

# THE GRAPEVINE

*Monthly Magazine of Botley Baptist Church*

*Hope  
Springs  
Eternal!*



**MARCH 2021**

# **Botley Baptist Church**

*Belonging*

*Believing*

*Becoming!*

## PASTORAL MUSING

The past two months have been extraordinary and incredible! The world is battling to secure victory on that tangible yet elusive prize called “reputation”. In this, COVID takes centre stage, in the battle for the efficient roll out of vaccines, the battle for the rank and prestige of each vaccine, and the battle for the vaccine that is ahead in adapting to mutations.

The reputation of national leaders is another battleground. Each leader pushing their programme of meeting social and health needs, and a programme of reviving their country’s economy after a prolonged lockdown.



Churches and Church leaders are also battling to preserve their reputation after a string of moral, spiritual and personal failures have come to light: Mark Driscoll, Pastor of the megachurch Mars Hill (Seattle), Ravi Zacharias of RZIM (Atlanta & Oxford), Jean Vanier, the Catholic founder of L’Arche (widely adored and often described as a “living saint”), Bill Hybels of megachurch Willow Creek, Steve Timmis (Pastor of “The Crowded House” in Sheffield), and the Oxfordshire vicar Revd. Timothy Davis, to name a few.

As these disclosures become public, everyone who imagines themselves to be “Someone”, wants to express an opinion why this happened, who is responsible and who should be blamed. Spades-full of personal opinion are dished out under the guise of Editorials, Reflections, Comments, Observations and Assessments, always with a wagging finger. Some even have the gall to say, *I told you (or, I knew) this would happen*. This is not to say there aren’t God-honouring thoughts and reflections shared by a few, but as always, a true and honest prophetic voice is drowned out by the cacophony of personal opinions, by the two softly-uttered, glossed-over words that cloak individual verdicts, *I think.....*,

In our pontification and the scramble for headline attention, several groups of people are left to their own resources. As they search for ways of dealing with their scrambled emotions, members of the fallen leaders' family watch the Priest and Levite walk by on the other side; perhaps the despised foreigner, the Samaritan will arrive to apply the healing balm of affirmation and offer the right hand of fellowship, that of a trusted companion who will not condemn, rather embrace them with God's love.<sup>1</sup>

Also forgotten are the victims of the fallen leader's sin, who hurt because closure and restitution are difficult to achieve, and because the walls echo words of condemnation, *it takes two hands to clap*, and similar hurtful comments.

Finally, let's not forget the thousands of spiritual victims whose faith has been shattered, having been sucked into idolising the "messenger", rarely encouraged to place their faith in the "Author of the Message".

In a personal confession dated 23 February 2021, Vince and Jo Vitale leaders in RZIM admit, *Actually, we were also not loving Ravi well, because friends challenge you to live in the truth, and we made it too easy for Ravi to live a lie.*

Vince's "we" turns the spotlight on the reputation of the Church as an institution (*how DID the Church and its leaders allow this to happen during their watch*), and in so doing, we forget that **WE are the Church!** We condemn ourselves when we castigate our leaders. A Church member sent us a thoughtful article reminding us, every time we point a finger at the fallen leader, three fingers point back at us! (published elsewhere in this issue).

We the Church have not held our leaders to account. Many of us stood by and ignored the warning signs, many of us did not want to believe this was happening, nor did we inquire about, or put in place, workable structures of accountability to hold all leaders to account.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:25-37

Could it be that we were so focussed on the speck in our brother's eye, we ignored the plank in ours which blinded us to Truth?

