

# InterSections

An Australian journal for Christian encounter and encouragement



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When I accepted the invitation to be guest editor for this issue of *InterSections*, my home city, Melbourne, had just entered its sixth lockdown, having already endured 204 days of stay-at-home pandemic restrictions. We soon took the title of the most locked-down city in the world.

Watching a global catastrophe unfold over the past 24 months has left very few on this planet untouched by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our lives, at times, were laid bare and devoid of the many joys that once filled them. Ploughing through days in lock-down knowing more variants will come has crystalised my conviction that God's will for us to have a joyful, abundant and victorious life in Christ is a purposeful calling to be chosen each day. Yet, through all this, God has been working: faith has grown; souls have been saved. This issue therefore exhorts Christians to live victoriously even in difficult times.

In our *Feature*, Sarah Chan helps elucidate what it means to live victoriously in a Scripture-breathed examination, compelling us to a godly interpretation of our suffering and what victory truly is. In our *Food for Thought*, Debby Rowley shares how a victorious life, lived to the glory of God, is manifested through living with a purpose and calling to serve others, and the rich heritage of this example she received from her mother. In our *International Letter*, Debbie Carpenter shares insights concerning pertinent challenges generated by the pandemic and faced by a local church.

For our *Interview*, Christian women around Australia share their voices in testimony of how God is working to provide victory in their lives through difficult times. Norainie Bargholz reviews the distinctive contribution offered by Kenneth Bailey in his book, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*.

From the Merrylands Church of Christ in NSW, Patricia Bussman brings a special tribute to the life of Edward Perry, a long-serving and faithful brother. In our *News* section, we hear about Global Christian Studies and a pilot KlesisEquip course.

We hope and pray this issue may spur us on to grasp hold of the victorious life in Christ that we have inherited - 'for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.' (1 John 5:4) ♦

*Christine Hooi*  
The *InterSections* Team.

## ChurchScene *Patricia Bussman*

*A Tribute to Edward John Perry (18 May 1943 - 6 November 2021)*

Edward John Perry was born on 18 May 1943 in Harris Park, NSW, and grew up in the neighbouring suburb of Merrylands. After the death of his mother - when Edward was just seven years old - his father and sister, Joy, raised him.

Edward first met Lorraine, his wife of 56 years, while playing tennis (the rest, as they say, is history). Soon, a beautiful daughter, Julia, was added to their family. As a result of a Church of England christening service for Julia, Edward and Lorraine began to study the Bible with brother and sister Bell of the Merrylands congregation. Edward had known sister Bell as his mother's best friend and neighbour for many years.

Edward and Lorraine were baptised in 1973 at the Merrylands Church of Christ. Edward was a young, fit, and deeply committed Christian who willingly shouldered many duties in the congregation. He organised and supervised many improvements to the century-old church building. Today, Merrylands' current members still benefit from his efforts.

Edward joined the police force in 1963. He later received a Commissioner's Commendation. In 1997, he retired due to ill-health. Lorraine was a very supportive and understanding spouse when faced with the long hours and overtime shifts Edward encountered in his profession.

For many years Edward was the church secretary and as such was in regular contact with Christians in many countries. The congregation was able to encourage and financially assist many overseas brothers and sisters in need. Over the years, many international visitors worshipped with the Merrylands congregation due to Edward's contact and encouragement.

Edward then accepted the position as church treasurer and fulfilled this role carefully and efficiently for many years - even depositing funds in the Police Bank for extra security! He also taught Bible classes, preached each month, led singing in worship, and was a godly example to all in the congregation.



Edward and Lorraine- married 56 years.



Top: daughter Julia and granddaughter Beth.  
Bottom: Edward and great granddaughter Brooke.

Alongside Lorraine, Julia, his two grandchildren and three great grandchildren, Edward loved, protected, and cared for a multitude of others in his home. As his health deteriorated later in life, he relinquished many duties and eventually couldn't attend Sunday worship assemblies. Nevertheless, Edward remained faithful to his Lord until the end.

In 2 Timothy 4: 7-8, Paul wrote: 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.'

