

THE EPOCH TIMES

LIFE &

TRADITION

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The Power of Forgiveness

Even on death row, one can choose happiness. Sunny Jacobs has been there, and made that choice.

In these times beset by anger, fear, and confusion, many people may be looking for someone to blame. And yet, forgiveness is probably what the world needs most today, according to Jacobs.

CATHERINE YANG

At age 28, Sunny Jacobs was sentenced to death for a crime she didn't commit and spent five of her 17 years on death row in solitary confinement. Her life was completely upended, her children were put into the foster care system, and it would take nearly two decades to appeal her wrongfully convicted case. Yet somehow, she managed to unlock the key to healing and forgiveness, and found joy even while she was in solitary.

When other exonerees look at Jacobs, who now lives a contented life with her husband Peter Pringle and their pets in

the idyllic Ireland countryside, it sparks a kind of hope.

It didn't take long for people to begin reaching out to Jacobs, asking how they too could attain what she has.

"They want what we have. They see that we've been able to overcome all that and find happiness and healing and love," Jacobs said. But forgiveness is the last thing on their minds.

"We have to ease into that conversation," she said with a laugh. "Forgiveness?" they'll ask in a tone of incredulous disgust. "It's like the f-word."

So she tells them this: "Forgiveness is a selfish act you do for yourself because no one else can do it for you. They can't free

you from what's inside yourself."

In fact, forgiveness is probably what most of us in the world need today, Jacobs said, as the pandemic has turned the world on its head and people are filled with anger, fear, confusion, and want someone to blame.

Sunny's Story

Jacobs was a peace-loving mother of two young children who rescued and cared for animals, and didn't know how anyone could imagine she could be capable of violent crime. Yet she found herself convicted of killing two police officers, and was put in a women's maximum-security prison.

Her husband was likewise sentenced to

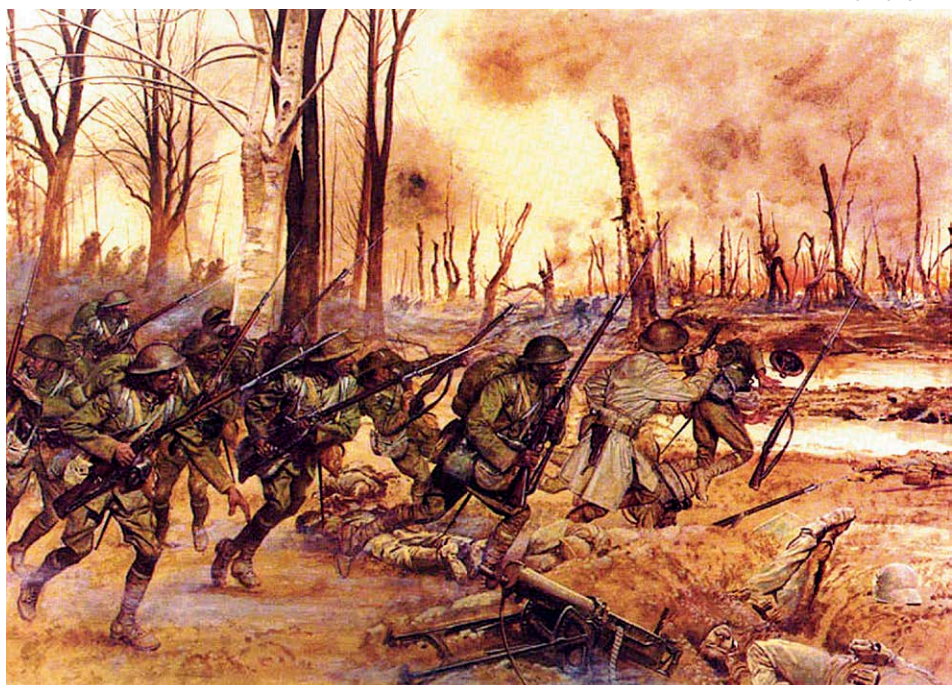
death, and unlike Jacobs, his sentence never changed; he was executed in 1990. Their daughter was so young that she had no idea Jacobs was her mother, beyond being shown photos of her by her grandparents.

Yet Jacobs began her journey to forgiveness perhaps surprisingly early during her sentence, when she realized her life belonged to her.

"I got sick of myself. I was never an angry, fearful, confused person until I was stuck in a concrete rock, and I thought, 'This is going to be the end of my life,'" she said. Then she thought, "I don't have to let them make me miserable."

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PUBLIC DOMAIN



The Harlem Hellfighters: The Incredible Story Behind the Most Decorated US Regiment in WWI

LAWRENCE W. REED

In his commencement address at Washington, D.C.'s Howard University in June 1924, almost six years after World War I ended,

An illustration of the Harlem Hellfighters in Séchault, France, in fall 1918, during the Meuse-Argonne offensive, by H. Charles McBarron, Jr.

President Calvin Coolidge paid tribute to African Americans who had fought in it: "The colored people have repeatedly proved their devotion to the high ideals of our country. They gave their services in the war with the same patriotism and readiness that other citizens did. The records

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The Harlem Hellfighters: The Incredible Story Behind the Most Decorated US Regiment in WWI

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of the selective draft show that somewhat more than 2,250,000 colored men were registered. The records further prove that, far from seeking to avoid participation in the national defense, they showed that they wished to enlist before the selective service act was put into operation, and they did not attempt to evade that act afterwards."

American involvement in that European calamity remains controversial to this day. Personally, I regard it as one of the two greatest foreign policy blunders since the dawn of the 20th century (the other being the Iraq War of 2003). However, one can oppose the decisions of politicians and still admire the battlefield valor of those who carried them out.

When Woodrow Wilson and Congress committed America to the war in April 1917, the country's black citizens could rightfully ask (and some did), "What's in it for us?" Wilson said America must "make the world safe for democracy" but right here at home, democracy was all too often denied to blacks. Wilson himself regarded them as second-class citizens. He promoted segregation throughout the federal government and turned a blind eye to discrimination by state and local governments.

Nonetheless, African Americans went to war, many of them hoping they might defeat both Germans abroad and racism at home if they proved themselves in battle. Coolidge's high praise was richly earned, and no contingent of African Americans deserved it more than the U.S. Army's 369th Infantry, a volunteer regiment known as the Harlem Hellfighters.

