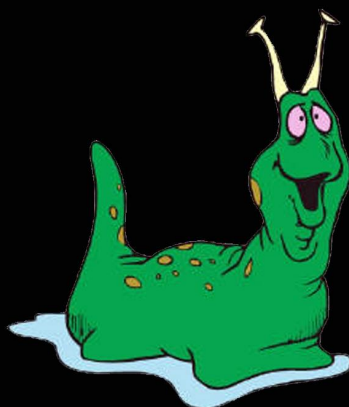


# *Inside* Life

Issue 1/ 2006

Your FREE Copy

What Happened  
*before*  
“The Big Bang”?



It's Family Night ! . . . . . Slugging it out . . . . . Getting a Handle on Stress

# ***Inside Life***

*A magazine of understanding*

Volume 1, Number 1, January 2006



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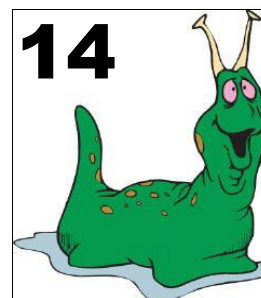
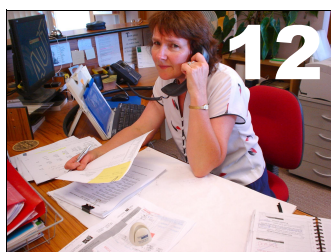
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### ***Inside Life***

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

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

***Inside Life*** is published four times a year, free of charge as a community service.

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### ***Our Cover:***

**Solar System Montage:** A montage of planetary images taken by spacecraft managed by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. Included are (from top to bottom) images of Mercury, Venus, Earth (and Moon), Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.

Photo courtesy of NASA.





# Why another magazine?

Go into any bookshop or newsagency in NZ, and you will be confronted by a kaleidoscopic array of magazines of all shapes and sizes, covering almost the full gamut of human activity and interest. There are women's magazines, men's magazines, fishing, sailing and boating magazines, publications about cars, hobbies, geography, history – you name it, and there will be something in print about it!

Come home from the bookshop and your mailbox will very likely be bursting at the seams with a fresh batch of colourful advertising brochures, perhaps even including another magazine or two – freebies distributed by marketers or community groups. And perhaps among them today, for the first time, you have found this new magazine, "Inside Life"!

"Why add *another* new magazine to this overabundance of literature?", you might well ask!

The publishers of "Inside Life" truly feel that we have something worthwhile to add to the range of magazines in New Zealand. We intend this magazine to be quite different to all the others – to add a unique and important new flavour to the mix.

Other magazines report on the news, on the events, activities and interests of people. They generally provide *information* rather than *insight*. "Inside Life", on the other hand, aims to be a magazine of *understanding*. Rather than just reporting on life, "Inside Life" will seek to delve *inside* the marvellous mystery that is *life*, and to examine what it is all about. What is the purpose of life? Why are human beings on the earth? Is there some plan behind it? Is there a God? What happens after we die? "Inside Life" plans to tackle the deep questions of life, in a simple, understandable way.

Mankind's knowledge has increased phenomenally in recent years! But so also have our troubles! We don't seem to be able to solve the problems of war, marriage breakdown, suicide, depression, crime, poverty – these conditions are still rampant, despite our much vaunted technological advances.

"Inside Life" intends to dig deep and look at the issues right at the heart, or the "*inside*", of *life*, asking and answering the important questions of our existence. We also plan to include articles offering practical help and encouragement in living a happier and more meaningful life.

How can we do this? The publishers of "Inside Life" believe there is a *spiritual* dimension to life, and this spiritual area holds the key to understanding the deep issues of our existence. We will seek to explore this spiritual element of life by considering the Bible, which we believe is a handbook given by God to answer the deep questions and challenges of life. But we have no intention of being "Bible bashers" with a "holier than thou" attitude! And we don't see any value in blindly believing the Bible without *proving* it.

Is the Bible believable? Is it relevant to modern life? Let's not take that for granted – let's see if it can be proved. We do believe it has some important answers, but we need to look at it in a realistic, down to earth manner, and objectively seek the answers to the profound but practical questions that penetrate deep "*inside life*" today!

We hope you will find "Inside Life" adds a fresh new perspective to life that will cause you to think, and will be of practical help to you. We welcome feedback – positive or negative. Please feel free to write to us using the addresses on page 2.

Happy reading!



# What happened *before* “The Big Bang”?

By Rex Morgan

**A**s I look up at the night sky from my home in Auckland, I am often moved to gasp with awe at the magnificence of the star-studded expanse stretched out above me. When I have the chance to view it from the remoteness of the countryside, the sight is even more awesome.

