

Voice

Your pocket-size magazine



My great escape

Four inspiring true-life stories

My great escape

An overseas adventure brought a surprising conclusion for
Ryan Hofman

I grew up on the coast of Queensland, Australia, the youngest of four children in a very loving home. We lived only two minutes from the beach. As a teenager, I'd be up at 6am, go surfing in the Coral Sea before school, and then back on the beach after classes.

On Sundays, my family usually attended church, but frankly God was not in the least real to me. I admit I said prayers on



occasion, but they were just empty words – I felt nothing, even to the point of thinking, “What’s wrong with me? Am I stupid?”

However, I found a degree of acceptance among my surfing mates. Some of them encouraged me to drink, to try ‘weed’ (marijuana) and ecstasy pills. This led me into a life of utter hopelessness, going nowhere.

So, at the age of 19, I decided I needed to get away from my friends and crazy lifestyle. I felt I needed to travel, to be alone, maybe discover what life was all about. My Dad, Peter, was

VOICE Magazine: this is another issue of the inspirational publication telling the true stories of ordinary people in their own words. In the last 65 years, millions of people have read VOICE Magazine, published in many languages around the world by the Full Gospel Businessmen. For contact details, please see page 16. Cover photo courtesy of Troy Williams on Unsplash pictures.

disturbed. “That’s crazy,” he said. “It’s not like you.”

I saved up for a year and then set off for Singapore, travelling west. I was drinking, taking ‘happy’ pills, and wondering if I could ever like myself. I was always trying to win acceptance – to feel loved. Drink and drugs anaesthetised the pain of my emptiness.

After a year of travelling I was in Canada one night, wearing a T-shirt in freezing weather, and so drunk that I could not stand up. I had to be pulled along the street, legless, by some friends.

Then one night, I had a moment of clarity in a car park. Staring up into the clear night sky, I resolved: “If this is all life has to offer, I don’t want it. There has to be more to life than this.”

This thought perhaps an answer to an unspoken prayer. I was able to stop drinking - and decided to go back to Australia. When I arrived in Brisbane, (with long hair), my Dad gave me a hug and for the first time I saw him cry. “I’m so glad you’re back . . . you look different.”

Later, some old friends invited



Ryan Hofman: chartered civil engineer, husband and father

me to church. I had very mixed feelings about that, but decided to go anyway. I tried to hide at the back, but the speaker asked for a response to the message that ‘Jesus had come to set the captives free’. My hand went up in the air! It was then that I asked in my heart: “God, can I know you? Not as the God of my friends, but God for myself?”

Amazingly, I felt that God did accept me, despite my past reckless life-style. He seemed to whisper, “I want you to be uniquely *you*. I am changing your heart.”

At last I realised that God was real, and that I could hear his voice within me. I experienced the promise of Jesus, in the Bible: “Come to me, *all* you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”

Later God gave me a wonderful wife, Hayley, and a beautiful daughter, Miya, now five. We set up home in the UK in 2011 and I now practice as a Chartered Civil Engineer.

As a new Christian, there was a longing to know more of Jesus’ power in my life. Hadn’t Jesus promised that His followers would do the things that He did? But first they needed the gift of the Holy Spirit as their Helper. Then one morning I was sitting on the sofa with a cup of coffee, when I felt an inner prompting. “*Get on your knees,*” as if royalty



Ryan and Hayley

was in the room. Suddenly, I sensed the very presence of Jesus standing before me! I cannot describe the intensity of His love. In tears, I whispered: “*Jesus, I have done so much wrong,*” but He replied, “Have you not seen my hands?”

Overwhelmed by the glory of His presence, I heard Him speak words into my heart. “*Ryan, I have made you to be so much more than you are now, but you must change the way you live.*”

I knew the Holy Spirit was filling my life with a new sense of God’s enabling power, just as he promised. This incredible, tearful encounter seemed like 30 seconds but in fact I was laying flat on the ground for an hour.

Today, I can say that I am a new man. My life has been revolutionised through faith in Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. He has set me free from so many things that had been taking me on the road to ruin. It has been a great deliverance!

Now my longing is to see hope restored to those who are in a lost generation and who feel there is no way back. I want them to know that Jesus is the answer!

Crazy ups and downs

Andrew Cannon tells how he found a new life after business failures and severe depression

I was born and raised in Liverpool.

