us of the amazing truth of the gospel, stunningly displayed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Chris Knight (page 14) helps us to think about how we might argue for the historical reality of the resurrection to friends.

Alex Bunn's article on *cynicism* (page 25) draws together all these things; as well as diagnosing cynicism, it offers an urgent prescription not only for treatment, but even better for prevention: 'Jesus' light has overcome the darkness, and the future is bright.' ■

# Christian, what do you believe?

Dimitry Grant-Frost looks at the Apostles' Creed<sup>1</sup>

This question is the customary opening to the recitation of the Apostles' Creed – the ancient declaration of Christian belief chanted by congregants in churches worldwide as a reminder to one another of the central truths of God's glorious gospel. It's a good question, and one we, who call ourselves Christians, would do well to ask ourselves on a regular (daily?!) basis. As a new academic year begins, some of you will be picking up a copy of *Nucleus* for the first time, whilst others, further into your studies or practice will know it better (the crossword is on page 35, by the way). Some of you will be new to the family of God, whilst others will have put your faith in Christ long before any decision to enter healthcare. Any way, it is a sensible and a wonderful thing to remind ourselves of the truths by which we live.

## **we believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

From the atom to the elephant, the planted foxglove to the expansive nebulae, from oceans to zygotes, we believe in a God who made everything we see and that everything we see in creation points us back to him. The Lord crowned man and woman as the pinnacle of his creative prowess, giving them authority to steward his creation.

It's our privilege as healthcare professionals, under the sovereign hand of our perfect king, to minister through our work to the very image of God. Far from believing that 'we are our brains' we can be confident, as we explore the workings of the body, that we are dealing with immeasurably complex and spirited creatures made for and loved by God, and that the wonders of scientific study do nothing to challenge his supremacy and rule. 'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good' (Genesis 1:31a). Be confident in enjoying your study of that which God has made.





Dimity Grant-Frost is CMF Nurse Student Staffworker

**we believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

The world is indeed governed by a wonderfully creative and almighty God, but there is a terrible truth to which the good news of the life and death of Jesus points us: all mankind and creation have been bound to the effects of sin. Without Christ we are dead in our trespasses, under its curse, and destined for judgment. You won't have to look far to see that this is true: the lives of our patients will point us to this world's pain, sorrow, rebellion, disease and death. We will ourselves experience these pains and inevitably and regularly be part of the problem, even as we try to help and care for others.

And yet there is a great and wondrous hope: God did not abandon the world that turned its back on him. Rather, he entered into it, overturning 'the laws of science', showing 'nature' who's boss, as he grew in a virgin's womb, performed innumerable healing miracles and returned to life from the death that took our judgment on himself. Greater than all these things was the love that drove him towards even the worst of sinners. He gave himself up to betrayal, abuse, insults, beatings and death for our sake. At the cross, his sinless life and sacrificial death reconciled us to God, bringing to us the most important kind of healing there is. The gospel is better than any medicine we will ever offer.

**we believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection**

**of the body, and the life everlasting.**

Jesus bought us freedom from condemnation and a future without the tears that this life brings. Christians believe a new heaven and a new earth will one day stand where our present world does. The promise of eternal joy in God is our source of hope for the future. But what of this life? Why practise medicine or nursing – why bother with the stresses and struggles of long hours, pressured resources, failed treatment and unhelpful colleagues when we feel so weak and could simply wait for him to come? In his lavish love, the Lord has sealed us in the present, even now, with the Holy Spirit and made us part of the worldwide body of believers (that's what the holy *catholic* church bit means!).

The Spirit empowers, counsels and changes us, so that we are daily being renewed in preparation for the new bodies we will receive when the Lord returns. The same love that drove Jesus to die for us, gives us the strength and courage now to live obedient, self-sacrificing, God-honouring lives for him as we receive his grace moment by moment. The staggering effect of Christ's compassion is the power and freedom to care as recklessly and selflessly as he did. And the church is the place where we are built-up in our faith, learn to love others and where wonderful change can occur within the messy, blood-bought safety of the family of God. All this has been given to us because of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and rule. Why bother with the laborious hours, the difficult relationships, the failures and rejections that lie ahead? Because God did and it has changed the world.

**Amen! What a hope! ■**


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# our beliefs: our sinfulness

Giles Cattermole examines humanity's sinfulness

*'Since the fall, the whole of humankind is sinful and guilty, so that everyone is subject to God's wrath and condemnation.'*



**S**in, guilt and divine judgment are not popular in polite society; they're not things that people like to talk about. Richard Dawkins thinks Christianity a 'nasty little preoccupation' with 'sin sin sin sin sin sin'.<sup>1</sup> If you don't believe in a good and personal God who cares about his creation, then you're unlikely to believe in sin, guilt or judgment either. A non-existent God can't be offended, can't declare us guilty, can't judge us. Instead, sin becomes just a wrong thing we do to each other, or even just something a bit naughty but fun. Guilt becomes just a subjective feeling, and the only judgments are those we ourselves make of others.

And the idea that everyone is inherently sinful is even less acceptable. Dawkins says it's 'morally obnoxious'.<sup>2</sup> Many people like to think that human beings are essentially good, even if they sometimes do make mistakes.

This statement in CMF's doctrinal basis is radically at odds with the world's understanding of humanity, and profoundly unpopular. So why is it there, and what does it mean?

It's there because this is what the Bible teaches. Quoting Psalms 14 and 53, Paul writes in Romans 3:10-12: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.' This sinfulness is universal, and though often expressed in unloving actions to others, it's primarily a rejection of God and his word. It's a failure to love him with all our heart, soul and might (Deuteronomy 6:5), as well as a failure to love our neighbour as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18). After David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband, he realised his sin



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wasn't just about the devastation he'd wreaked on them, but it was an offence against a holy God: 'Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me' (Psalm 51:4-5). David knows his very nature is sinful, and this is true of all people since Adam's fall. 'Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned' (Romans 5:12). Paul and David know that a perfect, holy God cannot tolerate sin; he is right to judge sinners, and the penalty is death. So the human race is objectively guilty before God; we're born in sin, our lives are full of sin, we're dead in sin. Like the rest of mankind, 'we were by nature deserving of wrath' (Ephesians 2:3).

### doing evil and good?

It is our human nature to sin, to rebel against God, to fail perfectly to love him and others. So by nature God is angry at our sinfulness, we are under sentence of death. This nature, reinforced by the evil of the world around us and the scheming of the devil, works itself out in the multitude of sinful actions we commit day by day, hour by hour. This doesn't mean that human beings aren't capable of wonderful acts of truth, beauty or love; the image of God in us is shockingly damaged, but it isn't lost. We still recognise what is good and what is evil (Romans 2:14-16). But even the best human actions are spoiled by sin; even at our best we are still under God's judgment. His standard is perfection; no-one is holy as God is holy (Leviticus 11:44, 1 Peter 1:16). However good we think our actions are, they're not good enough because they are all tainted by sin.

### punishment now and eternally

And the judgment we face is not just the spiritual death of separation from God now, and then eternally in hell. God's judgment on sin began when Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden into a cursed world of pain and suffering (Genesis 3:16-19). This is now a world of broken relationships, of futility, of disease, and ultimately, of physical death. Much of the punishment we face for our sin is seen as God hands us over to the consequences of our own actions; to a shameful and vicious spiral of ever more depraved behaviour, our minds debased and our bodies degraded as we are filled with all kinds of wickedness (Romans 1:18-32).

### what has all this to do with medicine?

Firstly, it's why there is medicine! Disease is a result of the fall; it's part of God's curse on our world. Disease is not 'natural', it's not how God designed things and it's not how things will be in his new creation. When Jesus came to defeat sin and death, one of the ways he showed this was by healing the sick. Not just because he's God and he could, but because all sickness will one day be removed. It has no right to be in God's presence. But although disease is part of the punishment people face in this earth, an individual's disease does not necessarily result from their own sinful actions. Some behaviours obviously have medical consequences, but when eighteen people were killed by trauma in Luke 13, Jesus was absolutely clear that they were not worse sinners than anyone else. Instead, such suffering is a reminder that the world is not as it should be, it is damaged by our sin, and we all need to repent.

Secondly, medicine is not the means of salvation. It is good to relieve the suffering of others; God has commanded us to love others, and Jesus demonstrated this compassion in healing the sick. But even the best medicine is spiritually just symptom control. Disease is a symptom of our underlying heart problem of sin (Mark 7:21-23). Medicine cannot remove our sin, its condemnation or its eternal punishment. Our guilt is not a psychological pathology that we need to escape; it's a forensic objective reality that needs to be forgiven. Medical technology cannot perfect humanity despite the best efforts of the trans-humanists. And the tragedy of secular medical ethics is that the world's answer to our ethical dilemmas is so often 'autonomy'. Yet autonomy, self-rule, got us into this mess in the first place! It's the assertion of self over God that lies at the heart of our problem.