We have been blessed by Edward and his service to the Lord at the Merrylands Church of Christ. ♦

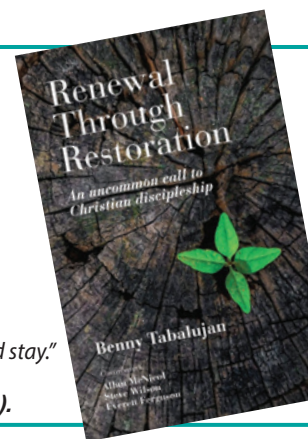
*Patricia Bussman is married to David Bussman; they are long-serving members of the Merrylands Church of Christ, NSW. davidbussman@icloud.com*

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## Feature *What does it mean to live victoriously?* Sarah Chan

As Christians, we know God has given us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). In that sense, we're already victorious. However, whether this gifted victory translates into our living victoriously today is quite another matter. More often than not we don't *feel* victorious, especially in difficult times.

Why is this so? And what does it mean to live victoriously today?



Let's start with what it means to live. Well, guess what? In Christianity, to live means first to die! True life comes through death. Jesus says in John 12:24, 'Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.' What a paradox! But, since Creation, God has planted this truth in nature all around us. It's perplexing yet also plain. In Jesus' case, his death leads to his glorious resurrection and life for all who believe in him.

For us, his disciples, the same paradoxical principle applies. It's in our spiritual death to self that our new life bursts forth, even to splendid harvest. If we pay attention, we'll find many similar death-life paradoxical passages in the New Testament: e.g. Matthew 10:39; John 12:25; Galatians 2:20, 6:14-15; Colossians 3:3; and 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. Hence, if we haven't died, we haven't begun to live – let alone victoriously.

We know from Romans 6 that our faith as expressed in baptism signifies the crucifixion of our old self and the beginning of our new life in Christ. It's also at this moment that we receive the gracious victory Christ won for us on the Cross.

However, with that gracious gift we also receive the responsibility to join forces with Christ and his Spirit and to internalise that victory into our daily lives. We can call this process 'sanctification'. Christ came not just so we may have life, but that we may have it to the full (John 10:10). In other words, Jesus doesn't want us to live in a half-hearted kind of way. He wants us to live victoriously!

Of course, it's easy to feel victorious when things are going well, when life is comfortable and free of troubles, or when we achieve something big and successful. But God doesn't want us to *feel* victorious; he intends us to *live* victoriously. These two things aren't quite the same.

Victory necessarily implies the element of a fight or battle, or a war to be won. After all, can there be victory in the absence of adversity? So, if we desire to live victoriously in Christ, we must be prepared to overcome difficulties. While the Devil uses trials seeking to defeat us, God uses them to expose and kill our inmost worldly, stubborn parts that we may not be aware of.

It's at these times that we see ourselves clearly and are confronted with key questions. Whom do we truly love – God or the world? What do we fear – separation from God or loss of health, wealth, or whatever we hold dear in this earthly life? In sleepless nights, do we dwell on life's problems or God's promises? What matters more – our faithfulness even to the point of death, or our success in this world? What defines our reality – this uncertain, everchanging world, or our relationship with the God of steadfast love and goodness?

In suffering, do we focus on ways to escape them so that we can *feel* victorious, or focus on deepening our reliance on God and producing a godly character – thus living a truly victorious life for Christ? Daily we must ask this: through the Cross, has the world truly been crucified to me, and I to the world? Such is our constant battle.

Living victoriously doesn't mean we win every battle every single day. Sometimes we fall, sometimes we stumble, sometimes we're deceived. But all isn't lost if this leads us to deeper repentance and to wrestling our way back to a closer relationship with God. The raging battles inside us are good reason to rejoice because the associated inner tension and pain (however awful they feel) alert us to the parts of our life that are yet to be crucified or which have to be nailed again to the Cross.

In this way, we're given another opportunity to resist the Devil to his face by proclaiming that Jesus is our Lord. After all, to live victoriously isn't about whether things are going our way. It's about how victoriously Christ reigns in us as we strive to live in faith, truth, love, purity, and unity – in spite of what the world is up to or what tribulations we're going through!