The 'atheist with an agenda', California-based lawyer Steve Baughman<sup>2</sup>, states what needs to be said, *"It took an evangelical village to enable him for decades and that's the real lesson here. It's not about Ravi anymore. It's about the system that let him get away with this. ... We need to have some systemic reflection and look at what are the structures that enabled a narcissistic abuser, to fool so many people."*

In the absence of a framework of workable (enforceable) accountability, charismatic leaders will betray the trust of the congregation they set out to serve, and Church members will slander Church leaders both, either in the pursuit of a personal agenda, or because their faith is not grounded in the Kingdom values of Christ the King. In both cases, we the Church, we the people who are the body of Christ, do not desire to be undergirded by Truth; we seek only to "take sides" because it fits our worldview and suits our agenda.

We are prone to being enthralled by a leader's public persona and captivated by their erudite message, oblivious to the question, *Does the person's life match his/her message?* Do we not take Jesus' teaching seriously: if we are aware the fruit is rotten, surely the tree needs attention and examination; if season after season, the tree yields rotten fruit, surely the tree must be cut down?

The "moral" failure of Church leaders, and the spiritual failure of the Church are intertwined. It is an oft-repeated cycle - being fed on rotten fruit from the pulpit creates a weak, Christ-less theology which is not edifying to God, and a congregation uninterested in being fed on Truth, as revealed in the Eternal Word of God, will opt for the false sweetness of rotten fruit.

All this might sound severe, harsh and punitive, but the soundbites gaining volume in secular communities are calling for action. Unless we the Church

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<sup>2</sup> Runs the website raviwatch.com, attempting to expose the lies and wrongdoing of international evangelist Ravi Zacharias

(congregants and leaders at all levels) take the upper hand and steer ourselves into clear waters, we might well find ourselves swimming against the tide into unfavourable and unpleasant waters.

Reflecting on the events of the past year, my mind drifted back to the theme song from the film "*Love Story*" (I'm giving away my age!) starring Ali McGraw and Ryan O'Neil titled, **Where Do I Begin**<sup>3</sup>. This is the question for the Church at this time. The song, though sung with the angst of heart-broken romantic love, expresses God-authored, Christo-centric love. Listen:

Where do I begin?  
 To tell the story of how great a love can be?  
 The sweet love story that is older than the sea?  
 The simple truth about the love she brings to me?  
 Where do I start?       ...       ...       ...  
 How long does it last?  
 Can love be measured by the hours in a day?  
 I have no answers now but this much I can say  
 I know I'll need her 'till the stars all burn away  
 And she'll be there.

Romantic love is a faint expression of Godly love. These verses offer us a powerful expression of our God, from before Creation to after Kingdom restoration! Where then **DO** we begin? At the beginning: *How great a love, ... older than the sea, ... a love that cannot be measured,... about which we have no answers, but this much I can say, I know I'll need Him until the stars burn away.... and He will still be there!*

A leader who falls into sin's trap is a human being, prone to sin as are we all. When we pray this for ourselves, shouldn't we be praying for EACH leader in the work of Christ's kingdom to come, *Father! Forgive them their sin, even as You forgive us ours; and lead them not into temptation, but deliver them from the evil one, even as you do the same for us when we pray and ask?*

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<sup>3</sup> Songwriters: Carl Sigman / Francis Lai (Love Theme from "Love Story") Lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC

M-A-N-Y pray for the work of God's kingdom on earth, but few pray for those in positions of leadership, including those in Pastoral ministry and Church leadership. By not covering them in prayer, we make it easy for the leader in God's Kingdom Enterprises, to opt for wearing the crown on the head, than bear the cross across their shoulders, or even carry the ox's burden across their neck.

All, however, is not lost! The Holy Spirit is directing winds of change across the world, looking for glowing embers of solid faith, to spark into flame!

When for the second time God asked the prophet Samuel to anoint Israel's second and most famous king, God reminded him, *"The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*<sup>4</sup>

As we come out of "a year that wasn't", and pick up where we left off, may we be guided by the principle which guides God's search committee, *People judge by outward appearance, but I the Lord, look at the heart.* I will be the first to admit, it is not easy, but the Son taught us, *"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. Everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.* He also told us, *Whatever you ask in my Name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*<sup>5</sup>

Are you challenged to live by this teaching? If you are, be mindful, you will be required to be humble in spirit, open to the voice of God and leading of the Holy Spirit, and obedient to act as God directs!