Thirdly, we need to be aware of the corrupting power of sin to ruin what is good in our own medicine. It is so easy to become arrogant and elitist. Medical school is highly competitive, society puts doctors on a pedestal, and we can end up believing the lie that we're better than others. We can manipulate or demean colleagues to achieve our ends. We can fall into dehumanising technical medicine that prioritises targets or procedures over people. Patients become nameless cases or bed numbers who exist to further our learning and advance our career. We can be greedy for money or status or publications or diplomas.

But even if we avoid all that (and we won't), we can fall for the more subtle lie that makes medicine our idol. We can do this with any good thing God gives us: marriage, friendships, our ministry to others. We end up worshipping the thing, rather than the God who gives it to us. Our medicine is a gift God has given us for now;

we are to use it to his glory. We must not allow it to come before God. One day he might give us another calling; perhaps through our own illness or exam failure or for whatever reason: do not resent the loss of your medical career, do not be angry with God for taking it from you. Perhaps your plans for your medical career don't work out, perhaps you don't get to do the groundbreaking research you thought God had called you to, perhaps you don't get to build the clinic in Africa you thought you would, perhaps you don't end up as a GP partner or consultant. Don't let these destroy you. None of these should be our ultimate goal; our chief end is to glorify God.

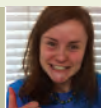
So lastly, this doctrine of sin will keep our focus on the good news of Jesus. The more we understand the enormity of our sinfulness, the more we will understand the vastness of God's love and grace to us in the gospel. The more we will glorify God. Awareness of our sin keeps us humble; there is nothing we can do to make ourselves right with God, we were dead in our sin (Ephesians 2:1-10). Doctors need the gospel as much as the drug addict they're treating; grace never allows us to look down on others. And we'll never forget that the most important need people have is not medicine; it's Christ. We will want to practise real whole-person medicine that recognises we are not just body, but body and spirit, and that to care truly for someone's spirit means pointing them to Jesus. And we will always see our medicine in the context of this bigger picture of living and speaking for Jesus Christ, bringing glory only to him. ■

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# albanian adventures



Sarah Tresidder is a fourth year medical student in Southampton

Sarah Tresidder reports on a medical mission week in Albania

**C**skemi. That's 'Hi' in Albanian - the first (and very useful!) word I was taught by the lovely lady next to me on the plane. Thankfully, Albanians speak impeccable English so my limited language skills went untested for the next seven days.

I'd first heard about the students in Albania via local doctors in Southampton. I was amazed by stories of Christian students boldly refusing to pay a bribe to pass finals (and so having to retake their final year twice). Southampton CMF student group were recently twinned with the Albanian equivalent BSKSH at Tirana medical school, and we'd had some email contact. Intercalation this year has afforded a little more flexibility, and I jumped at the opportunity to get out there this spring.

Each year the BSKSH group run a week-long mission. There are three days of lunchtime medical seminars on campus, followed by a four day evangelistic conference titled 'How to save a life: Christ in Medicine', at the seaside resort of Durres. Seminars gave an opportunity to promote the conference, as well as serving the students with top quality teaching. American doctors Al Weir and Mark Johnston have come over for the week for around 20 years, and Alex Bunn from CMF more recently.

Great food, comfortable rooms and a packed and varied programme made the conference an easy invite to non-Christian friends, and it was hugely encouraging to see about 30 Albanian Christian students and around 80 of their non-Christian friends. Albania was the world's first



atheist state, and the attempt to stamp out any faith group during communism in the late 20th century was very thorough. Many of the Christians I met were the first in their families to come to faith, often through local missionary work. Several came to faith at the conference in previous years. It was exciting to hear how they had been disciplined through the BSKSH group meetings. Being the only Christian in their families is often tough.

A highlight of the week was the friendship I had with some of the fifth year girls. They were lovingly hospitable and a lot of fun. I was surprised at how similar our sense of humour was; they even love our slapstick comedian Norman Wisdom! It was genuinely a wonderful privilege to see these women sharing Christ with their friends, a couple of whom are now following Christ themselves.

It was a tiring and packed week, with just one humiliating moment. Apparently my English accent demanded The Beatles at the karaoke, and I was literally dragged to the microphone. Being taught Albanian dancing later that evening made up for this! The more competitive of us also enjoyed beach games, basketball and American football.

Meeting these students, who are so excited about what Christ has done and how that changes the way they study and prepare to be doctors, has spurred me on and humbled me. Having met them I'm even more compelled to pray for them. Would you pray for them and others like them, too? =

# our values: service to all

Laurence Crutchlow examines biblical equality in medicine

*'To serve our patients according to their healthcare need without partiality or discrimination on any basis'*





Laurence Crutchlow is a London GP and CMF Associate Head of Student Ministries.

Our first reaction to this fourth CMF value might be that it is so obvious as not to be worth stating. Surely the recent Equalities Act (2010), frequent 'Equality and Diversity' training, and repeated political talk about 'health inequalities' render this value uncontroversial?

Although almost all doctors of any faith or none might assent to this value at first glance, it is easy for our actions to fall short of it, or for exceptions to be justified.

It is also important to think about 'fair' and 'unfair' discrimination. For example, a medical school is (and surely should be) discriminatory over who passes finals. Do we really want qualified doctors who think that beta-blockers are a good treatment for asthma, or who cannot recognise signs of infarction on an ECG? Such discrimination is surely fair and reasonable; but to decide that someone could not be a doctor because they are a woman is clearly 'unfair' discrimination.

## is there discrimination in this 'equal' world?

There are a number of possible situations where patients may not be treated equally. More obvious discrimination on grounds of gender or race is, at least in theory, rare; but debate continues over whether the elderly receive (or should receive) equal treatment. NHS guidelines ration certain procedures on grounds that may discriminate – classically joint replacement surgery for the obese, or IVF treatment for smokers. Such restrictions may be based on sound clinical evidence, but at what point does a clinical decision turn into discrimination?

'Partiality' (unconscious discrimination or favouritism) is perhaps more of a problem. Though few doctors will explicitly discriminate, it is common to do more for certain groups of patients – other doctors, families of practice or hospital staff, serial complainants, or even those who bring regular boxes of chocolates to the surgery(!). Very rarely is this conscious, but it can easily escalate.

What about discrimination on the basis of ability to pay? CMF's value statement was written some years ago in the context of the UK NHS, where almost all care was free; even now most care remains free, and questions of payment rarely arise. But even in a 'free' system, hidden 'costs' of healthcare (lost earnings while attending appointments, parking costs, transport) can still mean that ability to pay has some effect on access to care.

In much of the world, some upfront payment for care is usually required. To explore this in full would be a lengthy article indeed, although with both an ageing UK population and large government deficit it cannot be ignored indefinitely, even in the UK. Our colleagues at CMDA in the United States of course work in a very different system. Their ethics statements suggest that society should 'seek a basic level of healthcare for all', but not prohibit the purchase of additional care beyond this.<sup>1</sup>

## are patients really all equal before God?

Though most Christians today would be quick to defend equality, many outside the church do not believe us. Sometimes this is justified – Christians have not always universally acknowledged equality before God.

'That slavery is sanctioned by the Bible seems scarcely to admit of a doubt'<sup>2</sup> is not a made up quote, but was printed in a Christian publication during the American Civil War, only 150 years ago.

Sometimes the world's view is not justified – choices made by Christians in accordance with their conscience are characterised by others as discrimination, even when clearly recognised in law (such as the conscience clause in the 1967 Abortion Act).

God's word is clear that everyone was created equal in his sight. There is no mention of differences in status before him as creation is described in Genesis 1. Adam and Eve are both held responsible for the sin in Genesis 3. If everyone comes from a common ancestor, as the biblical creation account would suggest, then surely there should be no basis on which to discriminate, at least on racial grounds.

What about those who may have caused their own illness? We know that all have sinned (Romans 3:23), and that no-one can declare themselves truly innocent. We know that human illness only came into the world at the fall, and so is a result of sin. However it does not always follow that a specific person's sin has led to their illness – a baby who becomes infected with HIV *in utero* can hardly be said to be responsible for the infection.

If we are to treat all equally, we must recognise that all are sinners, and equally culpable. Even if our own sin hasn't directly affected our physical health, it may be responsible for the ill-health of others. Denying treatment because we perceive that someone has caused their own illness suggests that they alone are a sinner; and denies the reality of our own and others' sin.

Some argue that the early parts of the Bible

promote discrimination, with some distinctions made quite clear: 'Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated' (Malachi 1:2b-3a). God chose one people, the Israelites, through whom to reveal himself, and this can seem as if others are discriminated against. Yet as we read on in Scripture, we see that these things are there principally to illustrate the real unity that is to come. When the church is described to the Ephesians, we read 'But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.' (Ephesians 2:13); 'In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord' (Ephesians 2:21). 'There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3:28). God's ultimate plan is for all his people to be in unity under Christ.