But of course the stars we can see with the naked eye only represent an infinitesimally tiny fraction of what is actually there. All we can see are some of the closest stars of our own galaxy, the Milky Way. Beyond this are literally *billions* of other galaxies! Immense words like “billions” trip easily off the tongues of astronomers involved in the study of the vastness of outer space. Measurements describing the sizes, temperatures, and distances between heavenly bodies, including such phenomena as comets, nebulae,

**Galaxies Galore:** Gazing deep into the universe, NASA's Hubble Space Telescope has spied a menagerie of galaxies. Located within the same tiny region of space, these numerous galaxies display an assortment of unique characteristics. Some are big; some are small. A few are relatively nearby, but most are far away. Hundreds of these faint galaxies had never been seen before until their light was captured by Hubble. This image represents a typical view of our distant universe. In taking this picture, Hubble is looking down a long corridor of galaxies stretching billions of light-years distant in space, corresponding to looking billions of years back in time. The field shown here covers a relatively small patch of sky, a fraction of the area of the full moon, yet it is richly populated with a variety of galaxy types. All photos in this article courtesy of NASA.

quasars and black holes, involve figures that boggle the mind.

The distances are so great that it would be ridiculous for astronomers to measure them in kilometres. Rather, they speak in terms of light years, referring to the distance light can travel in a year, around 9.5 trillion kilometres. Using this enormous unit of measurement, our Milky Way is a spiral galaxy about 100,000 light years in diameter and varying from 10,000 to 30,000 light years in thickness. It contains an estimated 200 billion stars. The sun takes 240 million years to make one

orbit around the Milky Way. Figures of this magnitude are difficult for the average person to comprehend or even imagine, yet we are only talking about our galaxy, one amongst billions of others!

Photos taken from the Hubble Space Telescope indicate there are 50 billion galaxies. To give some idea of the meaning of numbers like these, if you were to count galaxies at the rate of one per second, you would take over 150 years to reach 50 billion.

What a massive and magnificent universe we live in!



## The Big Bang

Have you ever wondered: where did all of this come from?

It's a question worth thinking about. Astronomers and cosmologists have studied diligently into the origin of the universe for many years, and have proposed a number of theories to explain it. The most widely held position is that the universe began with an explosion, called the "Big Bang", about 13.7 billion years ago. The vast majority of scientists agree that the evidence argues strongly for this scenario.

In 1929 astronomer Edwin Hubble discovered that all the galaxies in every direction appeared to be moving away from each other. He based this conclusion on the "red shift" in the spectrum of the light coming from the galaxies. Just as the sound coming from a train whistle or ambulance siren is lowered in pitch or frequency if the train or ambulance is travelling away from the hearer, so the light from distant galaxies is lowered in frequency, or reddened, if the galaxy is travelling away from the earth.

Hubble's observation that the

galaxies are moving away from each other means that the universe is expanding. To picture the way this is happening, think of what would happen if you were to blow up a balloon with dots marked on its surface. The dots would move further apart as the balloon expanded.

**If there was  
nothing in  
existence before  
the Big Bang, how  
could something  
have come  
from nothing?**

This means the galaxies were closer together in the past. Working backwards in time, the Big Bang theory holds that the universe began as an explosion of space and matter, starting from an enormously dense and hot state when all the matter and energy in the universe was concentrated in a tiny space, known as a "singularity".

Early Big Bang theorists also predicted the existence of cosmic background radiation, the glow left over from the explosion. This radiation was actually discovered in 1964, providing powerful confirmation of the theory.

Observations made in 2003 by the NASA satellite WMAP probe indicate that the Big Bang took place 13.7 billion years ago, with a remarkably small one percent margin of error.

### Can something come from nothing?

Supposing most scientists are right, and the universe began with a Big Bang, the next question to ask is "What caused the Big Bang?" In other words, "Where did the Big Bang come from?"

Robert Jastrow, founding director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, says in his book *God and the Astronomers*, "Consider the enormity of the problem. Science has proven that the universe exploded into being at a certain moment. It asks, 'What cause produced this effect? Who or what put the matter and energy into the universe? Was the universe created out of nothing, or was it gathered



**A Grazing Encounter Between Two Spiral Galaxies:** The Hubble Space Telescope photographed this image of two galaxies trapped in mutual orbit around each other, resulting in distortion and disruption of one another. Our awesome universe contains myriads of spectacular phenomena. Where did the universe come from? Is it all a matter of blind chance, or was it orchestrated by a powerful divine being?

together out of pre-existing materials? And science cannot answer these questions..."

Cosmologists' observations cannot reach back to the time before the Big Bang. But we must ask the question "Where did the matter and energy released in the Big Bang come from?" If there was nothing in existence before the Big Bang, how could something have come from nothing?

Imagine a world in which there is nothing. Absolutely nothing at all in existence anywhere. Now ask yourself, "Is it possible for anything to come out of nothing?" Such an occurrence would defy the principles of logic, reason and science. Clearly, if there *was* a time when there was nothing, there would *still* be nothing!

Since it is impossible for something to come from nothing, there are just two choices: either the universe has always existed, or it was produced by something else that was already in existence.

If the Big Bang theory is correct, science has ruled out the first of these alternatives, by proving that the universe did have a beginning.