Where did their nickname come from? Harlem (in New York City) was home to many of the enlistees. No one seems sure, but it was either the French or the Germans who first referred to them as Hellfighters because of the fierceness with which they fought. And none fought more ferociously than Henry Johnson. On one night in the Argonne Forest, Johnson endured 21 wounds as he killed four Germans in hand-to-hand combat and rescued a fellow American—all in a matter of minutes. An entire platoon of 28 German soldiers scattered and fled at the sight of Johnson's prowess.

Formed from a New York National Guard unit, the men of the 369th learned basic military practices at Camp Whitman, New York, before being sent to Camp Wadsworth in Spartanburg, South Carolina, for combat training. They weren't welcomed by many of the locals there, and some were subjected to discrimination and vile epithets for no more reason than their color. In December 1917, they were shipped to France where they expected to see action on the front lines.

Their high spirits were quickly dashed when it became apparent the Army didn't want to deploy them for anything other than manual labor, far from the fighting,



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Some of the soldiers of the 369th Infantry Regiment (known as the 15th New York National Guard Regiment) who were awarded the French Croix de Guerre for gallantry in action, 1919. (L-R) Front row: Pvt. Ed Williams, Herbert Taylor, Pvt. Leon Fraitor, Pvt. Ralph Hawkins. Back row: Sgt. H. D. Prinas, Sgt. Dan Storms, Pvt. Joe Williams, Pvt. Alfred Hanley, Cpl. T. W. Taylor.

The 369th Infantry Regiment band played jazz for American wounded in the courtyard of a Paris hospital in 1918.

Even the rifles they brought with them were confiscated by U.S. Army officials.

The commander of the American Expeditionary Force, Gen. John J. Pershing, was reluctant to commit any U.S. troops to the front until he felt he had assembled them in sufficient numbers to ensure victory. The French, meanwhile, were desperate for manpower. Finally bowing to French pressure, Pershing gave them the 369th. While some regarded black troops as expendable, they ultimately proved themselves indispensable.

Consider this amazing record of the Harlem Hellfighters: No American unit experienced more time in combat than they did—no less than 191 days under fire. They never lost an inch of ground. The enemy never captured a single of their number. They suffered the highest casualty rate of any U.S. regiment. None deserted. The grateful French bestowed their highest military honor, the Croix de Guerre, upon the entire regiment. Many individuals of the regiment received the U.S. Army's second-highest award, the Distinguished Service Cross. Posthumously, Henry Johnson received America's Medal of Honor in 2015. The 369th ended up as the most decorated U.S. regiment of the war.

Another distinguishing feature of the Harlem Hellfighters was their band, the largest and best known of any regiment. Its leader was James Reese Europe, whose enlistment in 1917 proved to be a boon for recruitment. He was one of America's best-known black musicians and others such as Noble Sissle, who became Europe's lieutenant and lead vocalist, were eager to serve with him.

Europe's band was extremely popular with the French, even when Europe introduced his own arrangement of "La Marseillaise," France's national anthem. The Hellfighters' band brought both jazz and ragtime music to France, where nobody had heard either before.

James Reese Europe was tragically murdered in May 1919 by a disgruntled band member. Sissle went on to great fame in music and stage. He formed a life-long partnership with black musician Eubie Blake. The musical that the two of them produced in 1921, "Shuffle Along," ran for more than 500 performances on Broadway and is credited with igniting the magnificent flowering of culture we know as the Harlem Renaissance.

No story of the Harlem Hellfighters, which I encourage readers to explore through the links provided below, would be complete without a mention of a white man, Col. William Hayward, a native of Nebraska. Hayward served as the regiment's commander from its inception. He was a champion of black soldiers and loved by his men, in whom Hayward never lost faith. He was



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an unwavering defender of equal rights for all colors. When the 369th returned to New York in 1919, it was Hayward (not Wilson or Pershing) who ensured there would be a massive parade to welcome them. That reception by cheering throngs in the streets of New York was a glorious moment of racial harmony.

No matter what you think about America entering World War I, and no matter what color your skin, you can celebrate the heroic Harlem Hellfighters. They were among the best.

For Additional Information, See: "James Reese Europe and the Hellfighters" (video) from part 2 of Ken Burns' "Jazz" "The Harlem Hellfighters" (video) from the History Channel

"The Harlem Hellfighters' Great War" (video) from IMDb TV "Harlem Hellfighters 369th Infantry" from A&E (video)

"The Harlem Hellfighters: When Pride Met Courage" by Walter Dean Myers and Bill Miles

"The Hellfighters of Harlem" by Bill Harris "Harlem's Hellfighters: The African-American 369th Infantry in World War I" by Stephen L. Harris

"The Harlem Hellfighters" (novel) by Max Brooks

"One Hundred Years Ago, the Harlem Hellfighters Bravely Led the U.S. Into World War I" by Erick Trickey

Lawrence W. Reed is FEE's president emeritus, Humphreys Family senior fellow, and Ron Manners global ambassador for Liberty, having served for nearly 11 years as FEE's president (2008-2019). He is the author of the 2020 book, "Was Jesus a Socialist?" as well as "Real Heroes: Incredible True Stories of Courage, Character, and Conviction" and "Excuse Me, Professor: Challenging the Myths of Progressivism." His website is LawrenceWReed.com

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The 369th Infantry was the first New York regiment to parade as veterans of the Great War.

It's Never Too Late to Dream Big

A conversation with country singer Kimberly Dawn

BARBARA DANZA

LA-based singer Kimberly Dawn's newest country music single, "93," is a nostalgic look back at the pre-smartphone age of the '90s when times were simpler and worries few. It speaks to any generation who harken back to the good old days.

Dawn's career has taken a different path than the typical music star, beginning after the birth of her fourth child—her children are now 15, 17, 20, and 22—proving it's never too late to follow a dream. I asked about her experience and for her advice to other moms with a big dream.

The Epoch Times: When did you first dream of becoming a musician?

Kimberly Dawn: When I was 4 years old, I remember seeing the movie "Grease." I

was so fascinated by that movie.

The Epoch Times: You began piano and guitar lessons after the birth of your fourth child. What inspired you to take that leap at that point in your life?