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we know that all have sinned and that  
no-one can declare themselves  
truly innocent

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### what does biblical equality in medicine look like?

A simplistic answer might say 'provision of all possible care to all who need it'. However this has never been a reality, and is unlikely ever to be. Some element of choice as to what is provided to who is inevitable. The increased pressure on costs of both an ageing population and medical advances mean that difficult questions will arise more often – whether ultimate funding comes from taxation or from another model.

There are some areas where it is clear that we must not discriminate. God has created men and women and all different races equal before

him. The elderly are respected in the world of the Bible, and Jesus often singled out the marginalised, poor or widowed for special mention. Clearly we must not unfairly discriminate on these grounds, whether in the care we provide personally or nationally in the healthcare system we use.

Indeed in the case of the poor and widowed, Jesus discriminated in their favour – surely an example of ‘fair’ discrimination – and a reminder of how different God’s kingdom is from the world we live in.

Another form of ‘fair’ discrimination might be when a clinical decision is absolutely appropriate, even though it may appear discriminatory to the untrained eye. For example, there is little medical evidence for offering bariatric surgery to the mildly obese – but if we don’t offer it, some may say we are discriminating.

As alluded to above, more challenging cases include those where patients have been responsible for their own illnesses. Should a state-funded system pay to treat a motorcyclist who fractures their humerus whilst racing on track, or for femoropopliteal bypass surgery in a heavy smoker who openly admits that they don’t intend to stop smoking? Here it would be unfair discrimination to try and work out if either was sinful and deny treatment on that basis; but it may be entirely fair discrimination to say that surgical repair of the humerus will probably be successful, but that the bypass surgery may make little difference to the ultimate outcome if the patient continues to smoke.

Looking beyond the individual patient, we might think about groups of patients who appear to have worse outcomes than others. Patients with chronic mental health problems

or learning disabilities are well-recognised to be more likely to be in poor physical health. Thinking in public health terms, there are wide variations in life expectancy even just across different parts of London,<sup>3</sup> let alone across the world.

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this value is not only for individuals;  
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healthcare is delivered

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### what is our role now?

Our role in treating everyone equally should be obvious enough – with particular attention paid to the risk of partiality discussed above. But this value is not only for individuals; it speaks to systems through which healthcare is delivered. These may seem far from medical students; but there are opportunities to become involved throughout our careers. Some may work in public health or in commissioning roles as GPs where they have direct influence on the system. Others may do clinical research that explains (and helps us tackle) apparent differences in health outcomes.

But most importantly this value applies at a personal level, in treating every patient as Jesus would treat them. This is not an easy task, especially if tired or busy, or early in our careers when we may not be confident of our clinical skills. Such practice, though, is a powerful witness; not only to our patients, but also to our colleagues. ■

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# apologetics 6

## scripture and the resurrection

Chris Knight on the historicity of the resurrection.

**W**e have said before that the goal of apologetics is to bring our friends to a real relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Now although there is only one way to God (which we'll look at in a later article), there are many ways to becoming a Christian. The first step is always the grace of God in a person's life, but if we consider how God uses a person's experiences and encounters with other Christians, there are many ways that people can begin their journey to a saving and trusting faith. People may be moved by the Gospel accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ; they may be convinced of the existence of a creator God; they may experience a deep personal awareness of God's reality and call on their life; they may be convinced that Jesus rose from the dead. Each individual has a very different journey to faith.





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The death of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection from the dead are two of the key beliefs of Christianity. The resurrection provides God's 'Yes!' to Jesus and all that he had done and taught to his disciples during his earthly ministry. Having accepted that, the Christian life of discipleship follows. At some point, therefore, the sceptic, seeker or the new Christian will need to consider the evidence for the resurrection, 'and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins' (1 Corinthians 15:17).

## how do we know about Jesus?

As we consider the resurrection of Jesus with our friends, the same question comes up as with any question about the life and teaching of Jesus: how do we know that what we read in the Gospels is true? Could these documents be hoaxes, or late documents based on misunderstandings or legendary accounts? What reason do we have for trusting them as reliable accounts of what Jesus did and said?

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## friends need only to accept the general historicity and reliability of the Gospels, not their total infallibility

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This is a good question and links in to the question of the authority of Scripture, but is distinct from it. Our initial conversations with friends need only to accept the general historicity and reliability of the Gospels, not their total infallibility or inerrancy. We might move on to discussions on the reliability of the rest of Scripture and on its authority at a later time, but establishing the Gospels as

trustworthy historical documents is a good place to start off.

Specialists in many different areas, ranging from ancient history and classics to law and philosophy, have shown how their own discipline confirms the reliability of the Gospels. Some of these started from a sceptical viewpoint, attempting to demonstrate that the Gospels are *unreliable*, but the evidence and arguments convinced them of the opposite. Some useful resources in this area are listed under *further resources*, but I would like to consider some ideas from a recent book, written from a different area of expertise. J Warner Wallace (Jim Wallace) is a cold-case homicide detective, specialising in 'Forensic Statement Analysis' – that is, the scientific analysis of witness statements to determine their truth and reliability. In *Cold-Case Christianity*,<sup>1</sup> Wallace describes how his sceptical approach had dismissed the Gospels as 'late works of fiction'.<sup>2</sup> Yet when he came to read them, he realised that they could be treated as a 'cold-case', using his area of expertise, which he used on a daily basis in his police work, to determine how reliable the accounts were.

His book describes in detail the forensic principles he used to assess the Gospels, leading to his conclusion: 'The Gospels actually appeared to be ancient eyewitness accounts.'<sup>3</sup> He considers 'four critical areas of concern' to assess a possible eyewitness account:

- Were they even there?
- Have they been honest and accurate?
- Can they be verified?
- Do they have an ulterior motive?

# apologetics 6

I give one example here but I urge you to read and study *Cold-Case Christianity* for more – and buy an extra copy to give to a friend.

The feeding of the five thousand is described in all four Gospels, but some of the details in one Gospel only fully make sense when we read the other accounts. For example, in John's Gospel (6:5-9), we are told that Jesus asks Philip where they could buy bread to feed the crowd, although Andrew also gets involved in the reply. Philip and Andrew are not normally key players in the Gospel accounts, so why might they have been involved here? John 1:44 tells us that Philip and Andrew (as well as Peter) were from Bethsaida, but the significance of this is only seen when we read Luke's account and find that the feeding of the five thousand took place near Bethsaida. Jesus was asking one of the locals where to find bread – an impossible task for such a large crowd but if anyone was to be asked, it should, of course, be a local person!

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at the very least, our friends may then agree to read a Gospel with an open mind and heart and discuss it with us

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Two other details in this incident are of note. Mark tells us that the grass was green and John tells us that there was much grass. John adds a further detail that the loaves were barley loaves and also notes that the Passover was near. Passover occurs around the time of the barley harvest, explaining the type of loaves, and the early spring rains (called the 'latter rains') explain the quantity of green grass.

Wallace concludes that 'These meaningless details are just what I would expect to hear from eyewitnesses who were simply describing

what they saw, including the details that don't really matter in the larger narrative.'<sup>4</sup>

This is an example of 'unintentional support' between the Gospels – small details which on their own mean little, but where, when the Gospels are taken together, the details make sense and show an internal consistency which strongly supports the claim that these are truthful, eyewitness accounts which can be trusted.

Other evidence for the reliability of the Gospels and the fact that they are based upon eyewitness testimony comes from the historically and geographically accurate use of names (of people, their titles and of places) in the Gospels (internal evidence) and the corroboration of Gospel themes and details from non-biblical sources and archaeological finds (external evidence).<sup>5</sup>

Now if the evidence suggests (strongly!) that the Gospels are based on eyewitness accounts, the statements they make can, in general, be trusted and need to be treated seriously. At the very least, our friends may then agree to read a Gospel with an open mind and heart and discuss it with us. Resources such as UCCF's *Uncover*,<sup>6</sup> which works through Luke's Gospel, may be helpful.

## evidence for the resurrection

Jim Wallace is so concerned about the eyewitness testimony of the Gospel accounts because 'once you come to trust an eyewitness, you eventually must come to terms with the testimony that eyewitness has offered.'<sup>7</sup> In the Gospels, that testimony is to the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. For many of our friends, before the resurrection becomes a believable possibility, the Gospels need to be seen as generally reliable historical documents,



which is why we have looked at establishing the eyewitness character of the Gospel accounts.

We will now briefly consider two indicators of authenticity within the resurrection accounts themselves, before looking at the resurrection in further detail in the next article.