Ultimately, ask yourself this. Am I dying to myself continually – more and more thoroughly in all circumstances – so that Christ reigns victoriously in me, thus allowing me to live a truly victorious life in him? ◇

*Sarah Chan and her husband, James, a deacon, are members of Belmore Road Church of Christ in suburban Melbourne. They have two teenage children. sarahsxz@yahoo.com*



# Food for Thought

## Living Beyond Ourselves Debby Rowley

'But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.' (1 Peter 2:9)

Does this verse stir up a visceral reaction in you? It does in me. Affirmed as *chosen*, distinguished as *royal*, and verified as *belonging* are hallmarks that grip us. They send strong signals that we are different, we are set-apart, we have purpose.

A wide array of research studies alerts us to the tangible value of having purpose in our lives. 'Purpose in life predicts both health and longevity suggesting that the ability to find meaning from life's experiences, especially when confronting life's challenges, may be a mechanism underlying resilience. Having purpose in life may motivate reframing stressful situations to deal with them more productively, thereby facilitating recovery from stress and trauma.'<sup>1</sup> Science is confirming what our faith has already taught us: i.e. we should live with conviction.

The specific ways in which our conviction is carried out will depend on our gifts, talents, and opportunities. As children of God, we're called to: 'works of service' (Ephesians 4:12); 'do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers' (Gal 6:10); and 'let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven' (Matthew 5:16).

My avenue for works of service, doing good, and letting my light shine has been through learning to open my eyes to the needs of others and then taking simple actions to alleviate their needs. My training for this ministry came at the knees of my mother, Althea.

Mom was a quiet woman who lived a life of simple service. She was a devoted wife to my father. He spent long hours at work earning a modest income while serving over 40 years as a church elder. Mom bore four children within nine years, with the eldest being severely handicapped both mentally and physically. Mom lived by the Scriptures and lived fulfilling the Scriptures.

Verses took on special meaning to me as a child who witnessed Mom offering lifts to women who didn't drive, dividing a meatloaf into smaller portions so that she could feed another family who had less, and posting a card to encourage a recent widow. Mom's actions were what we now call 'teachable moments': Scripture verses were attached to her actions.

If we children asked why we had to share our meal with someone else and therefore do with less, the answer would

likely be: 'Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought' (Romans 12:3). If we complained about our schedule getting rearranged to accommodate someone else's need for a lift or a delivery, the reply was often: 'in humility count others more significant than yourselves...look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others' (Philippians 2:3-4).

Mom didn't have an excess of time or money, but she loved and was devoted to the Lord. So, she stretched and shared what she did have because that's what God asked her to do. She was a vivid example of living beyond ourselves. Mom wasn't tacitly aware that she's expanding her resilience, strengthening her emotional well-being, and enhancing her physical health by living out her purpose. She was just living by faith in the Lord and reaping other benefits serendipitously.

My siblings and I are blessed to be her children. She showed us that thoughtfulness and generosity were a way of life. These virtues were part of our calling; they were seminal to our purpose in life.

My upbringing also included spending time in the Word. Mom required us to place our Bibles on top of our pillows after making our beds each morning. Her wisdom was this: it's difficult to pick up your Bible and move it off your pillow without opening it to read some passage before going to bed. Clever lady!

So, daily time in the Scriptures, hand-in-hand with Mom's living example, paved the path to live more as 'a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God...' Sure, there have been times when I got it wrong and wandered off the path. But the seed was sown long ago that makes it easier to come back, give it to the Lord, and start afresh in living my calling.