Yours seeking to be in line with the will and plan of God.

Kalyan

PS: Just came across an excellent [interview with Josh McDowell](#) (<- click) about processing the heart-breaking news about Ravi Zacharias. 28/2/21

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Samuel 16:7

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 18:19; Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 14:13; John 15:7; John 15:16; John 16:23–24; James 1:5–6; James 1:17; 1 John 3:22; 1 John 5:14–15

## What is Luxury?

\* WHAT IS LUXURY? ... \* They made us believe that luxury was the rare, the expensive, the exclusive, everything that seemed unattainable ... Now we realize that luxury were those little things that we did not know how to value when we had them and now that they are gone, we miss them so much ... Luxury is being healthy. Luxury is not stepping into a hospital. Luxury is being able to walk along the seashore. Luxury is going out on the streets and breathing without a mask. Luxury is meeting with your whole family, with your friends. Luxury are the looks. Smiles are luxury. Luxury are hugs and kisses. Luxury is enjoying every sunrise. Luxury is the privilege of loving and being alive. All this is a luxury and we did not know ..

Stay blessed. Stay grateful.

**Where does the saying  
“when you point a finger at someone,  
there are three fingers pointing back at you”  
come from?**

There are several sources, but one that finds common currency is rooted in the tradition of the Navajo people in the American Southwest.

The Navajo have a word, *bila'ashdla'ii* (don't worry about pronouncing it!), which uniquely describes a human being: “the five-fingered one”.



Among the Navajo, pointing the finger is very powerful, and should be avoided at all costs. There are some exceptions: one can point at a rainbow, but with a thumb or an open hand, but never point with a finger.

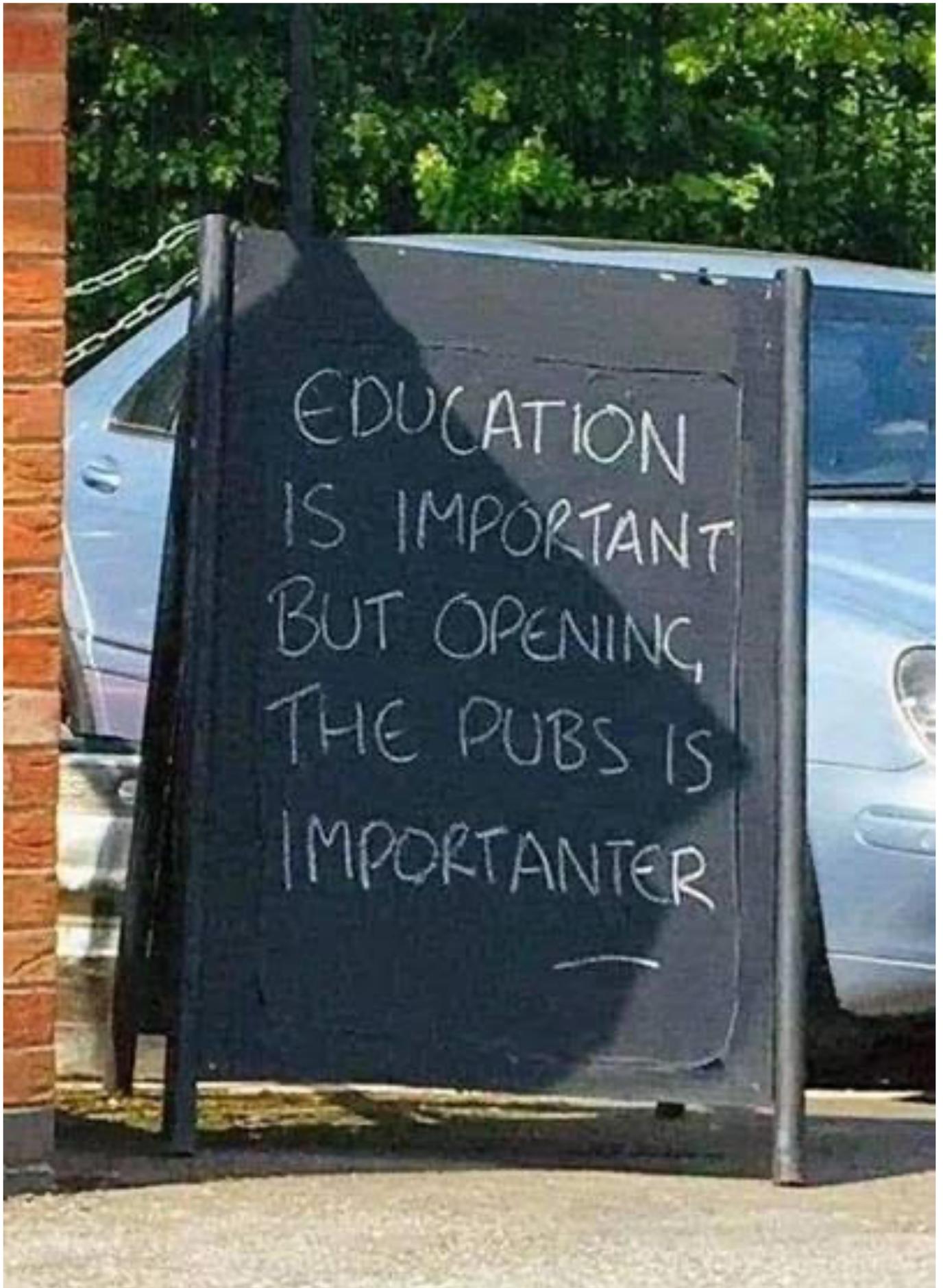
Pointing at a person is a silent act of accusing someone of wrongdoing, and can get the “pointer” in trouble. A Judge in a Navajo court of law, can admonish and reprimand a person for pointing at another, and remind all in attendance, when pointing a finger at a person, there are three fingers pointing back at you.