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### having women as the first witnesses would seriously weaken the impact of the claims that Jesus had risen – and yet that is what we find

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Firstly, part of the purpose of these accounts was to convince non-Christians that Jesus really had risen from the dead (as well as to inform Christians of what happened). If the writers were concocting a fiction to deceive, they did not do a very good job. A good deception will appeal to the intended audience. Yet the first people to bear witness to the resurrection are female (Matthew 28:1-10) – who at that time were viewed as less reliable witnesses. Rabbis taught that their testimony should only be accepted if there was no male testimony to the event. Having women as the first witnesses would seriously weaken the impact of the claims that Jesus had risen – and yet that is what we find. The only reasonable explanation is that the account tells it as it was.

Interestingly, when Paul writes about the resurrection appearances in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (probably quoting part of a very early creed), the first mention of appearances is to 'Cephas and the twelve', and then to 'five hundred brothers and sisters at one time ... to James, then to all the apostles.' This does not deny that the women saw Jesus first, but this early creed's apologetic purpose is better met by citing the appearances to Peter (Cephas) and

### key points

- The reliability of the Gospels as historical documents is important for sensible discussions about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- Making a good case for the reliability of the Gospels is an important tool for the evangelist-apologist.
- The fact that the first appearances of the risen Jesus were to women suggests that this is not a fiction invented to convince others.
- The fact that the early followers of Jesus were prepared to die for their claim that Jesus had been raised from the dead demonstrates the certainty of their encounter with their risen Lord.

### further resources:

- J Warner Wallace. *Cold-Case Christianity: A homicide detective investigate the claims of the Gospels*. Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2013.
- J Warner Wallace has two websites with excellent resources: [coldcasechristianity.com](http://coldcasechristianity.com) & [pleaseconvinceme.com](http://pleaseconvinceme.com)
- Craig L Blomberg. *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels, second edition*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2007
- Peter J Williams. *New Evidence the Gospels were Based on Eyewitness Accounts*. [bit.ly/1onYksp](http://bit.ly/1onYksp)
- Gary Habermas. *Recent Perspectives on the Reliability of the Gospels*. [bit.ly/1s7TkzC](http://bit.ly/1s7TkzC)
- Various speakers 'After Life? Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus'. [bit.ly/1nfQRhl](http://bit.ly/1nfQRhl)
- Various Speakers. *Jesus Myths Volume 1 - Introduction*. [bit.ly/1pAw366](http://bit.ly/1pAw366)
- Is the Bible reliable? [bit.ly/1nnWsjl](http://bit.ly/1nnWsjl)
- John Warwick Montgomery. *A Lawyer's Defence of Christianity*. [bit.ly/1kkqBoC](http://bit.ly/1kkqBoC)
- FF Bruce *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* Available online at: [bit.ly/1pAvCIY](http://bit.ly/1pAvCIY)
- Richard Bauckham. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2006. [A highly detailed and technical scholarly discussion on this topic.]

the twelve disciples, even though these were not the first ones to take place.

Secondly, what also seems certain is that Jesus's first followers sincerely believed that they had encountered the risen Jesus after his death. There is no good reason for them to invent stories about a resurrection and then be persecuted, tortured and killed. Only the certainty of what they had experienced fully accounts for their transformation and later behaviour, with a willingness to suffer and die for what they knew to be the truth.

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## there is no good reason for them to invent stories about a resurrection

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It is true that others have suffered and died for other causes which have turned out to be false – although they believed them to be true. But for the early disciples of Jesus, they not only believed them to be true, they were the original eyewitnesses of these events. Their own experience of the risen Jesus was so clear to them that they had no doubt at all that what they proclaimed about the resurrection was true. They were prepared to stake their lives on it – and many of them did exactly that.

Sceptics often allege that there are serious contradictions in the Bible and particularly in the resurrection accounts. Chapter 4 of *Cold-Case Christianity* examines the perspectival character of eyewitness statements and gives some fascinating examples from Jim Wallace's crime cases of apparent contradictions.<sup>8</sup> Upon further examination, discrepancies can turn out simply to be descriptions from different perspectives by individuals with different backgrounds and interests. This will affect what is important to them and hence what they recall.

## conclusions

Productive conversations about Jesus are vastly aided by an acceptance that the New Testament Gospels are generally reliable, historical documents, based on eyewitness testimony. Given this, we can fruitfully discuss the Gospel accounts of the resurrection or Jesus' miracles or any aspect of Jesus' teaching. The ability to make a good case for the reliability of the Gospels is therefore an important tool for the evangelist-apologist.

In reading the accounts of the resurrection, the key question is what explanation best accounts for all of the relevant evidence. We have touched on two indicators of authenticity: the testimony of the women and the certainty of Jesus' early followers that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead – a certainty which transformed them into bold witnesses to their risen Lord, for which they were prepared to pay with their lives. ■

**NEXT TIME** – we will continue to consider the resurrection of Jesus, examining the 'minimal facts' approach to the resurrection as well as some of the alternative explanations suggested by sceptics.

### REFERENCES

1. Warner Wallace J. *Cold-Case Christianity: A homicide detective investigate the claims of the Gospels*. Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2013
2. *Ibid*:160
3. *Ibid*:17
4. *Ibid*:191
5. See further resources
6. See [uncover.org.uk](http://uncover.org.uk)
7. Wallace. *Op Cit*:70
8. *Ibid*:69ff. Chapter 4, Principle #4: Test Your Witnesses

## **Sex, Dating and Relationships: A fresh approach**

Gerald Hiestand & Jay S Thomas

(Crossway, 2012 RRP £7.55, but only £5 as part of the *Take + Read* scheme)

## **The Dating Dilemma: A romance revolution**

Rachel Gardner & Andre Adefope

(IVP, 2013 RRP £8.99)



One certainty of the CMF student conference bookstall is that anything on relationships sells. Why should this be? Marriage, relationships and singleness often dominate students' lives – inside the church perhaps even more than outside. Yet the questions asked at this year's student conference seminar on relationships were almost all ones that I or my friends had struggled with as students. Little had changed. Both these new books are helpful. Though they come to mostly similar conclusions, the approach taken differs markedly.

*Sex, Dating and Relationships* could be recommended on the strength of its opening chapter alone. An exposition of sex as an expression of the gospel is challenging and refreshing, setting the tone for the rest of the book. Arguing that the Bible defines three 'categories' of relationship – family, marriage, and neighbours, the rest of the book places dating relationships firmly in the 'neighbour' category, and suggests principles that follow from this, leading to advocacy of a 'dating friendships' approach. Much is helpful, particularly the consideration of sexual desire. Some may however find the answers arrived at so radically different from usual Christian practice in the UK that they are difficult to consider – not that a challenge is a bad thing!

Much is built on the 'three categories', which I felt was the one weakness; there can be a risk of

assuming a biblical example (which these categories definitely are) always constitutes a biblical command (which I was not fully convinced these categories do).

*The Dating Dilemma* is on the surface more supportive of modern society's view of dating and relationships, seeing current practice as something to be redeemed and improved, rather than torn up entirely. It is intensely practical, directly addressing a lot of common questions. It is strong on putting God at the centre of all the things we do, and encourages us to date differently. 'Date stronger, deeper, clearer and wider' is the underlying message. Although the theological approach is quite different to *Sex, Dating and Relationships*, the underlying 'answer' reached is not so different once the very different terminology used is stripped away – perhaps reassuring to those who say different books always seem to give different answers!

If *Sex, Dating and Relationships* might be too radical for some, *The Dating Dilemma* may be too 'soft' for others. Sometimes clear biblical commands are treated gently – I'm sure from a well-founded motivation to engage and be grace-filled. This is welcome in an area which so often causes guilt, but someone looking for a 'get-out' clause might be able to convince themselves they had found it. The use of *The Message* for many Bible quotations was not helpful; a true translation rather than a paraphrase would have been better.



# studying and working for Jesus

Giles Cattermole explores working as a Christian

Christians have been called to Christ. That's our primary calling, and it's true for all of us. We're called to faith, holiness and salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14), to freedom (Galatians 5:13), to the one hope (Ephesians 1:18, 4:4). We're called to eternal life (1 Timothy 6:12), to a holy life (2 Timothy 1:9), to follow Christ's example of a suffering life (1 Peter 2:21). Are you wondering what your calling is? Well, if you're a Christian, that's your calling – to grow more like Jesus and to enjoy perfect relationship with God in the new creation.

There is another sense in which God calls us, but each in different ways. In 1 Corinthians 7:17,

Paul says we should lead the roles in life that God has assigned us, to which God has called us. He goes on to show that when God called us as Christians, he also called us to our different positions in society, in work, in marriage. These might change with time, but we're not constantly to seek to change them – instead, we're to use those callings as the place in which to fulfil our greater calling, to serve Christ.

This is true of all our roles and relationships. God has called you to be a Londoner or a Brummie; a brother or sister or friend; a medical or nursing student. In all these callings we have a responsibility to serve God. And in all these callings, he will have something to say



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about how we want us to do that. The Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) said: 'There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, "Mine!"'. All areas of life are under God's rule; we can't separate out the 'Christian' bits from the 'secular' bits. In all our roles and relationships, the gospel should shape the way we live.