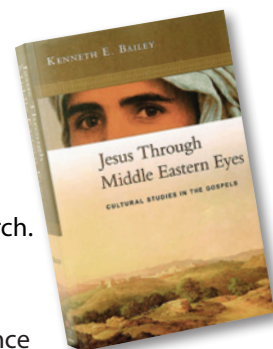
That's how I learnt to open my eyes to the needs of others and take simple actions to alleviate their needs. I don't have children of my own to pass on this message. Hence I'm praying that Althea's story can encourage you to live beyond yourself and, in so doing, enhance your daily life, live victoriously, and glorify God. ◇

<sup>1</sup> Schaefer, SM, Boylan, JM, van Reekum, CM, Lapate, RC, Norris, CJ, Ryff, CD & Davidson, RJ 2013, 'Purpose in Life Predicts Better Emotional Recovery from Negative Stimuli' *PLoS One*, 8(11):e80329, Nov 13, accessed 17 December 2021, <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3827458/>>



## Book Review *Norainie Bargholz*

*Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (IVP Academic, 2008) by Kenneth Bailey



A piece of text derives its meaning not only from the words used, but also from the cultural assumptions behind them. Most New Testament commentaries seek to clarify the text under scrutiny by explaining the meaning and usage of key words. But, without appropriate cultural and temporal references, we will often import our own cultural assumptions into a text. This sometimes has disastrous results — witness Christendom's persecution of Jews, aided by the reading-away of the Jewishness of Jesus and the early church.

Most readers today acknowledge the Bible as an ancient document, written to specific people in specific cultures and times. Bailey's work has the aim of enhancing a reader's understanding of the Gospels through an explanation of Middle Eastern culture. The book draws on Bailey's studies as well as his personal experience gleaned from 60 years of living in the Middle East.

Written for the lay person, this book is easy to read (for those wanting to dig deeper, further reading is suggested). Bailey divides the book into six sections:

- The birth of Jesus
- Dramatic actions of Jesus
- The Beatitudes
- Jesus and women
- The Lord's Prayer
- The parables of Jesus

Other than the sections on the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, none is exhaustive. For example, only thirteen parables are covered. It's my opinion that the subjects chosen are those on which Bailey feels he can shed most new light.

Each chapter comprises an introduction, an explanation of the rhetorical devices used by the Gospel writers where appropriate, a commentary on the passage under scrutiny, and a summary. Rhetorical analysis pays attention to the actual flow and structure of the text. This allows the text to order its own ideas rather than be dictated to by chapter headings and verse numbers. Nuances are brought to a passage by comparing the Greek or Latin bases of modern Bible versions with early Middle Eastern translations of the Gospels.

I found this book really illuminating. It highlights concepts in the biblical text I had never considered. It also explains texts which I had never understood well (e.g. the Parable of the Unjust Steward).

For example, I knew that women were looked down upon in Jewish society at the time the Gospels were written. But I haven't always borne this in mind when reading the Gospels. Consequently, I've not always been aware of how Jesus, in his teaching, demonstrated so much openness toward women of all social levels.

Bailey points out that not only did Jesus accept women as disciples, but he travelled with them and was financially supported by them. That was taboo at the time. Women were chosen to be heralds of the Good News (e.g. the Samaritan woman at the well, and the women who discovered the empty tomb). Jesus often chose images and crafted parables that would appeal to women (the Parables of the Lost Coin and the Persistent Widow).

I can recommend this book as a worthy addition to any library. ◇

*Norainie Bargholz is a wife, mother of two adult children, and a member of the Eastside Church of Christ in Sydney.  
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# International Letter

## *Are we running to win? Debbie Carpenter*

The apostle Paul wrote, 'Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run, in such a way as to get the prize.' (1 Corinthians 9:24)

Reflecting on the past two years and the challenges we have faced - and contrasting what the church looked like before and after - can leave some feeling a bit disillusioned. A global pandemic. A government controlling our movements and telling us when and how we should see each other. We wonder to whom we should listen. Our friends and neighbours tell us one thing, our government has its opinions, and so do fellow Christians.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must realise that we're in a race, and it's the race of a lifetime. There's really only one to whom we should listen: our God who, like a coach, gives us spiritual strength to follow his will.

The church has had to tackle technology. Online worship may be a good alternative for when we cannot physically assemble together, but it's not ideal. All Christians need fellowship and encouragement from one another. A runner is motivated to keep on running because he sees others striving for the finish line. That's how we motivate one another. Thus we spur one another to victory: 'And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.' (Hebrews 10:24)

In my congregation, when we recommenced assembling in-person, some of our members didn't return. They chose to stay at home to avoid crowds. As a church we did our best to clean properly, create distance by sitting in every other row, and wear masks. Even with these precautions, we still had Covid outbreaks within our congregation. No matter what we did, this virus couldn't be contained.