My story is one of business success, alcohol, cocaine and a near death situation. I left school, like any other kid, with the desire to take on the world, but in reality I didn't have the ability to tackle a sink full of dishes!

After school I went straight into employment for five years in a screen printing factory. Then the opportunity for more cash came up working for a construction company. I quickly got to grips with my new job and soon launched out on my own supplying skilled labour to contractors. This meant that my income



Andrew Cannon: now he's 'a man with a message'

increased dramatically. I found myself finishing work on a Friday and heading straight to the pub every night, with weekend binges as well.

In the year 2000 I did something crazy that I thought I would never do; I took cocaine. For the next 10 years my life got worse and worse. I spent £1,000 a month on drugs. Despite this, I continued to manage my business. I felt as though I had lost grip on normality, but hid that

behind even more drinking and drugs.

In this spiral of destruction my business collapsed. One day I couldn't take anymore. I drank a bottle of vodka and stuck an 8-inch knife in my chest. I survived, but my mother was later told my organs had deteriorated like a man twice my age. If I didn't stop drinking, I probably had three weeks to live. But still I didn't stop!

In January 2010 I was a broken and lost man, so I moved into a Christian rehab. On my third day there, I was told Jesus loved me and He could set me free. So I cried out, "*Jesus, if you are real, come and save me.*" Instantly I physically felt the hands of God touch the front and back of my head. I started to shake and could feel things dropping off me.

Then I started to pray in a heavenly language I had never heard - and I came back to my senses. I had been baptised in the Holy Spirit and in His fire, my addictions were removed

instantly and I was given a brand new life.

I met my wife Jenny in church. She had been a follower of Jesus all her life, a fiery lady and such a blessing from God.

Within a couple of months, by the kindness of God, I started a job at Jaguar Cars and was given one of the best jobs in the factory. I regularly shared my faith with hundreds of people, which gave me such joy. The guys would sometimes make fun of me in a kindly way, but would often approach me later to ask for prayer. I worked there for seven years and really enjoyed it.

I now live 'by faith' preaching the Gospel full-time worldwide as an Evangelist and count it a privilege to serve Him.

Andrew Cannon is happy to speak at meetings.

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Victory in life's challenges

***Dr Isaac Ohonba** tells
how he found his way to
peace and freedom*

I was born in 1957, a few years before the Nigerian Independence. My father was a teacher while my mother had a small business, trading in clothes.

However, I grew up surrounded by strife and anxiety. My family was initially monogamous, but in later years become polygamous. The family was therefore full of strife.

In polygamous cultures, mothers often struggle to secure favour and inheritance for their children which can sometimes lead to spiritual bandage,

During my teenage years



**Dr Isaac Ohonba: man
of wide experience**

I was much involved with my local Anglican Church as a member of the choir. I must say that I was often happy in church, and occasionally experienced what could have been a sense of the closeness of God - but I had no idea what 'personal salvation' was about.

I first encountered Christian students in 'Scripture Union' at my secondary school. I never doubted their sincerity and different lifestyles. Yet I was uncomfortable to be part of their

group and developed aversion to 'born again Christians' who I felt were austere and devoid of fun. Later, in 1976, as I began my medical career, I just wanted to be 'free', and do as I pleased, enjoying the company of friends and socialising with ladies to my heart's content.

I lived this way for many years, except for some periods of guilt when I remembered I used to be a church-loving young man. Despite pretending to have committed my life to God, I was trapped by the desire for partying, drinking, and going after the ladies.

The pull of the world was just too strong for me. This remained so even when friends I knew and respected, began to get 'saved'. I then seriously began to ask myself what 'getting saved' really meant?

I had by now overcome my previous dislike of committed Christians, and was impressed by the peace and contentment they enjoyed. It was not surprising that I found myself beginning to desire what they



Today, Dr Isaac and his wife, Okuoimose live in Cardiff.

had. But how was I to get rid of my personal sins and immoral life style? What was the formula? Feeling confused and really hopeless, a casual comment from a Christian friend hit me with the force of a battering ram! *"God does not expect us to change ourselves before coming to Him. He wants us to come to Him just as we are and He will then change us!"*

I was now happy to attend a Christian businessmen's meeting (FGB), where I gave my life to Christ after saying 'the sinner's prayer', confessing my sins and believing I was free at last. I was then prayed with for the baptism of the

the Holy Spirit and I began speaking in a prayer language which the Bible calls 'an unknown tongue'.