In this article, we'll look at how the gospel should shape the way we study and work. You've been called to Christ, and at the moment he's also called you to be a student – that's your place of work, it's the place God has called you to live and speak for Jesus.

## what does the Bible say about work?

It's easy to think that work is a necessary evil that we have to put up with to enjoy the rest of life. Perhaps it's especially easy to think this when revising for exams, or if you have a particularly difficult supervisor. But that's not how work was in the beginning.

The first mention of the word 'work' in the Bible describes God's good, creative work (Genesis 2:1-3). God made people in his image, and part of what it means to reflect God is to work – to create and to rule. In Genesis 1:26-28, God gave man and woman a task, to fill the earth and rule over it. That was the work that God created people to do: to make more people, to look after his good creation. This is what some people call 'the cultural mandate', God's original command to humanity.

In Genesis 2:15, man's task is to work and keep the Garden of Eden. He is to preserve the

place where he enjoys relationship with God. This is more than just working to make food, this is work as an act of worship: the word used for 'work' is translated elsewhere in the Old Testament as 'worship'. Man's work is service to God. And it is not good for him to be alone in his work (Genesis 2:18), so God makes woman. Working together in service to God, man and woman also reflect God's image; the loving, eternal relationship between the persons of the Trinity.

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### the first mention of the word 'work' in the Bible describes God's good, creative work

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But then it all went wrong (Genesis 3). Adam and Eve rejected God's rule. God's punishment affected both tasks he'd given them: making babies and working the ground would become dangerous and difficult. The relationship between them would become an unpleasant rivalry for power. They were thrown out of the garden, from relationship with God, from the source of life – until one day, they'd die. But in the meantime, they are still to work (Genesis 3:23). Work continues.

And through the rest of the Bible, and in our own experience today, we see two sides of work. On the one hand, work is often toil and misery; and if you think it's sometimes difficult as a healthcare student in a rich country today, imagine what it's like as a sweatshop worker or a first century galley slave. For most people, in most of history, work is drudgery. A place of oppression and injustice. A place of frustration and difficulty. Maybe the consultant or sister will make life difficult for you; you find the

sheer volume of stuff to learn overwhelming; you can't get your essays done or your treatments fail. And the patient dies. Maybe you give up and become lazy, cutting corners and just scraping through. Or maybe you determine to succeed, totally immersing yourself in it all, and your studies or your job push everything and everyone else out of your life. Medicine or nursing becomes your identity, it becomes your idol.

On the other hand, shards of grace can still shine through the brokenness of work. We can get wonderful moments of satisfaction and creativity, of God-honouring service to others. It's a great privilege in healthcare that our job is to help people in need, where we can work to restore damaged people, to rebuild bodies, minds and relationships. It's a great privilege that we can catch glimpses of what it means to rule over creation, as we learn how the body works and how to treat disease. It is wonderful when that treatment actually works!

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shards of grace can still shine  
through the brokenness of work

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## the work of Jesus

In Psalm 8, the psalmist reflects on the ideas of Genesis 1:26-28. He praises God for his plan for humanity, crowned with glory and honour, ruling over all the earth. And yet we're faced with the reality of broken, sinful people and a world of suffering and sickness that so often doesn't yield to our rule. So what are we to do? Muddle through our work hoping for occasional flashes of joy or success? Try to keep ourselves from idolatry and laziness, from injustice or being the cause of injustice? Struggle to fulfil

that cultural mandate to rule a world that refuses to be ruled?

Instead, we need to see what Jesus has done, and how this changes our attitude to work. Hebrews 2:6-10 tells us what Psalm 8 is really about. It's not about me, it's about Jesus. It's Jesus who's the son of man, made for a little while lower than the angels, crowned with glory, ruling over all. It's Jesus who's the fulfilment of that little glimmer of hope in Genesis 3:15, that someone one day would defeat the evil one. We don't have to worry about trying to rule over the world, nor about beating the devil. Because Jesus has already done it on the cross. Our responsibility is to respond to Jesus' gracious call, to follow him, to be in Christ. If we're in Christ, we're on the winning side. It's not my work that will sort out the world and its problems, it's his. We do still live in a sinful world, a world where work is difficult, but we know that the battle is won, and that one day there will be no suffering or tears (Revelation 21:4). In the meantime our task is to make that Kingdom known, to live for Jesus and to speak for Jesus.

## working for Jesus

*Firstly, our identity is in Jesus, not in our work.* How often do we fall into that trap of thinking our work defines us? When we meet someone, how often is our first question 'what do you do'? The assumption behind this is that what we do shapes who we are. For those studying vocational subjects like medicine or nursing, this is all the more dangerous, because many of us will do that job for the rest of our working lives. So if illness, or failure in exams stops us continuing our course, or if we change career, our very identity feels under threat.

But according to Galatians 3:28, in Christ

there is neither male nor female... neither medical student nor nursing student. We are all one in Christ Jesus. My identity is in him, not in my gender or race or job. And so what we are shapes what we do, not the other way round. I am in Christ; that should change the way I live. We live in repentance and faith, seeking to bring glory to God. Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). In your speech and your service, in everything may God be glorified (1 Peter 4:12). The whole of our lives – not just our work, but all those callings God has given us, all those roles and relationships – are to worship God.

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### what we are shapes what we do, not the other way round

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*Secondly, there is value in all work,  
not just in some jobs.*

If our identity is in Christ and not in our work, and if our task is to worship him wherever he's put us, then there's no place for thinking some jobs are holier than others. Medics are especially prone to thinking they're an elite because medicine is so competitive, highly paid and respected. That sort of arrogance has no place among Christians: academic ability, social status or financial success are not what makes someone right with God. Sadly, they are often a hindrance to humble acceptance of our total dependence on Christ.

But for both medicine and nursing, there is a further danger – that we think we're especially holy because we're doing healthcare, because we're helping the sick and vulnerable. We create a holy hierarchy of jobs in which medical missionary is near the top; followed by pastors,

Christian healthcare workers and teachers; with bankers and lawyers at the bottom. What rubbish! Colossians 3:17-24 and Ephesians 6:5-8 are both clear that even slaves are serving Christ in their work. Whatever our work, we are to do it in Jesus' name and in gratitude to God. If we are all serving Jesus in our work, then no job is any holier than another. Some jobs may well have greater privileges in being able to speak with or help other people more often, but such privilege brings greater responsibility. Sadly even the most caring of professions can be spoiled by selfish motives and behaviour. It's not the job itself that's holy, it's how you do it. And almost any job can be done to God's glory, in Jesus' name, in the power of his Spirit. Only a very small number of paid jobs are so intrinsically unethical that a Christian must avoid them.

*Thirdly, we depend on God in our work,  
not on ourselves.*

And so we need to remember that to serve God in our work, we need to rely on him for the strength to do it. Work will often be difficult, and we won't make it on our own. But more importantly, it's not so much about what job we do, as how we do it and why. We might be doing cardiac surgery, we might be wiping bottoms, or like Charlie Bucket's Dad in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, we might simply be screwing on toothpaste tube lids. Whatever we do, we need to behave in a way that brings glory to God. We need to work to provide for ourselves (1 Thessalonians 4:12) and those in need (Ephesians 4:28). We need to work hard and sincerely (Colossians 3:22). We need to be able to put up with unfair bosses (1 Peter 2:18-19). But none of this will be possible without God. We need to pray for his strength. We thank him

for the opportunity he gives us in the workplace to become more like the person he wants us to be, to be shaped more like Jesus.

And so we won't neglect our other priorities. Work will not dominate every waking moment, because we know it's not our work that defines us, nor is work the only place God has called us to serve him. God has also called you to be a member of your church and Christian Union, he's called you to be a member of university societies or sports clubs, he's called you to friendships across campus, as well as your calling to be a son, daughter, brother or sister to those in your family at home. You need to learn how you can glorify God in these places too, how you can work hard, sincerely, for others' benefit, loving and caring for people in the stamp-collecting club as well as in the lecture theatre or library.

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If we are all serving Jesus  
in our work, then no job is  
any holier than another

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But we also know that success in life is not dependent on our studies or work. And so you don't need to worry that taking time out from work will somehow destroy God's plan for your life. Make sure you take time to be with God and his people; in daily quiet time, in a day each week when you can. It can be difficult, especially with exams on the horizon. Everyone else might be in the library, and you might be in church. But by doing this, you're showing you're dependent on God, not yourself. You're showing that your identity is in Christ, not in your work. Taking time out to worship with God's people is his intended method for your growth and refreshment – so that you would be equipped to return to work and worship him there.