I was hoping that perhaps it would be our faith that could not be contained! In times of trouble, shouldn't it be our faith that speaks the loudest? What else do we need to strengthen our race of faith? 2 Timothy 3:16 affirms: 'All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.' The word of God is a valuable piece of our equipment. If we have one another and the word of God, then we're equipped to run this race.

It seems that a certain attitude is required to be an elite athlete. Do we have the faith we need to participate in this race? Do we believe we can win it? Our coach has told us we can!

The Hebrew writer was disappointed with some: 'In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food.' It seems that instead of growing in the word of God, some had regressed.

Rather, we should press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called us (Philippians 3:14). We must fight the good fight, we must finish the race, we must keep the faith (2 Timothy 4:7).

One hurdle that has become an especially polarising issue is vaccination. However, our congregation, located near Houston, Texas, has decided not to take a stand on this issue. So, we have vaccinated people sitting next to unvaccinated people and everyone is happy. Red, yellow, black, white, supporters of different political parties, mask, no mask, vaccinated, and unvaccinated; all are precious in God's sight. We won't allow Satan to divide us and fall over this hurdle.

Looking forward, can we stop dwelling on the inconveniences that we're experiencing and instead turn our thoughts to Who is in control of all things? In Philippians 4:8, Paul admonishes us to dwell on whatever is true, honourable, pure, lovely, and good. In Galatians 5:22, we're reminded that the Spirit bears fruit like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Paul also reminds us in Romans 8:38-39 that 'neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' With all these promises, why should we let Satan use a pandemic and temporary lifestyle changes to affect our lives so negatively?

The bottom line is that we can overcome with Christ on our side. Let's believe we can win. Let's run a race that's grounded in faith so that we can be victorious. ◇

*Debbie Carpenter and her husband, Scott, are members of Magnolia Church of Christ, Magnolia, Texas, where Scott serves as an elder. They have two adult children. [debbie\\_carpenter@sbcglobal.net](mailto:debbie_carpenter@sbcglobal.net)*

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Global Christian Studies provides a pathway for Christian leaders in Australia and other nations to improve their ministry by earning a master's degree in Bible and ministry. Students learn from one of the best Bible teaching faculties assembled among Churches of Christ: Harding School of Theology (HST).

When I was a student at HST decades ago, one of my teachers was the formidable Jack P. Lewis. Once Lewis told of a farmer hoeing weeds who refused to sharpen his hoe. He claimed there were too many weeds - so there's no time to stop to sharpen the hoe. But everyone knows that the best work requires the sharpest tools. Lewis went on to say, 'Our world is gripped as never before in a gigantic struggle for control of people's minds. In this struggle, what will eventually win out?' If we want to persuade people with the Gospel, we need sharpened minds.

GCS is a ministry which provides a cost-effective and time-efficient way to sharpen minds. GCS is under the oversight of the elderships of Belmore Road Church of Christ (Melbourne) and Eastside Church of Christ (Midwest City, Oklahoma). GCS provides substantial scholarship funding. Students remain in their home countries and study part-time largely online. Not only do students benefit, but so do their congregations and, eventually, the world. From two students in 2019, there are now 13 students on the GCS pathway from half a dozen countries. Three students are from Australia: a physiotherapist, music/arts educator, and an IT manager.

The world is a gigantic field filled with weeds. The church needs better and sharper minds. Interested to know more? Please contact me or visit the GCS website ([www.gcspathway.org](http://www.gcspathway.org)). ♦

Harold Shank, director of GCS    [drharoldshank@gmail.com](mailto:drharoldshank@gmail.com)

## *KlesisEquip Pilot Course - Australia*

In October-November 2021, a class of 15 eager participants - from five congregations in QLD, NSW, ACT, and VIC - met via Zoom for a pilot KlesisEquip module. The goal of KlesisEquip courses is to help raise the level of biblical literacy and theological understanding of Christians in Australia.