Ms. Dawn: I took up piano lessons after the birth of my fourth child because I was feeling this pull back into music. I didn't know at that moment that I was going to jump 100 percent back into that world but I knew that piano brought peace to me. I actually started taking guitar lessons about a year ago. I've always loved the guitar, and since I've been playing piano for so many years, I thought, now is the time for me to pick up another instrument, and I'm having a lot of fun learning the guitar as well.

The Epoch Times: How did you hone your craft and begin your career while managing the demands of motherhood?

Ms. Dawn: I will tell you it has been a juggling act. It hasn't always been easy. I am very blessed because I have a husband who has been completely supportive of my career and so we tag-team with schedules. I definitely would say in the

past five years I've been able to dive in even deeper into music. I will leave for Nashville for a week each month. It's definitely getting easier for me to leave the family when I need to, now that they're getting older. It obviously was very hard when they were younger because as a mom I just wanted to make sure that I was always present. I still plan my schedule around my family, because at the end of the day, my family does come first.

The Epoch Times: What was the most challenging part of embarking on a new career as a busy mom?

“**I just put my dreams on hold for a period of time and then went back to pursuing them.**”

Kimberly Dawn

sure that I was there for the important things. Sometimes I would miss out on a dance show or a baseball game. That was hard. My kids know that Mom is a musician and sometimes I am working and I couldn't be there. I feel like they are understandable most of the time.

A Kindergarten Friendship Blooms

LOUISE BEVAN

Kate, a stay-at-home mom who lives in Colorado with her kids and husband, Steve, is continually inspired by their three children, all of whom have special needs.

Having struggled with judgment from others toward her kids, Kate was touched when a little girl at her son Nicholas's kindergarten took a shine to him.

The little girl, said Kate, "likes him just the way he is."

Nicholas, aged 5, and the little girl, whom Kate calls "E" to protect her privacy, met in kindergarten in 2020. "They like to play outside together," Kate wrote on her blog, *This Special Journey*. "They like to sit by each other in school. They even like to hold hands."

But theirs isn't a typical friendship, Kate reflected. Owing to Nicholas's au-



COURTESY OF THIS SPECIAL JOURNEY

Nicholas and his friend E.

tism, it is one of inclusion, acceptance, and kindness.

While Nicholas spends much of his day in various therapies or learning life skills, he joins the general education kindergarteners for morning circle every day. The kids read, dance, play, and sing songs together.

DEAR NEXT GENERATION:

'Great Men and Women Don't Just Flare Into Existence, They Are Made'

→ Advice from our readers to our young people

Dear Next Generation, My late father gave me this pithy advice while in college, and it has stuck with me some 70 years: "Don't tell me about your I.Q. Show me your 'I did!'"

— Christopher J. Hoey
Florida

Let me begin by telling you some things about me and my family. I am 72 years old (older than I've ever been). I have six children, five girls and one boy. There were times when I thought that might be three more than I could afford! They are all wonderful people, hard-working, trying to do their best. Their lives, like most people's, have not been free of challenges and difficulties, and I am certain there may be more to come.

I must say, however, that so far they have been resilient and have persisted in doing good, something that, for a parent, is priceless! My wife passed away from cancer just over a year ago. She was an awesome artist; her work is in many places, even Europe. She was a class act and a classy lady for sure. I have a brother (four years older than me) who was killed in a tragic accident when 34 years old. He left his wife and five little boys (the oldest being 12) to go on without him. I have three sisters, one younger and two older. My youngest and older sister have both died of cancer. Fortunately, their children were grown when this occurred.

I am not writing about my family to draw attention to them or myself. Many people have had more difficulties than we have.

My purpose here is to help the next generation realize that bad things happen to good people, life sometimes deals bad cards, and sometimes life just isn't fair. Don't think that your life will be free of adversity—it won't! Also don't fall into the trap (so often laid by society) that your problems are always someone else's fault, even though sometimes they are. If you always think that your problems are caused by someone else, you aren't likely to fix them. Sometimes you have to look in the mirror to see what's wrong! It is wrong to want to never have obstacles or challenges, because these are what make us better! The only way a person can become good at climbing mountains is to climb them. To become good at solving problems, you must work at solving them. You see, success is not in never falling, but in rising every time you fall!

The only people who don't make mistakes are the ones who do nothing, and you must realize what the real danger in doing nothing is—that is, if you do it a lot you'll get good at it! I once heard a wise man say: "Don't just be good. Be good for something." Good advice for us all. A wise man also said, "There is never a right time to do the wrong thing and never a wrong time to do the right thing."

Each generation has the ability to solve the problems of its time. For the next generation, you are no exception—you can do it! Great men and women don't just flare into existence. They are made; they suffer losses and setbacks, experience adversity, deal with difficulties; they are tested! Finally, may I take a quote from the author G. Michael Hopf: "Hard times create strong men. Strong men create good times. Good times create weak men. And weak men create hard times."

— Richard Nicholas
Utah

E, a member of this class, always sits beside Nicholas. Even though Nicholas can't talk, E chats away to him happily, understanding that he can't answer back.

"She wants to be friends with him even though he is different from her," said Kate. "She doesn't treat him any less because he has autism ... it melts my heart to see somebody accept my son for who he is."

Nicholas adores E, she said.

Praising her son's friend for her "beautiful heart," Kate reached out to the little girl's mom to thank her for raising such a thoughtful child. Apparently, E is equally smitten, talking about Nicholas at home "all the time."

As the children's kindergarten moved into remote learning in the fall, Nicholas and E were unable to see each other in person. However, their parents orchestrated online playdates; Nicholas still gets excited to see E on the computer screen, said Kate.

"He knows who she is and understands she's his friend," she explained. "He made

I don't think there is a right or wrong way to go about following your passion in the music business. I will say, for many years I was hard on myself because I felt like I did everything backward. I got married and I had my kids and then I started really pursuing my music career. As I look back at it, I was always doing music. It just took until I had all my kids to realize that's really what I wanted to continue doing, so essentially I just put my dreams on hold for a period of time and then went back to pursuing them.

The Epoch Times: What is your life like now as you juggle it all?

Ms. Dawn: Life right now is still very hectic and busy. We're living in a different time right now especially with kids doing school remotely. I am home a lot right now too because everything has been shut down. I'm writing on Zoom versus being in a room with writers. I'm doing virtual shows. So cooking dinner and then excusing myself to go out on a show in my studio is the new norm in our home.