*Lastly, our work is a place of witness, as well as worship.*

If work is a place to worship God, if it's an opportunity to be shaped more like Jesus, then it must also be a place where we show Jesus to others. Lives that bring glory to God, bring people to God. 1 Timothy 6:1 and Titus 2:9-10 both teach that the way we serve our masters at work will impact the way they see the gospel. If we live lives worthy of the gospel, we will make it attractive. If not, we will bring the gospel into disrepute.

In 1 Peter 2-3, Peter shows us that the way we live in society, at work, in the family – how we submit to authorities, masters, our spouses – will all create opportunities to tell others the reason for the hope we have (1 Peter 3:15). If we follow Christ at work, if we serve others and suffer as he did, then people will want to know why, and we'll be able to tell them.

In 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1, Paul says that whatever we do, it should be to God's glory. And he shows that we do this as we seek the good of others above ourselves, as we seek their salvation. And as we do this, we are following Christ's example. Work is one of the places God has given you to follow Christ in, to be shaped more like him. And it is one of the places God has given you to show him to others. Thank God for the wonderful opportunity your work is, to worship him, and witness to him. And keep praying he'd help you make the most of those opportunities! ■



# cynicism: hope for heartless cynics

Alex Bunn on seeing through our suspicions



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Photo: HOUSE / Pictured: Hugh Laurie as Dr. Gregory House -- NBC Photo: Art Streiber / NBC Universal photo / Fox Broadcasting Co.



## case histories

The following sayings illustrate the negative mindset of cynics on campus and to patients on ward rounds:

- 'God's only excuse is that he doesn't exist'<sup>1</sup>
- 'He's a born-again Christian. The trouble is, he suffered brain damage during rebirth.'
- 'Life is a sexually transmitted disease and the mortality rate is one hundred percent.'<sup>2</sup>
- 'To turf. Verb: To find any excuse to refer a patient to a different department or team.'

But medical students are far less cynical than doctors. They are often admired for their

breezy optimism and activism. Only one thing can account for the slide from optimism to world-weary and suspicious cynicism: experience.

For instance, I recently investigated an outbreak of vomiting, causing dozens of staff to take sick leave, whilst I struggled on an understaffed unit. But the path reports showed that it wasn't the expected Norwalk or Rotavirus, it was Salmonella from the patients' canteen egg rolls. So either staff had faked a sickie, or they had been eating patients' food. Which was more likely, I wondered? Cynicism is

all about the breakdown in trust. We see it when colleagues routinely Datix their colleagues in retaliation, sometimes pre-emptively(!), when a quiet word would be more constructive. Patients record consultations on their phones 'just in case anything goes wrong', and the only thing rising faster than patient litigation is your medical defence subscription.

Perhaps our leaders in the NHS are more noble. A few years ago, a health minister resigned without scandal, apparently to spend more time with his family. That's laudable. But a sharp-eyed CMF member (now working in the student department) discovered him a year later on the board of a company manufacturing MRI scanners for the NHS.<sup>3</sup> The same minister who lobbied in government to give the contract to this company. The same minister who had campaigned to prevent doctors from working in the private sector. Self-interest! Double standards! These are the things that make doctors cynical.

## anatomy: definition and historical roots

What exactly is cynicism? It is the *distrust of others and assuming they have false motives*. Its not the same as skepticism, doubting truth. Cynicism doubts *people*. To the cynic, he dare not trust, because there is nothing but self-interest in the world. This mistrust can be applied to several areas of life. For doctors it may be compassion fatigue that leads to cynical characters in dark medical dramas like *MASH*, *House of God*, *Cardiac Arrest* and *House*. Disappointment in romantic relationships can leave us wary and cautious. And few people today instinctively trust institutions such as government, the police or even church.

However, cynicism was not invented by

Dr Cox.<sup>4</sup> A century ago the modern 'masters of suspicion', Marx and Freud gave cynicism intellectual respectability, particularly as an assault on faith. They weren't questioning the factual basis of religion, but going behind them to the motivation for holding beliefs. Marx encouraged the suspicion that religion (Christianity in particular) was attractive to believers because of its economic and social incentives, as it legitimised the status quo with 'The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate'.<sup>5</sup> The poor are taught to accept their station, sedated by the 'opiate of the masses', awaiting compensation in the afterlife for their sacrifices. Meanwhile the rich can use religion as a smokescreen to justify selfishness, as they thank providence for their dominance. Like Nietzsche, Marx portrayed Christian morality as deeply suspect.

Freud also claimed to see through faith claims, but saw psychological rather than economic pay-offs. Drawing on Feuerbach, he saw God as a crutch for our fears and inadequacies. We are weak and corrupt, creatures helpless before the blind forces of nature. As our childhood feelings of helplessness are eased by the belief in our parents competence, so deep down our belief in God is wish fulfilment, particularly in the face of death. A father in heaven is an infantile projection that offers consolation and a crutch in time of need. Christian teaching was rooted in psychological needs, not divine reality. Freud found that he was most persuasive in theological debate not when tackling the issues themselves, but by making his adversary feel embarrassed by their motivations for belief. It's curious that the father of therapy pioneered shame as an academic weapon. It was a cynical move, playing the man and not the ball.

But cynicism is older still. The word *cynic* is often ascribed to Diogenes (412-323 BC), a Greek philosopher, because of his *canine* lifestyle (the words have the same root in Greek). He lived in a barrel, on the street like a dog, as if to say 'you and me baby ain't nothing but mammals'.<sup>6</sup> In his time, Diogenes acted out his suspicion that human integrity does not exist in a humorous way. He took a lamp in broad daylight through the streets pretending to look in vain for an honest man! Perhaps you've heard similar messages in lectures. Evolutionary psychology reduces all human behaviour ultimately to self-interest, or the selfish genes that have shaped us. It's a dog-eat-dog world; altruism, love and God are all delusions.

## embryology: emotional and spiritual roots



But cynicism is older than Diogenes. Perhaps the biblical term for a cynic is the mocker or scoffer,<sup>7</sup> who avoid seriousness or earnestness at all costs.

We all know people like that. Perhaps it is particularly unfashionable to hold truth commitments in our postmodern age. Cynicism offers a defense against potential scorn.

The author Douglas Coupland observes:

- Knee-jerk irony: The tendency to make flippant ironic comments as a reflexive matter of course in everyday conversation
- Derision pre-emption: A life-style tactic; the refusal to go out on any sort of emotional limb so as to avoid mockery from peers. Derision pre-emption is the main goal of knee-jerk irony<sup>8</sup>

So behind the flippancy and mocking, cynicism may be a form of self-protection to prevent disappointment. If you trust no-one, no-one can let you down. Even the hardnosed philosopher Nietzsche wrote 'when trodden on a worm will curl up. That is prudent. It thereby reduces the chance of being trodden on again. It is the language of survival.'<sup>9</sup> When we are burned by past experiences, it's tempting to curl away from the muddy boots of the world.

But the king of cynics appears in the book of Job. Like the philosophers of suspicion, he claimed that there is nothing but self-interest in the world. Apparent goodness and faith is *always* instrumental, just a means to an end. His very name means the *accuser*. His name is Satan, and his slogan is 'TRUST NO-ONE' especially God. Right back in Genesis, God had trusted Adam with Eden, and Satan's message had been 'God doesn't trust you! He knows that if you eat the fruit you will become like him! Don't trust him!' Later, Satan tells God that he can't trust Job, because his faith is only skin deep, he's only in it for what he can take from his heavenly sugar daddy. But God challenges him to consider his servant, whom he trusts will be vindicated. We will return to him later.

## physiology: what's right with cynicism?

*sham virtue has always offended God*

Firstly, the Bible encourages us to be suspicious of just the kind of fake virtue and deception that cynics are so wary of. The Bible has plenty of biting satire, irony and even sarcasm to make this point.<sup>10</sup> The prophets and Jesus both warn us 'watch out',<sup>11</sup> 'let no-one deceive you',<sup>12</sup> 'be on your guard',<sup>13</sup> 'beware of' self-serving rhetoric.<sup>14</sup> Cynics are right to expose it.

*naivety is not a biblical virtue*

Jesus was no fool. He knew the hearts of men,<sup>15</sup> and warned: 'I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.' (Matthew 10:16)

My GP trainer was also shrewd. She once saw a driver knock off a wing mirror on a parked car. The driver got out and he wrote a note on the windscreen. She thought that was unusual so she went and checked. It said 'everyone thinks I am leaving my number but sorry love, this is London!' She amended the note 'I am also a Londoner, and witnessed a driving offence by the car with this number plate...' Busted! We need to be shrewd because the world is full of wolves.