Another evidence that the universe hasn't always existed was outlined in an article entitled "The Origin of the Universe" in *The Economist* of April 12, 1980. The article pointed out "A more fundamental problem with the notion of an ageless universe has to do with the second law of thermodynamics, one of the most fundamental laws of physics. This states that (in the macro world at any rate) order gives way to disorder, irreversibly. Cars

unwinding, depleting its reserves of ordered energy."

A further factor showing the universe had to have a beginning was the discovery of the radioactive decay of certain elements. This means that these elements could not be infinitely old, or they would have already turned to lead. There must have been a time when radioactive materials began to disintegrate.



**Lift-off of Mariner 1, bound for Venus:** *Mankind has interest in exploring the universe and the ability to do so, although we are still dwarfed by its enormity. How come man has a mind, with the ability to think, dream and explore? Did our imagination and inventiveness somehow arise from inert matter?*

If the universe hasn't always existed, there are only two possibilities for its origin. Either it came about by blind chance, by accident, from nothing; or it was generated by something else that was already in existence. The first of these options defies logic, as we have seen above.

Here is where the Christian Bible offers an answer, with its simple and authoritative opening words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth".

#### **A world of astounding complexity**

Let's stop for a moment and consider some specific aspects of the universe.

It so happens that the earth is located just the right distance from the sun. If it were only fractionally, say around 2%, further away, we would all freeze. If it were as little as 2% closer, we would all burn up.

It so happens also that the earth moves at just the right speed. If it moved just a little faster in its orbit around the sun, the centrifugal force would hurl us away to our destruction like a stone from a slingshot. If it travelled only slightly more slowly, the sun's massive gravity would draw our planet closer, causing the extinction of all life.

The size of the earth is just right too. Its corresponding gravity enables a thin layer of gases, mostly nitrogen and oxygen, to form our atmosphere – just the right mixture of gases to sustain life. If our planet was only a little larger, hydrogen would be unable to escape the atmosphere, making it inhospitable to life. If earth was a little smaller, oxygen would escape and water would evaporate.

Many other aspects of the solar system also work remarkably in our favour. For instance, the moon happens to be in just the right place too. If it was further away, or closer than it is, the oceans would flood over the land, destroying all life.

Without a planet the size of Jupiter positioned just where Jupiter is, the earth would be struck about 1000 times more frequently by comets or comet debris than it currently is.

The list of "fortunate coincidences" like this goes on and on. But are they just fortunate coincidences, or were they designed by something greater than they are?

When we replace the telescope with a microscope and look into the inner world, the same breathtaking complexity again astounds us. For instance, one molecule of human DNA, far too tiny to be seen by the naked eye, comprises an intricate spiralling ladder with about 100 million twists, and about 100 billion atoms. The human eye looking into

**If there was a time  
when there was  
nothing, there would  
*still* be nothing!**

wear out, buildings fall down, people grow old. The arrow of time points one way only: e.g. people never grow younger. The universe, like a clock, should be gradually but inexorably



the microscope contains 40 different mechanisms, such as a lens, a pupil, and a retina, and is made up of 130 million cells. And is there anything more marvellous than the human brain, which processes more than a million messages every second?

Whether we look up into the outer space of the world above us, or down into the inner space of the world around us, we are moved to marvel at what a massive and magnificent universe we live in!

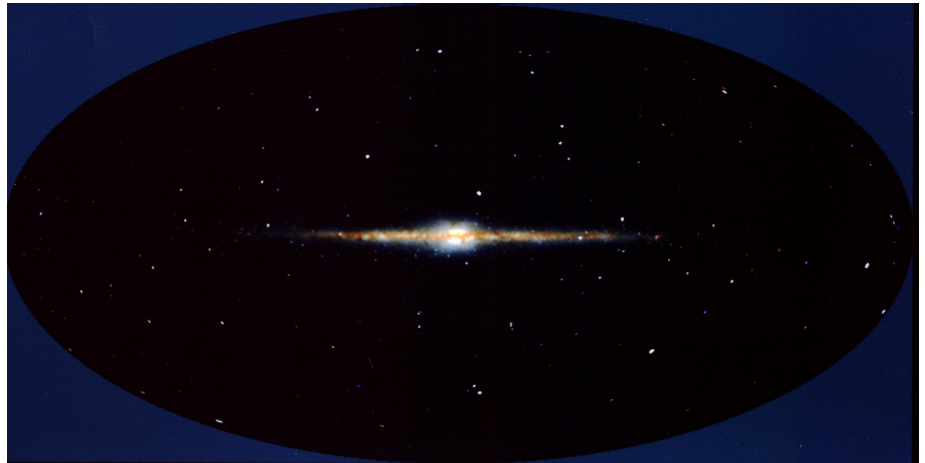
Did this mind-boggling display of awesome intricacy so perfectly tailored for life on earth all begin with a haphazard, arbitrary explosion that subsequently developed brilliantly into the remarkably precise mosaic of marvels we see all around us? Could all of this creation, crowned by the supreme masterpiece of the conscious human being, really have developed by sheer accident? By blind chance, from absolutely nothing? This seems to me to call for more faith than is required to believe in God!