The Epoch Times: What advice would you give other moms who have a big dream that they've put on the back burner?

Ms. Dawn: I would tell any mom out there that any dream that she has, to go after it. You're never too old or too young to do what you want to do. You will never succeed if you don't try.

a card for her on her birthday."

As a mother to children with special needs, Kate expressed thanks for her son being included at school and for E's kindness and friendship.

"I'm grateful E has parents that taught her what it means to accept people who are different from her," she said. "E has given me hope for my son's future."

Wanting to share her experience of parenting kids with special needs, Kate also manages *This Special Journey's* Facebook and Instagram pages as a resource for any families going through a similar situation.

On Jan. 15, Kate posted photos of Nicholas and E back together again, sitting side by side in kindergarten class. "Reunited!" she wrote.

Share your stories with us at emg-inspired@epochtimes.com, and continue to get your daily dose of inspiration by signing up for the Epoch Inspired Newsletter at TheEpochTimes.com/newsletter

True self-esteem also begets self-reliance. It is the self-reliant individual who assumes personal responsibility for choices and actions. When the individual knows that his or her choices and actions are based on what they know to be right, they are more able to withstand attacks upon those choices and actions. Those seeking to promote what is wrong often do so by belittling, humiliating, or in some way harming those who refuse to give in. Ergo, cancel culture.

It is the individual who possesses true self-esteem and self-confidence who is more able to stand fast when under attack. In these troubled times, the ability to stand up for what is right and true is more important than ever.

And that core self-esteem will never be built by removing standards and expectations.

— Pat Maru
Alberta, Canada

What advice would you like to give to the younger generations?

We call on all of our readers to share the timeless values that define right and wrong, and pass the torch, if you will, through your wisdom and hard-earned experience. We feel that the passing down of this wisdom has diminished over time, and that only with a strong moral foundation can future generations thrive.

Send your advice, along with your full name, state, and contact information to NextGeneration@epochtimes.com or mail it to:

Next Generation, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



ALL PHOTOS BY JOHN FREDRICKS/THE EPOCH TIMES



Charlie Parker has had a lifelong passion for swimming. He calculates that he has swum over 6,000 miles so far over the course of his life.



U.S. Navy veteran Charlie Parker.



Parker, who requires a wheelchair most of the time, is also the primary caretaker for his wife.

VETERANS

Swimming 100 Miles for the American Legion

Unable to walk long distances, Charlie Parker found another way to take on the challenge to benefit fellow veterans

ANDREW THOMAS

Social distancing and lockdown measures have made charitable functions such as marathons, galas, and other fundraising events more difficult, if not impossible to hold. At the same time, the financial needs of nonprofit organizations haven't gone anywhere. Fortunately, the good Samaritans among us haven't stopped caring. Charlie Parker of Murrieta, California, is one of them. He is 75 years old and largely bound to his wheelchair—but that didn't stop him from swimming 100 miles for his fellow veterans.

Parker joined the U.S. Navy on April 21, 1967, and was an anti-submarine warfare technician until he left the Navy in 1971. During his service, he earned the Navy Commendation Medal for saving a child's life in San Diego. He continues to give back and joined the American Legion in August 2020 in an effort to help veterans and do good in his community.

A Need to Serve

After a series of accidents, Parker developed a condition known as bilateral drop foot, which necessitated braces on his feet. He can now walk short distances, but most of the time, he requires a wheelchair. De-



Charlie Parker, 75, lives in Murrieta, Calif.

spite his condition, he is also the primary caregiver for his wife, who suffered a stroke in 2016. Nevertheless, Parker still felt a need to serve.

He wanted to participate in the 100 Miles for Hope campaign organized by the American Legion, the country's largest veterans service organization, to raise money for the organization's Veteran's and Children's Foundation, which helps military families who are struggling with the pandemic, natural disasters, and unemployment.

But he knew he would have to get creative. "I thought to myself, 'I can do that, but I can't walk it. I can't run it. I can't jog it. I can't ride a bicycle, but I can swim 100 miles in 100 days,'" Parker said.

In early August, Parker started swimming at least a mile a day five days a week. As a result of his injuries, he swam using only his arms with a float between his legs. He knew that swimming the distance would be an unusual feat, and he wanted to set an example for people to both exercise and become more involved in the community. A sign on the back of his wheelchair alerted others to the challenge, and he even had "100 Miles" shaved on his head to raise awareness and funds for disabled veterans.

Parker has been a passionate swimmer since he was a kid. When he was in second

grade, he suffered from rheumatic fever. While other kids played basketball and football, he found himself on the sidelines.

His mother, who worked as a lifeguard during the summers at their community pool, taught him how to swim, and earned his Red Cross junior lifesaving badge. In high school, he taught swimming at his local YMCA and swam and competed.

"I've always been more of a long-term endurance swimmer rather than sprinter," Parker said.

"During the course of my life, I've swum a little over 6,000 miles, which is actually equivalent to going from San Diego to Honolulu back to east of Denver, Colorado."

Despite the total amount of miles he's completed in his lifetime, his wife isn't very impressed, Parker joked.

He finished his 100-mile swim challenge on Oct. 30, 2020. With the exception of the lift chair at the pool not functioning on occasion, the challenge went smoothly.

The feat took him a total of 89 days, and he completed the challenge with 11 days to spare.

To the best of his knowledge, he is the only person to swim the American Legion's 100-mile challenge.

The week before completing his swim, he also participated in a walk to end Alzheimer's and was joined by about 40 people in the community.

"I've got an amazing group of friends that support me in almost anything I do. I always say I don't have friends, really, I just have people that follow me out of morbid curiosity to see what I'm going to do next," Parker said.

Parker's original goal was to raise money for and awareness of the plight of disabled veterans. Knowing that approximately 20 veterans commit suicide every day motivated him greatly to bring attention to veterans' issues, and being able to help even just a little brought him immense satisfaction.

The Power of Forgiveness

Even on death row, one can choose happiness. Sunny Jacobs has been there, and made that choice.

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Jacobs said that first, she realized she had a choice between hope and hopelessness, and then she consciously chose hope. Her belief in God had dwindled upon her sentencing but she revisited that choice, too, "because without God it really is pretty hopeless," she said.