## pathology: what's wrong with cynicism?

*physicians heal yourselves!*

*Question our own hearts first.*

However before we get too self-righteous, Jesus tells us to target our suspicions. Guess where? Remember Jesus' saying about the blind ophthalmologist? 'How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?' (Matthew 7:4)

We need to be suspicious of our own hearts first! We can barely fathom our own hearts, let alone someone else's: 'The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?' (Jeremiah 17:9)

When I was at university, I was a lazy student. In the summer term I sidled up to the more studious female students who had taken copious notes and asked pleadingly if I could borrow their revision notes. I remembered being unusually friendly, taking particular

interest in their hobbies, and was delighted when their notes got me better results in the exams than any of them. But I knew I had used them. It was cynical. Self-justification is the default mode of the human heart, and we should be quick to judge ourselves before others.

But, the cynics claim goes much further: they say that there is absolutely nothing else but self-interest in the world. It's a totalising or universal claim. For instance, it's one thing to notice that a politician *once* tried to claim a duck house on expenses.<sup>16</sup> It's another thing to say *all* politicians at *all* times in *all* places care *only* for themselves. That they 'are all the same!' How would anyone know that? We would have to read the *inner* workings of the heart of *all* people at *all* times in *all* places wouldn't we? It's a tremendously arrogant claim, and we are somewhat under qualified to make it.

## was Jesus cynical?

However, it is the Bible's claim that one man has had that 'God's-eye view', Jesus Christ. He knew men's hearts better than they knew themselves. If anyone in *all of history* had a right to cynicism, it was Jesus. What was his verdict? Was Jesus a cynic, even at the end of his life, after all he had seen?

Let's look at one passage, Mark 14:1-11. It's a scene of high drama right before Jesus' death. In just eleven verses we have a murder pact, an unholy alliance, a riot threat, a secret defection, blood money. Seething powerplays.

But in the central more intimate scene, there is a cocktail party, a gate crasher, who scandalizes the onlookers by throwing around top of the range perfume. Was it attention seeking? Perhaps a sexual motive? In the other gospel accounts the disciples rebuke her,

especially Judas. John remarks that Judas 'did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it'.<sup>17</sup> Ah, the money motive! Presumably his end of year accounts finally caught up with him after his death, another fake unmasked. It's an ugly scene of accusation and counter accusation. *From man's perspective* we have the dirt on every single character in this scene: priests, teachers, gate crasher, guests, disciples, Judas. He said she said he said she said... money, sex power. It explains everything. The cynics are right, and it stinks.

## special investigations: the God's-eye view

But here's the surprise. *What does God see?*



He sees beauty. He smells fragrance. He says this woman will be remembered worldwide, in fact we're doing just that 2000 years later, remembering genuine

goodness, verified sealed and stamped by God himself. To the cynics, she was invisible, they had explained her away, reduced her to her track record. Their deconstruction of her motives is just wrong: 'leave her alone, why are you bothering her...she has done a *beautiful* thing to me'.<sup>18</sup> He doesn't see through her. Do you ever imagine that God basically views you as a sum of your failures? He doesn't see *through* us. We're not ghosts. CS Lewis wrote this:

'You cannot go on "seeing through" things for ever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. It is good that the window should be transparent,

## discussion points

- Do I have a trust issue I need to repent of? About relationships? politics? church?
- How can I be more like Jesus, being shrewd but not cynical?
- Who do I know who is cynical, and what might drive it?
- How can I be someone that non-believers have reason to trust?

## further reading and listening

- Keyes, D. *Seeing Through Cynicism: A Reconsideration of the Power of Suspicion*. IVP 2006
- L'Abri cynicism and hope resources: [bit.ly/1qX3bTj](http://bit.ly/1qX3bTj)

because the street or garden beyond it is opaque. How if you saw through the garden too? A wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To "see through" all things is the same as not to see'<sup>19</sup>

Here's a message you don't hear often: God believes in man! He trusted Job and his trust was vindicated. It's as if He says of Job proudly 'That's my boy! Real faith exists!' Marx and Freud listen up. Elsewhere, Jesus said of Nathaniel 'Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit'.<sup>20</sup> Diogenes, look again! An honest man does exist!

So is God blind then? Clearly there is plenty of nastiness all around him. It's remarkable that just a few hours before his death, Jesus is not despairing at the very real wickedness around him, even though he is the only one with the right to. Instead he pauses with a woman written off by her peers (and the disciples) and celebrates a moment of genuine love. That's the generosity of God. He sees that his creation is

not beyond redemption. It's like he's saying, 'I can work with this!' Even on the cross, a thief asks for his help. The cynic says 'Really? A death bed conversion? That's just desperation!' But no, Jesus welcomes without cynicism to the very end. Why is that?

I recently read of the businessman Martin Lang who bought a Marc Chagall painting for £100,000 and took it to the BBC *Fake or Fortune* programme. They sent it to the Chagall Committee in Paris who deemed it a fake, and under French law declared it should be confiscated and scrapped! Oh the heartache! Whereas for a genuine masterpiece the owner would do everything in his power to restore it. The gospel declares that each one of us is the genuine article, not a fake. But we are flawed masterpieces, made in the image of God but fallen: glorious ruins, battered, marred, crumbling, but *not beyond repair*. Jesus hasn't scrapped us. Whereas cynicism gives us no hope and humanism gives us false hope, (it's too naive!) only Christianity is real about both the glory and the ruin. Only the gospel give us humility to face the shame, and hope for future glory in Christ.

## treatment: is there an alternative to cynicism?

*'And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.'*  
(1 Corinthians 13:13)



Cynics tell you that time is on their side: you will eventually lose all trust (just a secular

word for faith). 'If you're not a socialist in your 20s you haven't got a heart. If you're not a capitalist in your 30s you've got no brain.'

But the slide into despair is not inevitable. Cynics are not tired of life as they claim, but understandably tired of the deadening effect of mistrust and suspicion. And thankfully, whatever the headlines say, theirs is a passing world order. Jesus' kingdom is the future, it has come to stay, and it is life enhancing.

Have you ever seen the Youtube clip *Top 5 proposals gone wrong?*<sup>21</sup> It features a guy at a basketball match who, having spent thousands of dollars on a ring, proposes with millions watching on live TV. But he totally misjudged his beloved's response: she runs off blushing. It is the most painful public rejection to witness. But one question you have to ask is 'did this guy not know his partner?' In contrast, how did the woman in the gospel have the confidence to interrupt Jesus in public, smother him in perfume, risking scandal and humiliation from a judgmental crowd?! After all, she was probably carrying a reputation.<sup>22</sup> It could have gone so very wrong! Didn't she expect to get burned and turned away, remembered forever for all the wrong reasons? She must have known Jesus very well and that he would *never* turn her away. She was captivated by him and that's why she spent a year's wages on him. She knew that she was worth more than that to him, perhaps her weight in gold?

In fact in just a few hours he'd prove that she was worth her *weight in blood* to him, perhaps with her perfume still fragrant to him on the cross. That's why Jesus makes that strange statement in Mark 14:8: 'She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.' The perfume anticipated Jesus' burial, whether she knew it or not. His death would show his love most definitively: generous, confident and open-hearted. We have even more reason than this woman to trust Jesus. But even she had

utter assurance of Jesus' love, and it transformed her. Luke tells us that she loved much because she was forgiven much. The cynics were wrong. Her motive was pure thankfulness, no scheming to manipulate his affections, she was already confident of them. And as a result she could face scorn, misunderstanding, rebuke, all without fear, without really worrying what anyone thought. She had already uncurled and dared to love like Jesus: generous, confident and open-hearted. Isn't that a more desirable way to live?

So Christians resist cynicism not because we are naive optimists. Far from it, we are frank about our dark sides. Instead, our hope is anchored in the purposes and character of God who loves extravagantly and can be trusted. The more we become like him, the more we will be generous towards others and they will want to trust us and him. When we are tempted to be cynical, let's remember we can't read others' hearts any more than they can read ours. There will be surprises on judgment day!

*'It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.'* (1 Corinthians 4:4-5)

## summary

Cynicism is not new. It is as old as Satan, the accuser, who desires to undermine all faith, trust and love. It has been reasserted by Marxists, Freudians and evolutionary psychologists, who have tried to shame people of faith by questioning their motivations. But cynicism is understandable as a defence when we are let down and hurt by self-serving people, much like ourselves! But Jesus

challenged the cynics' assessment that humanity was beyond redemption. Whilst we wait for his kingdom of faith (trust in action) to be finally established, we need the humility to recognise our part in the brokenness of the world. We live hopefully in the light of future promise not past hurts. We seek to be softened by his love that we might trust him and be generous to others. His light has overcome the darkness,<sup>23</sup> and the future is bright. We can trust him! ▀

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# HEROES + HERETICS

Alexandra Roche examines a WW2 hero of faith

## HEROES 14: CORRIE TEN BOOM: SPIRITUAL SOLDIER

There are many stories of heroic men and women who risked their lives saving Jews during WWII, so what was different about Corrie ten Boom? To be honest, when I was asked to write this article, I asked myself this same question. However, page by page, her own account of her work during and after the war had such a big impact on the way I viewed my life and my relationship with God, that I found myself on my knees in prayer for the first time in far too long.