A number of writers in the Bible speak of the origin of the universe. For instance, the book of Psalms says "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands". (Psalm 19:1)

Written perhaps 3,500 years ago, the book of Job describes the greatness of God in this way: "He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south." (Job 9:8-9)

The prophet Isaiah wrote: "Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing." (Isaiah 40:26)

Jeremiah described it this way: "He made the earth by his power; he founded the world by wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding." (Jeremiah 51:15)



**Edge-on view of the Milky Way:** From its orbit around Earth, the Goddard Space Flight Centre's Cosmic Background Explorer (COBE) captured this remarkable view of our Milky Way galaxy in infrared light, a form of radiation that humans cannot see but can feel in the form of heat, as part of its mission to test the "Big Bang" theory of the creation of the universe. According to NASA, "In addition to proving the Big Bang, the satellite discovered that the cosmic background radiation had indeed been produced in the Big Bang just as scientists originally speculated. The satellite's data even discovered the primordial temperature and density fluctuations that eventually gave rise to the Milky Way and other large-scale objects found in space today."

## New research on the origin of life

The *New Zealand Herald* of August 16, 2005 reported that a team of researchers is receiving US\$1 million per year from Harvard University for a research project studying how life began.

David R. Liu, a professor of chemistry and chemical biology at Harvard, is quoted as saying, "My expectation is that we will be able to reduce this to a very simple series of logical events that could have taken place with no divine intervention."

In other words, these researchers seem rather keen to prove God wasn't involved in the origin of life! But surely it is important go into research projects like this with an open mind, seeking to find the truth and ready for any outcome, rather than expecting to verify a predetermined assumption?

The project is called "The Origins of Life in the Universe Initiative". But of course studies into the beginning of *life* proceed from the "given" that the *universe* is already in place. They beg the question as to how the universe came about in the first place.

Actually, seeking the origin of life and seeking the origin of the universe are very similar propositions. Just as the universe couldn't just come about from nothing, similarly life couldn't just arise out of nothing. Louis Pasteur's experiments gave rise to the law of biogenesis, which reflects the fact that life can come only from pre-existing life. Never in the history of science has life been observed to come from non-living material, let alone to spring forth from absolutely nothing at all!

The accompanying article goes back to the very beginning. Once the origin of the universe is established, the origin of life naturally follows.

## Where did God come from?

In response to these assertions, the question may be asked: "But where did God come from?" That's a fair question, and should be carefully considered.

With its clear and authoritative opening statement about the origin of all things, the Bible simply answers that he was always there. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

It's hard for us to comprehend something that is eternal, because we live in a physical world, and naturally think of everything as being physical. Because of their temporary nature, all physical things have a beginning and an ending, and they all deteriorate over time.

But according to the Bible, there is also a spiritual dimension, and that is where God lives. John 4:24 says that "God is spirit", and other verses show he is invisible and immortal, or eternal, having no beginning or ending (Hebrews 7:3). This is because God lives outside the constraints of time and space. When he created the universe, and the material world sprung into existence, time and space began.

**Since there could be no time when there was nothing, there had to be something at the beginning, something that was already in existence, and that had in fact always been there.**

The Bible contends that the visible elements of the physical universe were made by someone who is invisible.

The biblical book of Hebrews says, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's



**"Pillars of Creation":** These eerie, dark pillar-like structures are actually columns of cool interstellar hydrogen gas and dust that are also incubators for new stars. The pillars protrude from the interior wall of a dark molecular cloud like stalagmites from the floor of a cavern. They are part of the "Eagle Nebula" (also called M16), a star-forming region 6,500 light-years away from Earth in the constellation Serpens. Did remarkable phenomena like this just appear out of nothing, or did the creation have a creator?

command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." (Hebrews 11:3)

Another scripture adds, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities -- his eternal power and divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made." (Romans 1:20)

Christians cannot absolutely prove to unbelievers that God exists. As the above quotation from Hebrews says, this is something they accept by faith. But they do have a wealth of reasonable evidence on which to base that faith. As we saw earlier, if there was nothing at the beginning, there would still be nothing now. Since there could be no time when there was nothing, there had to be something at the beginning, something that was already in

existence, and that had in fact always been there.

And that something had to be capable of creating everything, or there would still be nothing. So God didn't come from anywhere -- he was always there!

If you are interested in reading more on this subject, please write to **Inside Life**, P.O. Box 2709, Auckland, and request our free article "Can You Believe in God?"

Rex Morgan, the editor of "Inside Life", and his wife Marilyn live on Auckland's North Shore. Rex produced 264 issues of



a family newspaper from the age of 12 through 19, and has contributed articles to a number of publications since. Rex can be contacted at :  
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# Do You Have Time for a Happier Marriage?

is empty. Two people sit down to breakfast and realize they have nothing to discuss. The amount of time spent with another, of course, does not by itself indicate the quality of the relationship, but it is used frequently as a measurement of love. Time together is a crucial ingredient if a relationship is going to develop and grow.