At about this time, the Lord graciously brought my way a young Christian lady from the same part of Nigeria that I come from. We got married and she has remained my loving wife and friend through all the challenges of marriage and ministry.

Shortly after my conversion I attended a Christian convention (FGB) and heard God speak prophetically to my heart - *only to hear someone else speak out the same words!* Later, alone in my room, I sensed a bright light and a heavy weight upon me. I fell to my knees and wept as I saw a playback of my life - and repented of all I saw while at the same time saying, "I love you, Lord." I spent the remainder of the day staggering around as if I was drunk!

The long-term effect of this experience was that my hunger for God went through the roof and has remained so all these

years. I was immediately freed from shyness and a stammer when I spoke in public. I was then able to tell my story, to lead meetings and to become an FGB Chapter President a few years later. I also gained some training in various aspects of Christian ministry and leadership.

I learned to always work hard but allowing God to decide the outcome. I also came to know the place of faith, the Word of God and prayer in overcoming obstacles and gaining victory in life's challenges.

I also had some Bible school training and felt God lead me to plant a church which I pastored until I came over to the UK in 2004 for my medical training in Psychiatry.

I also find my Christian background a help in being more empathetic and compassionate to my patients.

Dr Isaac is a Field Representative and Vice-President of Cardiff Chapter of the Full Gospel Businessmen, UK & Ireland. He can be contacted via email at: eyezeek2000@yahoo.co.uk

Healing after years of heartbreak

*'God threw me a
lifeline,' says former
Police Officer
Simon Pinchbeck*

I never knew my biological father. My mother married my stepdad when I was four, and he was the guy I called 'Dad'. There was no love growing up, there was no physical affection. It left me with a very hard heart. Looking back, I loved nothing except myself.

I left home in 1976 to join the Metropolitan Police in London. I was almost 19 years old and started at Holloway Police Station in north London. After ten years I was posted to the Territorial Support Group, TSG, in central London. We drove about in police buses and were



Simon: often in danger

equipped with 'riot gear'.

One of the main aspects of my police career was service on Football Duty. I spent ten years working at the Arsenal football ground - in those days I had a big moustache and was nicknamed 'The Walrus' by the soccer fans. One game stands out between Arsenal and West Ham, on May 2nd 1982. There was a massive battle and I was fortunate to get out without serious injury.

Then I married a lovely lady

named Lynda. I must admit I was not a truly loving husband because I didn't know *how* to love. We had two boys, Tom and Jamie. I cared for them but I didn't know how to love them as a father. I was a selfish dad - it was all about *me*. In fact, I left my wife at a time when her mother was terminally ill with cancer.

Finally, I had a fight in a nightclub and was charged with assault. I was found 'Not Guilty' as the defence was 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder' (PTSD), suffered from the fighting in that West Ham game.

I then left the police, and after befriending some local

criminals, I drifted into a life of crime, attracted by the lure of easy money.

I was obsessed by money and material things - big cars, holidays, clothes - nothing would satisfy my lust for more.

Eventually after putting this money into an ill-fated scheme, I was 'ripped off' by these guys for a very large amount. Knowing it was senseless to go up against them, I just 'walked away'. This was the lowest point in my life. The Police were tailing me, trying to find something to charge me with. At the same time I heard that some of my criminal 'friends' were talking of killing me.



Snapshots from the family album: me on the left with a walrus moustache in my early Police days; and, right, with my lovely Lynda, on the beach with our sons, Tom and Jamie.

Then God threw me a lifeline. I had seen the great difference that Jesus Christ had made in the life of a man who had once been very violent. There was no denying that a great change had taken place. So I went along to his local church in London, Holy Trinity Brompton, where I said a prayer with the Vicar, Nicky Gumbel. It was then that I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour.

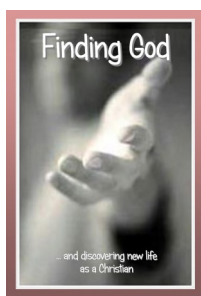
At last I felt forgiven, and at peace. I went on a free, informal course called *Alpha*, which explores the basics of Christian faith.* There I learnt that God wanted a relationship with me through His Son, Jesus Christ. I had been searching for 'something' all my life - I had now found the answer in the love of Jesus.

I got back with my wife and we renewed our wedding vows. I now have the love and trust back of my two boys, and I know how to love my family. However, I still go through struggles, life is not easy. I need my Christian brothers around me, but most of all I need Jesus Christ.