Perhaps the Navajo gleaned this wisdom from Jesus' caution, “*Don't focus on the speck in your brother's eye while ignoring the log in your own eye.*” When cruel accusations fly, we all need to hear the voice of reason that says, “*Look in the mirror, sister. You might just be talking about yourself.*”



People in sports, for example, are so intensely focussed on themselves out-manoeuving and winning, they often blame their mistakes on their opponent and the referee/umpire, oblivious of taking stock of their own errors. We all make mistakes. We win some and we lose some. Even the greatest champions cannot win them all. It doesn't make us losers, or haters, or unattractive. It just makes us human. What we do with those painful feelings is what really matters. The three fingers pointing back at us, however, should never be self-accusatory.

*-submitted by a member of the Church, published on condition of anonymity.*



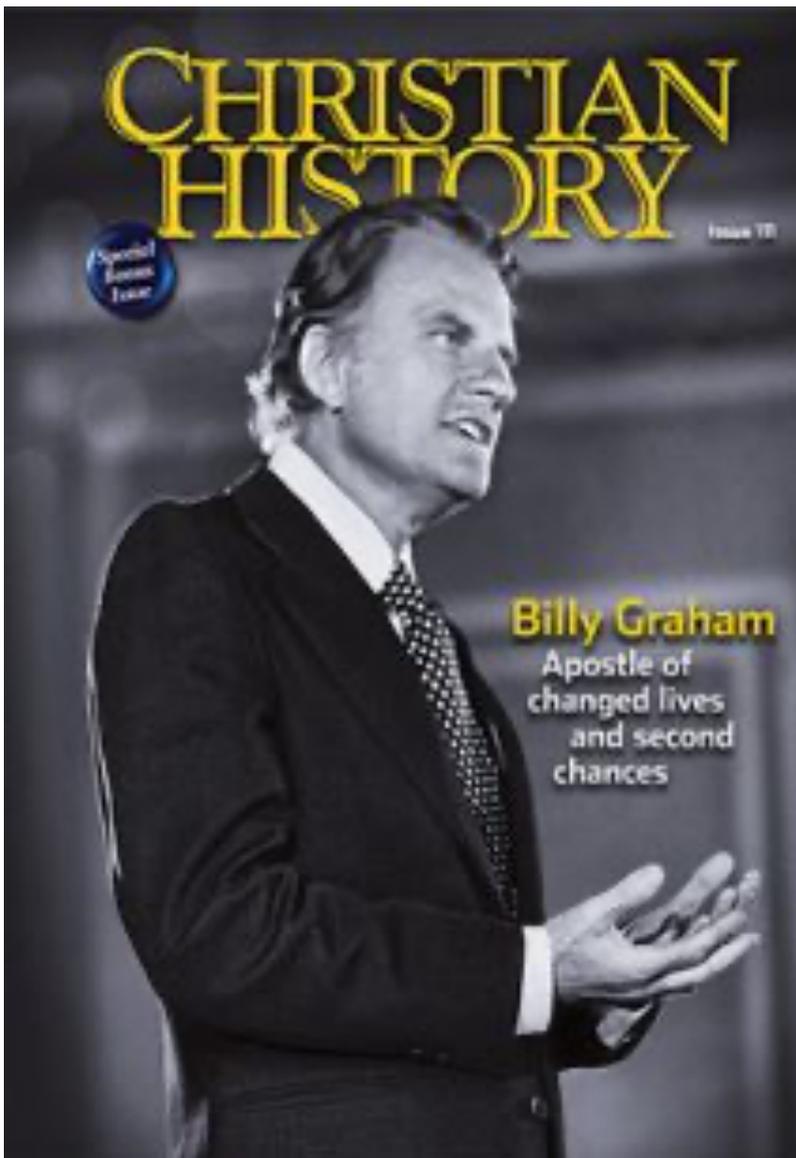
## Remembering Billy Graham

This year, 2021 is the third anniversary of Billy Graham's death. He died on 21 February, 2018 and his funeral was held on 2 March, 2018.

*"My home is in Heaven. I'm just traveling through this world."*  
- Billy Graham

Beginning with a simple expression of faith at age fifteen, and speaking around the world with clarity and conviction, Billy Graham's ministry has delivered the message of hope in Jesus Christ throughout the world for over 80 years.

**"Christian History"** magazine dedicates this issue to remember the life of an extraordinary man who has changed many lives.



Click [HERE](#) to read it online

To watch three great videos click each title below

**"Billy Graham - a Life Remembered"**

**"The Cross"**

**"Heaven"**

## LET'S PRAY NOW

A mother decided to take her three children ice skating at a nearby town. After several wrong turns and stops to ask directions, she pulled over to the side of the road and suggested they pray asking God to help them find the rink. They finally arrived, but an hour late!

The following week, as they got into the car to go skating again, her five-year-old son exclaimed, *"Mum, let's pray now and save time!"*



This little boy exposed one of the shortcomings in our prayer lives. We pray to God when we get into trouble, asking Him to take care of us. And there's certainly nothing wrong with that. God wants us to turn to Him when we are in need. As the Psalmist said, *"When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles."* (Psalm 34:17)

It is said, *"If you only pray when you're in trouble, you're in trouble."* We don't feel the need to pray when things are going well in our lives. As that little 5-year-old boy noted, we would not be in need if we prayed in advance. If we prayed for wisdom. If we prayed for God's guidance in our lives. If we gave thanks for the many blessings we enjoy. If we prayed for God's will to be done. If we asked for God's presence. If we gave God the honour due Him.

As a father, I didn't mind if my children came to me when they needed something. I wanted them to do that. But it would have bothered me if that's the only time they ever spoke to me. I wanted a relationship with them that went beyond meeting their needs, a relationship of mutual love.