Time together need not be spent only in talking. It may be spent just being together. I can think back to times on vacation when I enjoyed being with my wife, Shirley, sharing the same experiences, yet talking little. We enjoyed the same rushing mountain stream and the solitude without constant discussion. One of our favourite times is walking along the beach holding hands even after 45 years of marriage. Just being with each other, being aware of the other's presence, is often as meaningful as a verbal interchange.

Isn't it amazing that before marriage a couple can't find enough hours to share their thoughts, and afterward they can't find enough words to fill the minutes? And does anybody doubt the extent to which television is a barrier to time and communication? (Like the husband with his hand on the television remote who says, "Dear, do you want to say anything before the football season starts?")

Husbands, do you want to see if

your wife might enjoy a little more time just with you? Why not call her and make a date to take her out for a leisurely dinner somewhere where you can talk without interruption? Then note her response.

## A few questions

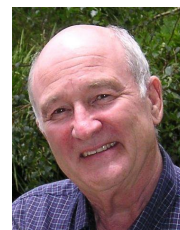
Husbands and wives, ask yourselves:

- Does my use of free time help or get in the way of my marriage relationship?
- Do I seek out activities or duties that prevent me being with my spouse?
- Do I tend to give my spouse only leftover time?
- Do I use television, newspapers or hobbies, as excuses to avoid dealing with my feelings about our relationship?

*Dexter H. Faulkner*

Isn't it amazing that before marriage a couple can't find enough hours to share their thoughts, and afterward they can't find enough words to fill the minutes?

*Dexter H. Faulkner and his wife Shirley live in southern California. He is a retired journalist who contributes to several publications worldwide. If you desire to correspond with him his email address is [faulknerdh@hotmail.com](mailto:faulknerdh@hotmail.com)*





# It's Family Night!

**"**I remember growing up always looking forward to Friday night," says Karen. "Because our family always had a special meal together -- white tablecloth, candles, dessert, the whole thing. It was great!"

Now married with children of her own, Karen is continuing the "family night" tradition in her own family. And although constantly changing family schedules mean she can't keep it strictly to the same night every week, her kids remind her that they expect that one special family meal each week -- with dessert!

Setting aside one mealtime each week as a special family

time is a good way to build family ties and develop some great memories.

Haven't got time? Can't get everyone to be in one place at one time? All the more reason to do it!

If your family is too busy to be together over a meal once a week then surely it is just too busy. And if your family shares most mealtimes together anyway, making one of them extra special will add a welcome feature to mealtimes once a week. Put some fun on the menu!

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- ☐ A traditional Sunday lunch.

- ☐ A barbecue or picnic at the beach or park.
- ☐ A family dinner once a week.
- ☐ A weekend breakfast or brunch.
- ☐ A meal at a restaurant.

## **Ideas for young children**

If you have very young children and find mealtimes more stress than they're worth, try breaking the routine and putting some fun back into things by making the special mealtime different and relaxed:

- ☐ Eat outside.
- ☐ Sit on the floor and eat (put an old mat down first!).
- ☐ Make the meal entirely "eat with your hands" (more delicately known as "finger food").



There's something about sharing a meal that relaxes us and bonds us. It helps facilitate conversation and sharing. It could also give different family members a chance to contribute something special to the meal (ever tried a three-year-old's chocolate cake?!) or to take responsibility for preparing the whole meal. With older children you could do a theme night featuring a particular style of food. Or, if no one likes cooking, you might prefer to order take-away food so no one has to slave over a hot stove.

Whatever, whenever and however you do it, put a special family meal on your weekly calendar and put some fun on the menu!

# Family Traditions

**You can easily build family traditions into special mealtimes.**

***For example:***

- ☐ **Going for a walk around the block before dessert.**
- ☐ **Inviting a special guest once a month.**
- ☐ **Having older children invite a friend.**
- ☐ **Celebrating achievements of the week.**
- ☐ **Inviting each family member to contribute one item of news or interest.**
- ☐ **Incorporating a light-hearted family meeting.**

***Add value by incorporating some after dinner activities:***

- ☐ **Watching a movie (or videos of family outings or holidays).**
- ☐ **Playing charades, board games or telling stories.**
- ☐ **Having one person present something entertaining, or staging a family concert.**
- ☐ **Inviting each family member to play one piece of music they like for the rest of the family.**

# New Year's Resolutions

Okay, this year you're really going to ....  
Not like last year!

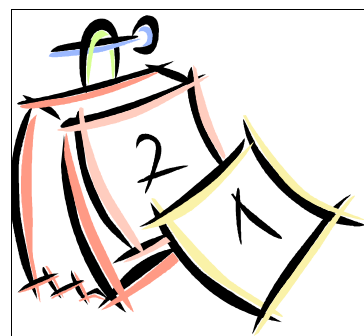
The trouble is, we too often make vast, vague resolutions that overwhelm us within a few weeks if not days, or rash, impulsive resolutions that are unattractive or forgettable. Instead, think of a resolution as a "goal" -- somewhere you want to be.