She decided that, since she was for once without housework to do and had plenty of time, she was going to use this time to work on her spiritual self. She read her Bible, and when she had 30 minutes of television time, she turned to a yoga program.

"There was a process, and it begins with, 'I'm a spirit here on my journey. That was the only way I could come to terms with my circumstances. I was a spirit here on my journey, and this was part of what I was here to learn,'" she said. "And I had to get out of my own way in order to do that. And if I started to see myself as a spirit here on my journey I had to also see the jailers as a spirit on their journey, that was their journey for some reason, and the judge, and the prosecutor and the people in my trial, and the killer. All here on our journeys, to learn whatever it is we're here to learn."

"And so, I was able to what I now call forgive them, it was basically just a willingness to let go of all the other stuff, the anger, the resentment, and all the rest, because I now saw them as spirits here on their journey. And that was also the path to self-forgiveness as well."

Jacobs's routine of yoga, meditation, and prayer allowed her to clear her mind, body, and spirit and connect to something greater. And in that process, she discovered more freedom than she ever had. It's a process that she's discovered can serve nearly anyone well, anywhere.

Finding Forgiveness

After five years in solitary on death row, Jacobs had her first appeal, and her sentence was changed from death to life, and she subsequently moved to the general population of the prison, where she was the happiest prisoner in prison. But finding forgiveness isn't a one-time cure-all. While Jacobs was imprisoned, her parents died in a plane crash. It was the worst day of her life; she was orphaned, and her children were effectively orphaned and sent to foster care after which visits with them ended. Forgiveness is a process and it is ongoing, especially when something as large as a wrongful conviction has such ripple effects.

After Jacobs's exoneration, she eventually got involved with humans rights advocacy and became an activist against the death penalty. Speaking on this topic brought her to Ireland, where people kept asking her, "Have you met Peter Pringle?"

She knew nothing about him but reached out and invited him to her talk, after which she found out he had been wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death before being exonerated.

Jacobs asked how he got through it, and he said, "yoga, meditation, and prayer."

During that first meeting, they had a three-hour conversation about forgiveness, and when they met again the next time Jacobs visited Ireland, they started to date. The couple is now married and split their time between Ireland and the United States, and together run the Sunny Center Foundation, where they teach other exonerees to heal, house them, and help connect them with services.

New Set of Troubles

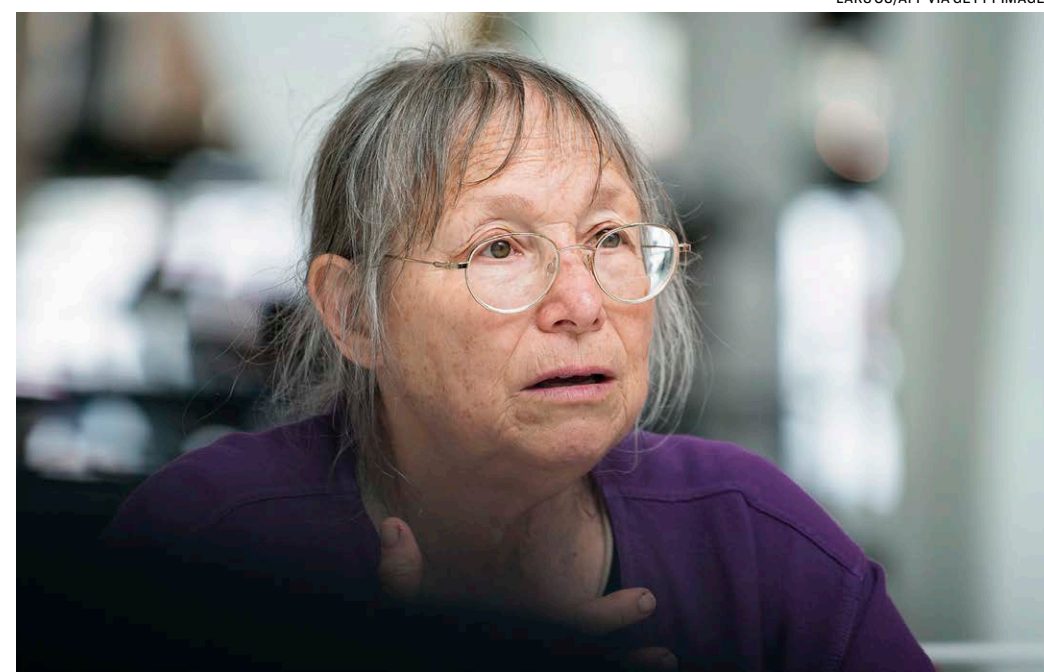
There are organizations that help free wrongfully convicted prisoners, but the help most often ends with freedom, whereas the problems don't. "It just opens up a whole other set of problems for which you are not prepared," she said.

Jacobs adds that exonerees for good reason feel like they can't tell anyone about what they suffered, because no one else would truly understand. It is truly a unique combination of bad circumstances.

For instance, Jacobs went into prison in her 20s; she was a mother, a wife, and a daughter. When she left, she was 45 years old, a widow, an orphan, and a grandmother to a little girl she had never met, and incapable of getting hired with her work record. And technologically, the world had changed drastically. She didn't relate to anyone.

And, unlike people who are released after completing their sentences, exonerees are not entitled to the same housing, jobs, mental health, and other services meant for released prisoners.

"That just seems upside-down," said Jacobs, who has done advocacy in this area



Exoneree Sunny Jacobs, who served on death row for several years, is pictured during an AFP interview in Oslo, on June 20, 2016.

as well as started to expand her foundation to provide some of these services, including through the Sunny Living Center in Tampa, Florida.

Fortunately, Jacobs left prison with a drive to share with the world the techniques that got her through her ordeal. Since no one would hire her, she started teaching yoga; it got her through prison and it would get her by outside of prison.

She also started speaking about her story, and realized people anywhere and everywhere could face injustice too, and needed forgiveness in their lives—even her own children, whose lives were upended with Jacobs's sentencing.

"There's the wrongness that has been done to yourself, there is this spillover effect on your entire family, your mother, your father; if one is fortunate enough to have children before it happened, the effect on the children is devastating," she said.

"It requires forgiveness of the people in the system that participated in your wrongful conviction, it requires forgiveness of your friends or family who maybe didn't believe in you or just didn't stay in touch with you because they were ashamed or whatever, it requires forgiveness of the people in prison while you were there who made life difficult, guards, prisoners. It requires forgiveness for the loss of your health, physical health, mental health."