An attitude of constant prayer is a distinguishing mark of the mature Christian, which is why we are commanded to *"pray without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

*"Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."* (Colossians 4:2)

Let's pray now!

A vintage picture of an old tradition of people eating cake after someone blows air from their mouth onto it  
*(circa 2019 BC - Before Coronavirus)*



## ARTICLES of INTEREST

*Clicking on titles below takes you to external websites. Botley Baptist Church offers these as topics of current interest and is not responsible for their content, nor the views expressed.*

**12 months that changed the church** *Premier Christianity*

**Real Easter Egg Dropped by Pandemic-Hit Supermarkets**

*CRE News*

**Church campaign to tackle vaccine misinformation launched** *Baptist Times*

## The Hard Times That Hurt You

Many of the world's greatest dramas are not on a stage or a screen, but they are played out in that quadrennial spectacle we call the Olympics. One year Britain's representative Derek Redmond running the 400-meter race, went down in the back stretch with a torn right hamstring. As medical attendants approached, Redmond fought to his feet and set out hopping, desperately trying to finish the race. He knew he wouldn't win, he was just trying to finish.



When he reached the final stretch, a man came out of the stands, pushed past a security guard, and ran to Redmond and hugged him. That man was Jim Redmond, Derek's father, and he said to him, *"Son, you don't have to do this."* Gritting his teeth and with tears in his eyes, his son said, *"Yes, I do."*

His father's reply, *"Well, then, we're going to finish this together."* Derek's head was sometimes buried in his father's shoulder, but they stayed in his lane to the end. When they crossed the finish line, the crowd stood to its feet, cheered, and wept as those two men finished the race.

Moses says to Israel, *"Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the desert. There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went, until you reached this place."*<sup>6</sup>

If you are tired, banged up, or stressed out, and like Derek Redmond you are staggering right now, having a hard time finishing your race, or you started well, have been running hard, but you are about to go down. Maybe you have been hit by discouragement, illness, family trouble, a lack of support, or a lack of help. Maybe you've run into obstacles or pain and you are hurting, and there is still more of the race ahead of you. God wants to give you the good news that someone has left the stands to help you. He is coming to the track to help you

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<sup>6</sup> Deuteronomy 1:29-31

finish the rest of the way. **It's your Heavenly Father!**

God left the stands to come to the cross, and there He rescued us from the sin wounds that would have kept us from reaching heaven. He knows we can't make it alone. He is an all-powerful Father who offers to carry us, but we have to let Him. If we are too proud to collapse in His arms and surrender to His control, then our power is limited, and we're not going to make it. If we will totally release control to Him and, in the words of Scripture, humble ourselves, we will have all His power. Even little children know where the power is when they sing, *"...we are weak, but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me."*



Each of us experience days when we just don't have any more to give. Maybe you're there now. It's those moments in the race that can take you deeper into the love and power of Jesus than you have ever been before. Your Father is not a spectator in the stands today. His arm is around you right now, where you are. Listen to His voice saying, "We're going to finish this together!"

"WE NEED 'STRENGTH' WHILE  
DOING THE POSSIBLE.  
BUT  
WE NEED 'FAITH' WHILE DOING  
THE IMPOSSIBLE"..

## JOIN THE CLUB

*Just a line to say I'm living,  
That I am not amongst the Dead.  
Though I am getting more forgetful  
And mixed up in my head.*

*I've got used to my Arthritis,  
To my Dentures I'm resigned.  
I can cope with my Bi-focals,  
But, ye gods, I miss my mind.*

*Sometimes I can't remember  
When I'm standing by the Stair,  
If I should be going up for something,  
Or have I just come down from there.*

*And before the Fridge so often,  
My mind is full of doubt.  
Now did I put some food away,  
Or did I come and take some out.*