"I have spent thousands of hours reading books and listening to cassette tapes about success and have found there is one factor on which they all agree," wrote author and financial advisor Noel Whittaker in *Getting It Together* (Simon & Schuster Australia, 1993). "That is the importance of setting goals -- the ability to decide what you want and then make a detailed plan to go after it. If you can master the art of doing that your success is guaranteed, for you have literally given yourself the power to design your own future."

Here are some common goal-setting principles to help you achieve your new year's resolutions:

- 1. Clearly define your goal** and set a time-frame (rather than "I'm going to get fit", decide "I'm going to walk five kilometres five times a week for three months").
- 2. Start with small, short-term goals** that work towards larger achievements (after you've achieved your five-kilometre walk goal, you may want to start a gym membership for the next three months).
- 3. Write down your goal** somewhere you will see it daily.
- 4. Tell your friends about your goal** (they'll help keep the pressure on you, they may even support you, and it will help you be realistic).
- 5. Plan your achievement** (for example, schedule your daily walk, buy some walking shoes).
- 6. Review your progress** each week.
- 7. Once a goal is achieved, celebrate.** Then move on to the next one.

Yes, this year you really are going to...!



# GETTING A HANDLE ON STRESS

By Gael McInnes, RGON. RM.  
BHIth Sc.(Nsg)

“It’s mine, I worked for it, I deserve it! And as soon as I have time I’ll have my nervous breakdown!” (Anon.)

Anyone who is expecting life to be all fun and games is living in an impractical dreamland!

From the moment we are born, we interact with our environment. Constant biochemical adjustments are necessary to meet the variety of demands on us – like noise, temperature, activity, achievement, failure, financial burdens, poor health, relationship problems, anxiety, frustration, boredom, anger, fear, joy – to name but a few. In fact, the whole range of activities that make up modern living. This is stress – a normal, natural part of life.

In response to these demands or stimuli (the stressor), biochemical reactions occur in the body, (the stress response). Heart rate increases, blood pressure rises, adrenaline and other hormones are released into the blood stream, and blood sugar and cholesterol levels rise. We are prepared for “fight or flight”.

The level of response depends upon our perception of the stressor, which can be real or imagined. It is important to be able to separate reality from false perception – to get the facts straight. Positive thinking and sound emotional health are important. When we do not cope well, and at the end of the day



## Are you stressed?

*Stress is a huge problem of modern living.*

there seems to be as much work as at the beginning, and we can’t see a way forward, are not sleeping, perhaps turning to drugs and alcohol, then our body is distressed. This unrelieved stress causes a negative effect on the complex structure of the body.

Most people can avoid distress by learning to effectively control stress in the daily experience of life.

Here are some tips on handling tension and stress:

### 1. *Learn to cope with change.*

Accept the fact that your life will change constantly and practice adapting to it. Try to make an adventure of adjusting to new situations and challenges. Keep your eye on your long-range goals and life values.

### 2. *Learn to cope with problems.*

Plan for possible problems. For example, I don’t expect to have a flat tyre, but I always carry a spare. Should a problem develop, this will save a lot of hassle.

One of the best things I learnt when I was a Girl Guide was the motto – “Be Prepared”.

Meet problems with courage, faith and hope. Confront problems – don’t avoid them – nip them in the bud. They won’t go away by themselves.

### 3. *Learn to deal with conflicts.*

Engage in creative ways for solutions to the conflict, but don’t run away from it. Whatever methods you use – particularly peaceful ones – deal with it effectively. Unresolved conflicts become one of the





## Stress-Illness Assessment Scale

By Dr. Thomas Holmes and Dr. Richard Rahe,  
University of Washington, USA, 1967

### A sample of some of the values:

Event	Scale of Impact
Death of spouse	100
Divorce	73
Marital Separation	65
Death of close family member	63
Personal injury or illness	53
Marriage	50
Fired, laid off at work	47
Retirement	45
Pregnancy	40
Death of close friend	37
Large mortgage	31
Change in job responsibilities	29
Change in living conditions	25
Trouble with boss	23

## ...Or unstressed?

**Read this article for tips on how to handle stress.**

most frequent causes of stress and distress.

### 4. Conquer the worry habit.

Worry is a real problem and a big killer. Worry can sap your creative energies. It can make you less effective, and it produces no positive results.

### 5. Learn how to relax and relieve tension.

Take a short relaxation or meditation break periodically. Vary your tasks from time to time. Exercise every day – it does not have to be strenuous – just go for a 10 – 15 minute walk, mow the lawn, wash the car, do a bit of gardening or housework. This will help relieve tension and you'll sleep better at night.

Practice emptying your mind each night as you prepare for bed. Remind yourself that you have done all you could do that day, and you have your plans in order for the next day.

### 6. Learn to keep events in perspective.

Learn to separate what is really serious from what is merely frustrating. Most things we call serious are really only annoyances.