### love for the Jews

Cornelia 'Corrie' ten Boom was a Dutch Christian born in 1892. She was the daughter of a watchmaker – a trade she also learned. Corrie never married and lived in the family home in Haarlem throughout her adult life. The family lived a humble existence but kept an open-door policy for anyone in need. They also had a strong heart for the Jews and prayed for them faithfully each week.



During World War II, the ten Boom family found that they became a natural contact for Jews in Haarlem seeking refuge. Remarkably, the extensive connections made through their watchmaking business enabled the ten Booms to source safe houses and provide ration cards for more than 800 Jews. In a secret room in their own home they also hid Jews other families deemed too risky to hide.

However, betrayed in 1944 to the Gestapo, the ten Boom family were arrested and sent to prison in Holland, where Corrie's father died. Corrie and her beloved sister Betsie were later sent to Ravensbrück, a German concentration camp for women, where they endured unimaginably horrific conditions that led to Betsie's death. Even here, Corrie and Betsie longed to share the gospel with their fellow prisoners and held secret Bible studies, encouraging other Christians amongst them and leading many others to be saved. All but one of the Jews they were hiding at their house evaded the Nazis.





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## later life

Corrie was eventually released from Ravensbrück due to an administrative error. She became known to the world as she spent the next thirty years (into her nineties) travelling to sixty-two countries, sharing all that she and Betsie had learned about God's love and forgiveness in prison. She also wrote about these experiences in several books, including *The Hiding Place* which was later made into a film. She was knighted by the Queen of Holland as a war hero, and given the title 'Righteous Among the Nations' by the state of Israel. Today her house in Haarlem serves as a museum.



command in 1 Thessalonians to give thanks in *all* circumstances.<sup>1</sup> She wrote about how selfish she was with a bottle of medicine that she had smuggled in for Betsie and didn't want to share with other prisoners. She was afraid the medicine bottle would run out if she shared it, but God made it last until more medicine was available.

## impossible with men but possible with God

Perhaps most remarkable was her story of forgiveness after release from the camp. One day she met a former guard from Ravensbrück who had been one of the cruelest. He had heard her usual message

## personal faith

Having saved hundreds of lives and leading many thousands of souls to Christ, Corrie ten Boom sounds every part the Christian hero. However, what is striking throughout her books is Corrie's brutal honesty about her humanity. Even though she loved Christ, time and time again she describes situations where she failed to trust him, where she was sinful and when her faith was weak.

For example, when Corrie first entered the concentration camp, she could not bear the cruel conditions. She found it hard to obey the

at a meeting, and asked Corrie for her forgiveness. Corrie had 'angry, vengeful thoughts'. In her own words: 'I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity'. Yet Corrie's story is testimony to the fact that 'what is impossible with men is possible with God'. She could not be thankful for the conditions in Ravensbrück, but God showed her how he could use even the fleas to work out his plans! She wasn't able to forgive the Nazi guard, but as Corrie prayed: 'Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me *your* forgiveness', 'the most incredible thing happened...into my heart

sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me... For a long moment we grasped each other's hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then.'

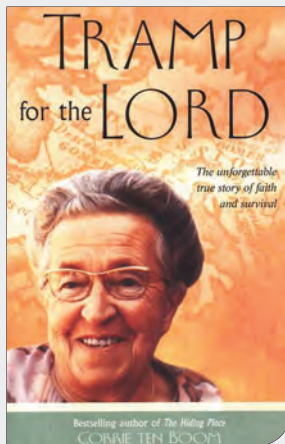
### how is God shaping your character?

So what was it about Corrie ten Boom's story that moved me to prayer? Corrie made me realise that if God used a humble watchmaker, likewise God could use a fourth year medical student – perhaps in a great way, perhaps in a way that I will never come to realise. But would I be ready? Could I have endured what Corrie went through? If she was called to forgive the man responsible for her sister's death, who might I be asked to forgive, and could I do it?

Thankfully God prepares his people. Corrie spent her first fifty years building her relationship with God and soaking herself in Scripture – and even after that she still often had to be reminded to trust him! Like Esther, only on reflection could she see how God used sometimes seemingly insignificant events in her life 'for such a time as this'. However, even if we don't feel prepared, we need not be afraid. As Corrie's father once told her:

*'Corrie,' he began gently, 'when you and I go to Amsterdam – when do I give you your ticket?'*

*'Why, just before we get on the train.'*



*'Exactly. And our wise Father in Heaven knows when we're going to need things, too. Don't run ahead of him, Corrie. When the time comes... you will look into your heart and find the strength you need – just in time.'*

What we need to realise is what Betsie reminded Corrie: That 'there are no "ifs" in God's world. And no places that are safer than other places. The centre of his will is our only safety'. God's will is the only place that we might also find contentment. Therefore, as Corrie prayed, we would be wise to pray also about every aspect of our lives: 'Lord Jesus, keep me in your will! Don't let me go mad by poking about outside it.'

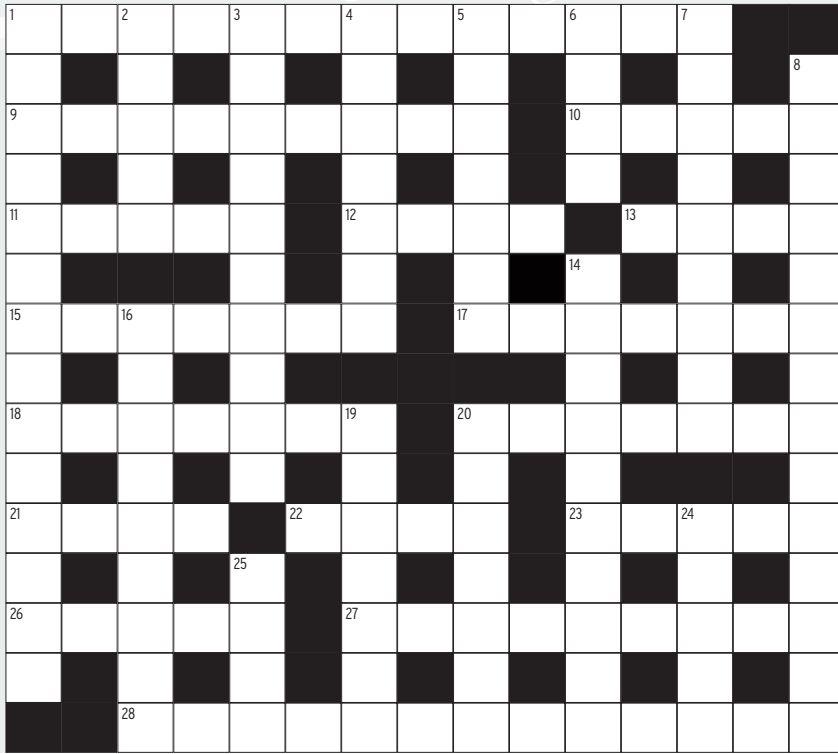
You can read Corrie's story of the war in her own beautiful words in *The Hiding Place*. She also describes her life before the war in the book *In my Father's*

*House* and her mission to share the gospel after the war in *Tramp for the Lord*. ■

# cross-word 13

— word

by LACTOMETER (1 Peter 2:2)



The winner for cross-word 12 was **Jon Ripper** from Surrey.

The NW and ESJ are used for biblical references.

ACROSS

- 1 Honour ----- as holy [1 Peter 3:15] (6,3,4)
- 9 Turning from sin (9)
- 10 Of the ear (5)
- 11 Xerxes ruled from here to Cush (5)
- 12 Confidence (4)
- 13 Vessels or ducts (4)
- 15 Dorcas (7)
- 17 Relief from grief (7)
- 18 God's words (7)
- 20 Someone who keeps out of the way (7)
- 21 A son of Adam (4)
- 22 Where vessels enter organs (4)
- 23 Elijah's bird (5)
- 26 This is how we should trust (2,3)
- 27 Clerical vestment (9)
- 28 He carried Christ's cross (5,2,6)

DOWN

- 1 Type of surgery (14)
- 2 Description of eye movement in sleep (8)
- 3 Fused digits (10)
- 4 Main airway (7)
- 5 Extra-uterine pregnancy (7)
- 6 Er's brother (4)
- 7 Skin-like (9)
- 8 First cranial (9,5)
- 14 Wasting (10)
- 16 Nickname for James and John (9)
- 19 Infamous medical murderer (7)
- 20 A rainbow was - ---- God's covenant [Genesis 9:13] (1,4,2)
- 24 Tricuspid is an example of this (5)
- 25 First man (4)

Entries can be submitted by post to the office, or email to [giles@cmf.org.uk](mailto:giles@cmf.org.uk). The deadline is 1 December 2014. The winning entry will receive a voucher worth £12 for books from the CMF website. If no entry is correct, the closest will receive a voucher worth £6.

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