*If it's not my turn to write Dear,  
I hope you won't get sore.  
I may think that I have written,  
And don't want to be a bore.*

*So remember I do love you,  
And wish that you lived near.  
But now it's time to mail this,  
And say goodbye my Dear.*

*I stand beside the mail box,  
And my face, it sure is red.  
Instead of posting this to you,  
I've opened it instead.*

## Showing Through

A little girl on the way home from church turned to her mother and said, *“Mummy, the preacher’s sermon this morning confused me.”*

The mother said, *“Oh! Why is that Dear?”*

The girl replied, *“Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. Is that true?”*

*“Yes, that’s true,”* her mother replied.

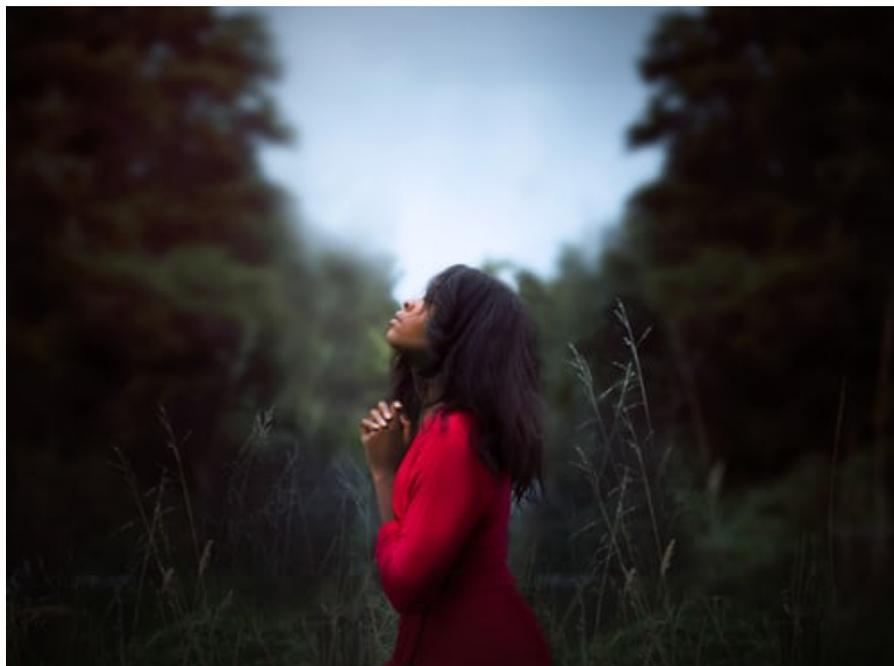
*“He also said that God lives within us. Is that true, too?”*

Her mother patiently replied, *“Yes.”*

*“Well,”* said the little girl. *“If God is bigger than us and he lives in us, wouldn’t He show through?”*

I like that little girl’s way of putting it. If God lives in us, then there’s no way of keeping Him from *“showing through”*. That’s the essence of Christian living -- living in such a way that people around will see God in our lives.

*“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:16)



# MOTHERING SUNDAY

14 March, 2021

*You held me when  
I didn't know who you were.*

*Now let me hold you  
and you will remember  
who I am*

*Love you Mum !  
ALWAYS!*





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## **THE SECRET**

**"The secret is Christ in me,  
not  
me in a different set of circumstances."**

*Elisabeth Elliot*

*[www.elisabethelliot.org](http://www.elisabethelliot.org)*

## ROADMAP for LIFTING RESTRICTION

In England the earliest dates for hospitality reopening are:

**12 April** - Restaurants and pub gardens will be allowed to serve customers sitting outdoors - including alcohol; customers can meet in a group of up to six people from different households; a maximum of two households can meet to form a group of any size

**17 May** - Hospitality venues can seat customers indoors; parties can be made up of a maximum of six people or two households of any size; groups seated outside must be smaller than 30 people

**21 June** - All restrictions will be lifted, and nightclubs will be allowed to re-open

These decisions will be a minimum of five weeks apart, and guided by whether the "four tests" are being met, including the vaccine roll-out going to plan, and no surge in hospital admissions.