The pilot module was titled: 'The Drama of Scripture'. We met on Zoom on Tuesday evenings once per week over eight weeks. It was a privilege to have Steve Wilson - an elder at The Point Church in Brisbane - lead us through an overview of the biblical narrative. Steve shared lessons based on the framework offered by Craig Bartholomew & Michael W. Goheen in their book, *The True Story of the Whole World: Finding Your Place in the Biblical Drama* (2020). Each session included reflections on the biblical texts studied that week, discussion on their theological content, key themes, and additional readings.

Interspersed throughout the classes were group Q&A times. This provided ample opportunity to share comments, ask questions, and exchange plenty of interstate banter. Despite never quite finding time for break-out room discussions, it was a blessing to learn more about God's overarching redemptive plan for creation as revealed in Scripture. Doing this alongside fellow Christians from around Australia was an added treat.

A big thank you goes to Steve Wilson for his insightful lessons, Helen Hughes for her administrative sharpness, and all the participants for their energy and curiosity each Tuesday evening. ♦

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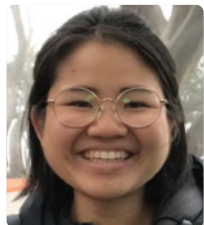
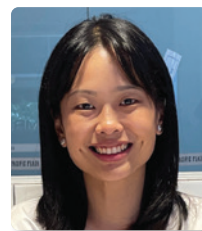


*[Editorial note: Klesis plans to run two more KlesisEquip online courses in 2022, in May-June and October-November. See the advertisement on page 5.]*

**Christian women share how they have experienced victory over challenges in their lives with God's help, and the ways God has been working through these challenges:**

'I've never been graceful or victorious when dealing with pain or sin myself. God often brings me to a point where I've nothing to lean on except for 'God's grace which is sufficient for me' and 'God's power which is made perfect in my weakness.' And that's perhaps the best victory I've ever had in the midst of trials.' For when I am weak, then I am strong.'

*Joanne Tjipto, Belmore Road Church of Christ, VIC*



'I've seen God working to teach me humility and patience. In particular, being knocked-back for a leadership position in my final year of middle school led me to re-assess my motives and turn my heart back towards God. Also, being rejected numerous times for jobs in my first year of university challenged me to wait upon God and his timing, and to always be persistent in prayer.'

*Faith Tabalujan, Belmore Road Church of Christ, VIC*

'A few years ago, I lost my voice after a bout of bad hay fever. I've had to work on redefining what's wrapped up in my sense of identity. My pride has suffered too. I liked having a nice voice. I've asked God what he's teaching me through this. And, like Miriam in preparation for the Exodus, I've packed my 'tambourine' in hopes that I'll be able to sing freely again one day. There is the lesson of learning to be patient. It also helps to share my struggles and hopes with a few people who really get what a big deal this is for me. God extends his love in so many ways.

*Rebecca Knowles, Holland Park Church of Christ, QLD*



'God is knowledgeable and wise; he's in control of everything and there's nothing he cannot do for you. He knows what's best for me and my family. I'm very grateful to him for allowing me to enjoy motherhood and working life.'

*Vivian Thia, Bungaribee Church of Christ, NSW*

'When COVID-19 invaded the world by surprise, it brought everything to a sudden halt. To overcome this paralysing fear, I read the Scriptures, prayed, and trusted God to be in control. This gave me the peace that surpasses human understanding.'

*Swee Lan Tay, Belmore Road Church of Christ, VIC*



'There have been times when I've felt very weighed down with the stresses of life. In these times God has always provided people who have encouraged me and reminded me of the peace we can experience because of the hope we have in Jesus.'

*Hannah Payne, Belmore Road Church of Christ, VIC*

'As I look back over my life, I can trace a pattern of God teaching me what I needed in order to face the next difficult challenge - even though at the time I had no idea of this. As I write I'm now caring for my aged mother and I rely on the wisdom of Matthew 6:34.' ♦

*Kathy Jackel, Peninsula Church of Christ, VIC*



*The above women are from across VIC, NSW, and QLD. They were interviewed by Christine Hooi christine.kuachi@gmail.com*



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