There is also the forgiveness of yourself, Jacobs said, which sometimes comes last because people don't realize it's needed yet, and because it can be so much harder to forgive yourself sometimes.

"But forgiveness is key," Jacobs said. "You can get compensation, you can finally end up with money, you can finally end up with services ... but still in all, if you don't find a way to forgive, that is going to underlie and eventually overshadow your whole life, because it's like a dark shadow that you carry around."

A Beautiful Transformation

A few years ago, a lawyer connected Jacobs and Pringle with an exoneree who, though free, wasn't doing well, Jacobs said. They invited him to stay with them at their two-bedroom cottage in Ireland, out in the rural countryside, for one month. It was cathartic; they could relate to him and he could speak freely, and they helped him discover a sense of identity beyond his past, beyond "exoneree."

That became the beginning of the Sunny Center Foundation. Over the years, many exonerees from all around the world have stayed with the couple and found healing, identity, and forgiveness, a space of empathy, sharing, and grace.

When they stay with Jacobs and Pringle, they become part of the family for the month. "We ask them to choose some sort of contribution on a daily basis that they could make," she said. It could be walking the dog, or doing the dishes, or feeding the chickens.

"You have to become part of the family, because a lot of people, they came so young they really had no kind of idea what it was like to really be part of a family, as a child but not as a grownup. And a lot of their family experience wasn't great anyway, which was what made them vulnerable in the first place."

The first week, all Jacobs and Pringle do is listen.

"It's finally a chance, an opportunity, for people to unburden themselves," she said. "You don't have to pretend everything is OK, you don't have to pretend that you're not scared to go into a building with a lot of people in it."

"Things you wouldn't tell anyone else—

and why would you tell them? They wouldn't understand."

"You can say, 'I have a panic attack when I go into a public place,' you can say 'I'm not comfortable using the stove because I'm afraid I'm going to burn the house down,' you can say 'I'm not comfortable around women because my case revolved around something that happened to women,'" she said. "You can say these things to us, because they know that we know—we've been there."

"There's nothing to be ashamed of, you don't have to hide," she said. "They just start talking and things will come out."

During the course of the stay, Jacobs says they also work with volunteers, typically young women, who teach people how to socialize all over again. This is a crucial step and a lifeline.

"When people first get out, they are isolated," she said. "They're isolated by their financial situation—you can't afford to go anywhere, you can't even afford to go to a movie. You are isolated also by your social standing." She says Pringle puts it this way: when you first get out, you don't have anything in common with people on the outside.

"You have nothing to talk about with them. They're talking about their job and their home and their vacation and their kids, if you've just got out of prison you don't have anything to talk about, and all they want to know is, 'How was it in prison?' that separates you further, it doesn't connect you," she said. "And gosh, how are you going to date? You don't have any money, you don't have any nice clothes, you can't take anybody anywhere, how are you going to meet anybody? Where are you going to go?"

"So we first let them talk, and that's where we find out the areas where they need our guidance," she said.

The second week, they start to share. Jacobs and Pringle tell their own stories and share what worked for them because no one else can really give that advice, such as reconnecting with adult children who might have felt betrayed when they were left as young children, how to build relationships again, how to feel comfortable in the world again. "They learn how to work together by working with Pringle and how to cook by preparing meals with Jacobs."

"And always with animals," Jacobs said. They have a dog, cat, chickens, geese, and they used to have goats when they had the space. "That's a chance to experience unconditional love, you know? Love, to be able to



Sunny Jacobs with actors Michael McShane (L) and Danny Glover (R) during a photocall for "The Exonerated" on April 11, 2006, at Riverside Studios in London. "The Exonerated" was a series of true stories based on the real lives of people on death row.

open yourself up to that without fear of being let down or hurt, and that was a huge thing."

Then, when they've eased into it, they share their own processes of forgiveness, because though the end goal may be the same, the process is uniquely individual.

"Things don't always work out the way you want, and you have to be OK with that," she said.

With forgiveness, healing, identity, and connection, they are different people when they leave than who they were when they arrived. They hold themselves straighter, they smile, they look people in the eye, have hobbies, friends, and hopes and dreams. They've realized they choose how they live, and have chosen forgiveness over victimhood, and hope over hopelessness.

"It has been beautiful to see the transformations," Jacobs said. "We've never had anybody who didn't change."

Within Your Control

After their first guest, Jacobs said they realized that despite all the healing he had done while staying with them, months after going home "the pixie dust wore off," because these people were still living poverty-stricken lives where no one would hire them, they could not access services, and were socially isolated. At the beginning, Jacobs tried to follow up with each person regularly by phone herself, but when the number of alumni grew to 10, 20, then dozens, it was no longer feasible.

A supporter of the couple's work suggested they create a foundation, and after that they hired an outreach coordinator to follow up with people in the United States.

The foundation continues to grow, and it has all been a learning process, Jacobs said, especially since in the past year they have only been doing remote video calls with people because traveling has been difficult.

Recently, Jacobs has been making videos to share online, answering questions and sharing advice, because forgiveness and healing is something everyone needs during this pandemic, she said.

"A lot of times people think forgiveness means it's OK, that what they did was OK, that you even have to let the person know," Jacobs said. "Let me tell you, the people who are forgiven, they have no idea, they don't know. It has nothing to do with them. That's the part about forgiveness that I think people don't understand."

"It's all about you and what you want for yourself, because they've succeeded in messing up your life up until then, but now it's your. You are screwing up your own life. They're not doing it, they probably don't even remember you," she said. "You are doing it, and you are doing it to yourself."

"And that is something you can change. You can't change what happened in your past ... you can't control your outside circumstances, you can't control what's coming next, you can't control the future, but right now, today, you can control what goes on inside of you," she said. "You can decide you are going to have a nice day. And I don't even care if you are on death row, you can decide you are going to have a nice day."

"You can choose, and once you know that, you can do it," Jacobs said. "It's something you do for yourself so you can have love and joy and happiness again."

This doesn't mean that when bad things happen we do nothing, or that we don't fight against injustice, preventing it from happening to other people ever again, she added. Jacobs herself is still an outspoken advocate against the death penalty, for instance, and with her foundation is helping exonerees, step by step, obtain services that other former prisoners are entitled to.