Now I would never go back to the mess I was in before I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour.

To sum up what my faith means to me - I have forgiveness for the past, peace in the present, and hope for the future, all through Jesus Christ. If you look for Him, you can find Him, too!

To find details of an Alpha Course near you, see the website: **www.uk.alpha.org*



Want to know more?

A free copy of the booklet, '**Finding God**' is available on request. Simply fill in the details on the request form on **Page 14** and send it back to us.

In conclusion, a personal word for you . . .

The best news of all

We hope you enjoyed reading one or more of the ‘new life’ stories in this issue of **Voice** magazine.

You may be wondering whether God could make a difference in *your* life, too? The answer is a very definite ‘YES’.

Someone has said that there is a God-shaped hole in everyone’s life - “some people use alcohol, or sex, or their children, or food, or money, or music, or drugs to try and fill a sense of emptiness.”

The Bible says that God Himself has put a longing in all our hearts for something outside of ourselves, to fill that vacuum. “He has put eternity into every person’s heart.” (*Ecclesiastes 3:11*).

Continued on next page



My response

For more information, please see **details overleaf** and then send this response form in an envelope to:

FGB Voice, PO Box 11,
Knutsford, Cheshire,
WA16 6QP

Continued from previous page:

One reason people don't know God is they have not wholeheartedly looked for Him.

God says, "You will find me when you seek me with all your heart," (*Jeremiah 29:13*).

The unique and remarkable message of the Bible is that God loves the world so much he sent Jesus to reveal his heart of love for every one of us and give us eternal life.

Our Father offers us peace and forgiveness amidst all the turmoil of life, but how do we begin this journey of faith? Simply through trusting Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour.

Jesus said: "I am the Way, I am the Truth and I am the Life. No-one comes to the Father except through me." (*John 14:6*).

On the facing page are three simple steps to begin this life-changing journey.



My personal response

Today I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour ☐

Tick here to request a **free booklet** called '**Finding God**' ☐

Please send me some details about the FGB Fellowship ☐

My name _____

Address _____

Post code _____

Optional question: age range, please tick: under 18 , 18-30,
30-50, 50-70, 70 + Tel number _____

Please return this reply to:

FGB Voice, PO Box 11, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 6QP

As you have read one or more the 'new life' stories in this magazine, you may also want to ask God into *your* life? There are three simple steps to do this:

STEP 1: Admit that you have sinned by falling short of God's standard - admit that you need a Saviour to deal with your past and assure your future.

STEP 2: Believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died on the Cross to shed sacred blood to pay the penalty for your sins.

STEP 3: Receive Jesus as Saviour and Lord of your life by personal invitation and ask His forgiveness for your sins.

Your decision to receive Christ as Saviour and Lord is the most important decision you will ever make.

You can pray your own words of course, but here are some to say - just find a quiet place to quietly pray this aloud:

“Lord Jesus,

I believe you are the Son of God. I believe you died on the

Cross for me. I am sorry for my sins and I truly want to turn away from them. I ask you to forgive me and cleanse my heart.” *(Pause here to mention anything on your conscience. Take your time, then continue),*

“I want to trust you with my life, starting right now. Please be my Lord and Saviour. I invite you into my life. Please help me to live by the power of the Holy Spirit, to guide and to teach me.

“I now believe your promise in the Bible that I am born again. I am a true child of God. Help me to trust you with all my heart.

Thank you, Lord Jesus.

Amen.”

Congratulations if you prayed those words from your heart. You can be sure that God heard you.

We would also love to hear from you. Please use the coupon on the facing page. Simply cut it out and post your reply in an envelope.

We look forward to hearing from you and will be pleased to send you a free copy of our booklet, 'Finding God.' Thank you.

True 'new life' stories in this issue . . .



Civil engineer
Ryan Hoffman



Speaker
Andrew Cannon



Doctor Isaac
Ohonba



Former Police Officer,
Simon Pinchbeck

Local contact number

This magazine is produced by the Full Gospel Businessmen, UK and Ireland, who are all active members of their local Christian Churches from the full range of Christian Denominations.



Many leaders of these Christian Churches have personally endorsed the work of the Full Gospel Businessmen, (FGB). These include the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, who says : "We need more men like them."

To contact FGB, UK and Ireland, email: office@fgbuk.org or phone: 01565 632 667 or visit the FGB website www.fgbuk.org, where you will find many more real life stories, like the ones in this magazine, to read or watch.