Click **ROADMAP** for details.

### Places of worship

You can attend places of worship for a service. However, you must not mingle with anyone outside of your household or support bubble. You should maintain strict social distancing at all times.

Follow the **NATIONAL GUIDANCE** on the safe use of places of worship.

# BIBLE HISTORY DAILY

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY • BRINGING THE ANCIENT WORLD TO LIFE

## Earliest Human Symbol Found?

*Jonathan Laden February 18, 2021*

An etched bone fragment from the Middle Paleolithic period 120,000 years ago, found in central Israel. *Photo: Marion Prévos*



A bone fragment, marked with symbols, has been found in the Ramie region of Israel. At approximately 120,000 years old, it is possibly the earliest evidence of human use of symbols ever found. As such, it is an important clue to how symbolic expression developed.

The bone is from an **auroch**, a fierce, wild cattle, closer in size to modern elephants than cows, but the ancestors of modern, domesticated cattle. Aurochs are mentioned several times in the Bible, sometimes translated as “wild ox.”

Attempts were made to save the Aurochs, including restrictions on hunting, but they went extinct in Poland in 1627. This was probably the first extinction that humans observed and tried to prevent.

The find came from an excavation by archaeologists from the Hebrew University, University of Haifa, and the Le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in France. Dr. Iris Groman-Yaroslavski explains, the team used three-dimensional imaging, reproduction of the engravings, and analysis of microscopic elements, to determine that *“people in prehistoric times used a sharp tool fashioned from flint rock to make the engravings.”* They also determined that the markings were made by a right-handed human in a single sitting.

The researchers note the importance of the artifact: *“This engraving is very likely an example of symbolic activity and is the oldest known example of this form of messaging that was used in the Levant. We hypothesize that the choice of this particular bone was related to the status of that animal in that hunting community and is indicative of the spiritual connection that the hunters had with the animals they killed.”* It is the oldest symbolic engraving ever found in the Levant. They hope further research can reveal what the symbols were meant to convey.

### **Recreating the Origins of Language** (<- *click to read*)

Epigraphers have a hard enough time tracing the evolution and spread of ancient writing systems. How do linguistic scholars conceive of the languages of our preliterate ancestors? After identifying patterns in the evolution of language, linguists can reverse the process to recreate ancient sound systems. This involves analysis of large quantities of “Big Data;”

### **The Oldest Hebrew Script and Language** (<- *click to read*)

In the BAR article “What’s the Oldest Hebrew Inscription,”\* epigraphy scholar Christopher Rollston asks a seemingly straightforward question: What is the oldest Hebrew inscription? His examination requires him to address the fundamental questions of epigraphy. Is a text written in Hebrew script necessarily in the Hebrew language? And was the Hebrew language originally written in an alphabet that predates Hebrew script? Christopher Rollston

examined four contenders for the oldest Hebrew inscription—the Qeiyafa Ostrakon, Gezer Calendar, Tel Zayit Abecedary and Izbet Zayit Abecedary—to explore the interplay between early Hebrew script and language.

### **Precursor to Paleo-Hebrew Script Discovered in Jerusalem**

*(click to read)*

This Jerusalem Proto-Canaanite inscription precedes the development of the Paleo-Hebrew script, which was used by the Israelites until the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. When the Judean exiles returned from Babylon, they brought back the square Aramaic script, which ultimately replaced the Paleo-Hebrew script. Both the Paleo-Hebrew and the square Aramaic scripts, however, were used together for hundreds of years.



## **A Baptist Church in Botley**

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*Recollections, Reflections, Observations, Yesteryear, Newsworthy  
Items etc. are welcome and can be emailed above,  
or submit in person*

*Editor's discretion/decision is final.*

*Thank you.*

*Editor: Gillian Guest*