"But I don't need to carry anger and hatred within me to do that," she said.

And frankly, she added, the anger doesn't go away. Every once in a while something will happen—such as her grandchildren being affected by the ripple effects of her wrongful conviction—and Jacobs gets angry. But then she does her yoga, her meditation, and prays, and only then does she take action to right a wrong.

"I will do something about the situation, but first I'm going to deal with this anger," she said. "That's what worried me about what's happening today."

"The anger and fear going around every single day ... I see a lot of people making decisions like 'That's it, I'm just not going to put up with having this person in my life,' or becoming so depressed or people becoming suicidal. I find that very troublesome because these decisions are being made out of anger and fear, and in my experience, those are usually not good decisions," she said.

"We have whole societies now that need forgiveness."

DEAR JUNE

On Family and Relationships



Seeking Guidance on COVID-19 Vaccines

Dear June,

I have concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines. I need trusted—truth and tradition—guidance.

My work wants to make it mandatory as fast as legally possible.

Concerned Hospital Worker

Dear Concerned Hospital Worker,

I think that understanding how some traditional ideas—moral principles and beliefs—apply to the issue of vaccine mandates will help us to bridge the gap between both sides of this very polarizing issue.

The following is my best attempt to present a line of thought that I hope will help to guide your quest for understanding

The ancient Chinese thought that plagues were a prelude to change and that natural disasters came when morality in society had declined.

Ancient Understanding of Disease

For most of human history, a belief in divine forces guided the thoughts and actions of people and nations. However, this didn't preclude the use of physical treatments for illnesses.

For example, in his treatise on epilepsy, Hippocrates, who is considered the father of modern medicine, argued against the idea that the disorder was somehow more sacred than other diseases, saying that "all are divine, and all human." He enumerated some of the natural causes of epilepsy, including genetic predisposition and seasonal triggers, but maintained that the cause of these was still divine:

"And the disease called the Sacred arises from causes as the others, namely, those things which enter and quit the body, such as cold, the sun, and the winds, which are ever changing and are never at rest. And these things are divine, so that there is no necessity for making a distinction, and holding this disease to be more divine than the others, but all are divine, and all human."

In ancient China, it was similarly held that divine order was the ultimate shaping force of nature, and that the forces of nature shaped human health. Traditional Chinese medicine recognized that seasonal weather patterns and a person's constitution (genetic factors) were

two of the factors that set the stage for illness or health.

The ancient Chinese thought that plagues were a prelude to change and that natural disasters came when morality in society had declined.

Biblical scripture holds that plagues, droughts, floods, and pestilence come from God partly as retribution for sins and partly as an opportunity to renew faith.

Modern medicine also recognizes that there are seasonal aspects to some diseases, such as the flu, and that climatic factors affect disease outbreaks—for example, that warm, wet weather increases mosquito-borne illness.

According to an article in Scientific American, scientists studying ancient Chinese records now also associate historical outbreaks of disease with specific climatic changes.

In practice, modern medicine no longer considers that there could be divine causes of illness, and it proceeds under the assumption that it's the only thing holding tremendous suffering at bay. However, I think both the true scientist and a true person of faith share an immense reverence for truth, and would agree that our human understandings are limited and that we shouldn't subvert scientific principles nor moral precepts in the interest of supporting any goal—no matter how noble it may seem.

Morality of Mandates

The case for vaccine mandates rests largely on a utilitarian argument: that the right course of action is that which serves the best interest of the greatest number of people.

If you look back in history, this is no surprise because the stage for our modern public health system was set by the English lawyer, philosopher, and social reformer Jeremy Bentham, who is the founder of modern utilitarianism. Bentham took as a fundamental axiom that "it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong."

In contrast, the U.S. Constitution was founded on a very different moral premise: that of natural or unalienable rights.

These rights—which include the rights to life and liberty—are supposed to be constrained by human laws because they derive from something higher and more fundamental: a belief in the sanctity of every human life, regardless of position in society.

If we agree to mandate vaccines with the hope of reducing the burden of illness in society, there will be a number of people who will suffer long-term ill health or even lose their lives as a result of vaccination. This isn't a hypothetical situation; the United States currently has a federal court dedicated to reimbursing death and injury from vaccination. A utilitarian framework will justify vaccine mandates if the number of those injured by vaccines is small. But speaking on principle, mandates wouldn't be justified under the theory of natural rights, as these people would be denied their right to life because they didn't have the liberty to reject vaccination.

Now, the moral situation is perhaps a bit murkier when it comes to work- and school-related mandates because a person still has the right to choose to leave a job or pull a child from school. However, in this situation, we run into what could be considered the tyranny of the majority, as defined by English philosopher and classic liberal thinker John Stuart Mill. He was also a utilitarian but had a qualitatively different formula for defining good than Bentham, and considered tyranny by majority opinion worse than political tyranny:

"Society can and does execute



A panel of four paintings by Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller depicting Hygieia, Hippocrates, Fauna, and Galen, 1826.

its own mandates: and if it issues wrong mandates instead of right, or any mandates at all in things with which it ought not to meddle, it practices a social tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political oppression, since, though not usually upheld by such extreme penalties, it leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself. Protection, therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough: there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them."

There is also the argument that vaccines, as a pillar of modern health care, are a human right. To this, I would say that the definition of a human right is very different from the definition of natural rights that America is founded upon.

The late British philosopher Sir Roger Scruton describes this difference thusly:

"Originally, in Locke and also in Kant, human rights are fundamentally negative things—the right not to be interfered with, not to have your life taken away, not to have your freedom taken away, not to your property taken away, and so on."

The axiom of this definition is that if a person has a right, then others—society at large—have the duty to respect it. However, he notes that after World War II, all sorts of new rights were postulated, including the right to have a job and the right to health care.

This new definition of rights necessarily moves government toward a more socialist concept because the state bears responsibility for fulfilling claims to them, Scruton said. And it's the right and wrong of this new genre of rights that's currently at the heart of political and moral debates.

Doing Your Own Research

I hope the above discussion has given you food for thought. In focusing on the morality of mandates, the argument I have made above presupposes that the science on vaccination shows solidly that the benefits well outweigh the harms. This idea is widely held to be true and, at the same time, it isn't socially acceptable to probe it in a meaningful way.