### 7. Cultivate a good sense of humour.

Stress seldom overcomes people who can laugh at their problems and at themselves. Learn to look for the humour in every situation – you'll live longer and have more fun along the way.

### 8. Vary your interests.

"Take time to smell the roses." The time you spend enjoying your family, your friends, your hobbies, and your cultural interests will not only make your life richer, but also help you to cope with stress.

Practice these eight tips to help you handle stress and prevent distress, and you can avoid being a victim of tension and stress.

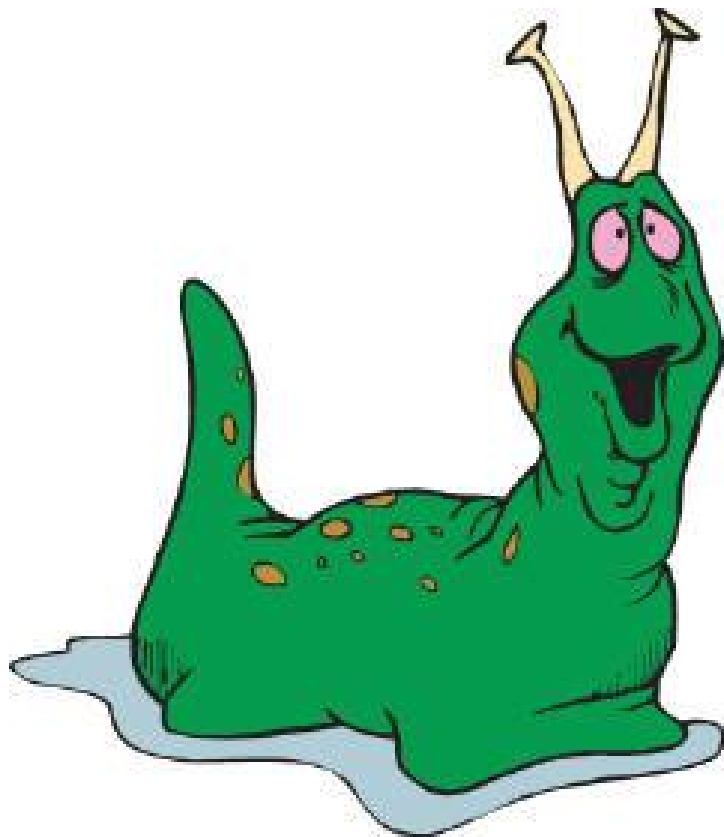
As Proverbs 12:25 says, "An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up."

If people do not come apart and rest a while, they may just plain come apart!



Gael McInnes, who lives in South Auckland, is a recently retired nurse and midwife, experienced in holistic care. Gael worked in diverse health arenas and taught at tertiary level.

# Slugging it out



By John Halford

**I don't usually like to lead people up the garden path, but I wonder if you could join me on mine for a moment. I want to show you a slug.**

This is a particularly impressive slug. It is about four and a half inches long, and has a lustrous silvery sheen—well, to be strictly honest, perhaps it is more of a slimy grey—but it does have a bright royal purple panel on each side. I have seen it several times as it slides across from the lawn to a flower bed, where it apparently hangs out during the day. It is steadily chewing its way through our flowers, but I haven't the heart to reach for the slug pellets. I have become rather fond of this slug, and I have the distinct impression that I have seen it before. I seem to remember it crossed my path last year. But do slugs live that long?

## A long, slow life

A few minutes of research on the Internet showed me that they did. In fact, I learned that a slug can live up to six years—given favorable circumstances, like not being eaten, trodden on or eating a slug pellet. I wanted to know more. (If you stay with this article, you'll find out why, I promise.)

I bet you don't know much about slugs. For example, did you know they are not insects? They are molluscs, like clams and squid, and are distantly related to the octopus, but it is pretty distant. Octopi are considered to be quite intelligent; some people think they may be an intellectual match for animals such as rabbits. Slugs certainly are not. They probably do not have any measurable intelligence at all. But they make up for that in numbers. Someone has calculated that there are as many as 26,800 species of slug.

Most of them live on dead or decaying organic matter and even fungi. There are only a few species that feed on live plants—unfortunately those are the kind we have in our gardens. Biologists call slugs gastropods because they, like Napoleon's army, march on their stomachs. Also, like Napoleon's army, they don't do well in cold weather, surviving by burying themselves in the ground wrapped in a cocoon of their own slime. It has been estimated that there may be 250,000 slugs—weighing perhaps 70 pounds collectively—per acre of farmland.

## 'International' slugs

Since becoming slug conscious, I have begun noticing them on my travels. The biggest I have seen were in Sweden—massive black slugs, maybe six inches long, although I understand the biggest in the world are twice that size!

When in Holland I had the opportunity to find out how fast they can travel. I met a four-inch Dutch slug, engaged on a suicide mission across a cycle-path. It did not seem to be phased by the people flashing by. How fast was it going? I decided to time it. (I know, I know—I need to get a life.) I laid my mobile phone next to it to see how long it would take to travel its length.

Almost immediately the phone, set on loud ring/vibrate went off. I would have thought this would have the same effect on the slug as a stun grenade would have had on me at close quarters, but it didn't miss a beat. It took just under two minutes to travel the six-inch length of the phone. That works out at about 15 feet an hour, doesn't it?

What else can I tell you about slugs? (I am assuming you are still reading this, and probably wondering why. I



really will get to the point, soon, honest!) Well, they have as many as 27,000 backward slanting teeth, which act with a rasping movement, like a shark's. They also have a guillotine-like jaw, similar to that of an alligator. No wonder they play havoc with plants. They can eat several times their body weight in a night. They have eyes on the tips of their tentacles, and some species may also have infrared sensors, which allow them to detect food, if not mobile phones. Oh yes, and they like beer.

This really isn't very interesting, is it? But I am afraid slugs just aren't. I suppose I could liven things up by telling you about their sex life. Apparently they start out as males, spend their breeding life as hermaphrodites, and then become female in old age. They have a most elaborate mating ritual – although exactly why they need one isn't clear. Some species climb trees in pairs and hang from the branches by strands of their own saliva. I'd better leave it there. What happens next might offend some sensitive readers!

### From humble beginnings

So why am I wasting your time with this? Slugs really are some of the more boring, and even disgusting of God's creatures, aren't they? But

**I would not want to change places with a slug for one minute, let alone half a lifetime. But that is, in effect, what Jesus Christ was willing to do in order to become our Saviour.**

watching that slug make its laborious progress across my garden path, and realizing it might have been doing that for six years, reminded me of something the great Christian writer, C.S. Lewis, wrote in *Mere Christianity*. In a discussion about what it meant for Jesus to come and live on earth as a human being, he wrote: "The Eternal being who knows everything and who created the

whole universe, became not only a man, but (before that) a baby, and before that a fetus inside a woman's body. If you want to get the hang of it, think how you would like to become a slug or a crab." Have you ever thought of it like that? In December of each year, we are reminded of the birth of Jesus Christ. Although common sense tells us it probably wasn't really like that, we



have a romantic impression of the Nativity scene in the stable. There is the calm mother with her beautiful baby boy: "The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes. But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes."

I don't know how aware of his circumstances the baby Jesus was, but if in some way he was able to understand his situation, I bet he would have felt like crying. Think about it. Not so long ago he had been God, the Lord of Creation. Now he was a helpless baby, unable to talk, to stand or even control his bodily functions.

He who had possessed all power was dependent on his mother for everything. He got cold. He got hungry. He got colic, and had to be burped. His glorious, divine existence had been exchanged for the comparative squalor of life as a human being.

Whereas once he could roam the universe, unencumbered by the limitations of time and space, now he was wrapped in swaddling clothes, unable to move. He could get tired, dirty and discouraged. He would have to learn to crawl, to talk and feed himself.

I don't know if there was an ancient equivalent of the nursery rhyme that goes: "What are little boys made of. Slugs and snails and puppy dog's

tails...." But if Mary had ever sung it, I think Jesus would have muttered a rueful "Amen."

Those 30 or so years during which Jesus slugged it out in our world must have seemed like a long time. No wonder he prayed to the Father as he faced the end of his physical life with the unspeakable torture of crucifixion, "Glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" (John 17:5).

### Changing places

Watching that slug and remembering C.S. Lewis' words gave me a new appreciation for Jesus and the sacrifice he made. I would not want to change places with a slug for one minute, let alone half a lifetime. But that is, in effect, what Jesus Christ was willing to do in order to become our Saviour.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full," he said in John 10:10. He knew what life could be like, and he wanted to share it with us – not what we call life, squashed into a few decades, constrained by time and space and trapped in a decaying physical shell. Real life is so much more than that. It is everlasting, indestructible, freed from all the weaknesses of mind and character. It is greater than anything we can really grasp, because: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

We cannot fully grasp it, any more than that slug on the path can understand what my existence is like. So this isn't really about slugs. It is about Jesus – who became one of us for a while so that we could be with him forever.



*John Halford is a writer and editor, currently living in the USA, but writing for and editing magazines and articles on several continents. He can be contacted at [john.halford@wgc.org](mailto:john.halford@wgc.org)*

## Coming up in future issues of ***Inside Life...***

- *Coping with Change*
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- *Steps to Financial Security*
- *Making the Most of your Time*
- *The Bible — Myth or Authority?*
- *Valuing Teen Age*
- *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*
- *Depression — the Black Plague*
- *Keys to Success*
- *Who Is Jesus?*
- *Astrology and the New Age*
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- *The Answer to Crime*
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- *The Marvellous Human Mind*
- *Overcoming Loneliness*
- *Would "God Defend New Zealand"?*
- *After Death — Then What?*



Time Management



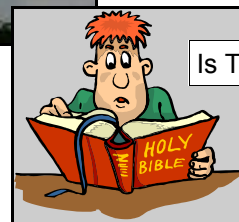
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