After a good deal of research, it's my opinion that the science isn't as conclusive as we have been led to believe. However, I don't think you should just take my word for it. Instead, I would suggest, if you care about this topic, that you do your own research.

My suggestions for research include the following: Check all studies cited by media and look at the studies cited on the CDC web-

site. Check out The Highwire, an online program dedicated to vaccine news and concerns. Actively compare viewpoints; watch the movie "Vaxxed," take notes, and fact-check. Look at Vaxxter, the website of Dr. Sherri Tenpenny, and books and videos by Dr. Suzanne Humphries. Understand their viewpoints, and check their citations and PubMed for more context. If you are looking for a place to start, I recommend the deposition of Dr. Stanley Plotkin, which you can find in full (all nine hours) on YouTube or broken down by topic on various websites. Since he is speaking under oath, and being questioned by a lawyer knowledgeable and skeptical about the science of vaccines, it's one of the closest things I've found to a debate between both sides.

The case for vaccine mandates rests largely on a utilitarian argument: that the right course of action is that which serves the best interest of the greatest number of people.

When you talk to your employer, I would point out the ways in which the benefits of having you vaccinated, from their perspective, compare to the risks of the unknowns you face.

For example, your workplace will still have to follow the same precautions whether you are vaccinated or not. First, it isn't known whether vaccinated persons can still spread the virus; second, we don't yet have herd immunity; and third, it isn't known how long your vaccine immunity will last. Reinfection with COVID-19 has been reported, according to the CDC. Vaccines generally don't confer stronger immunity than natural immunity. Coronaviruses also tend to have high mutation rates; some mutations appear to be causing reinfection and might also evade vaccine protection, and we might require different or updated vaccines at a later time.

The risks to you include a lot of unknowns: Both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines (the only ones available in the United States at the time of writing) employ new vaccine technology and only have emergency licensure at this point, so there is no long-term safety data.

Sincerely,
June

Do you have a family or relationship question for our advice columnist, Dear June? Send it to DearJune@EpochTimes.com or Attn: Dear June, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001.

June Kellum is a married mother of two and longtime Epoch Times journalist covering family, relationships, and health topics.

LARGER THAN LIFE: ART THAT INSPIRES US THROUGH THE AGES

Raphael's Divine 'Acts of the Apostles' Drawings

Visitors to London's Victoria and Albert Museum will soon be able to see seven of Raphael's sublime cartoons, depicting the life of St. Paul and St. Peter, the fathers of the Roman Catholic Church, in the museum's newly refurbished Raphael Court.

The refurbished gallery was due to open last year, to mark the 500th anniversary of Raphael's death. Although still closed due to the pandemic, the museum has released some new digital content so that the cartoons, full-size preparatory drawings, can be enjoyed before the museum's reopening, which is yet to be announced.

The seven cartoons are all that remains of the 10 "Acts of the Apostles" pictures that, in 1513, Pope Leo X commissioned Raphael to design for a series of Sistine Chapel tapestries. These tapestries were intended to be hung in the chapel on feast days.

Raphael and his studio painted the 10 full-scale cartoons, around 16.4 feet by 11.5 feet, in thick gouache (or "body color," that is, opaque watercolor) on sheets of overlapping pieces of paper that had been pasted together. Experts believe that Raphael himself painted many of these cartoons, which was unusual.



"The Miraculous Draught of Fishes (Luke 5: 1-11)," 1515-16, by Raphael. Body color on paper, laid onto canvas.

Renowned weaver Pieter van Aelst and his workshop in Brussels used the cartoons to create the Sistine tapestries. Each cartoon was cut into strips about a yard wide to make transferring the designs easier. Subsequent sets of tapestries were made from the cartoons in Flanders.

Seven of Raphael's cartoons came to Eng-

land—all still in strips—when the Prince of Wales, who was the future King Charles I, purchased them. The cartoons continued to be used by weavers at the esteemed Mortlake Factory in southwest London, established by Charles's predecessor, James I.

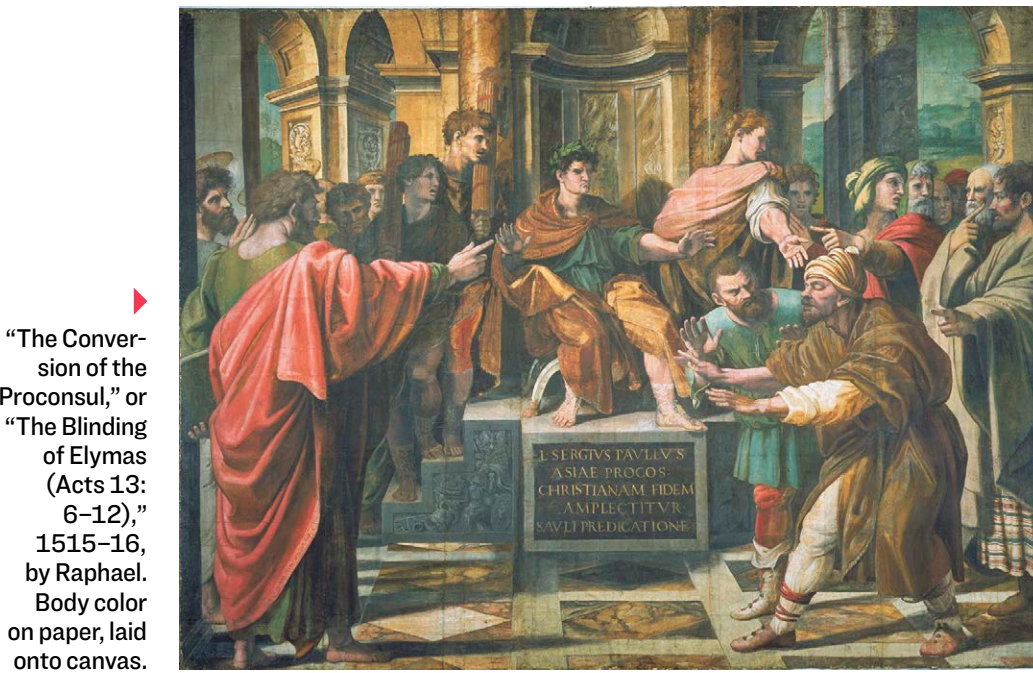
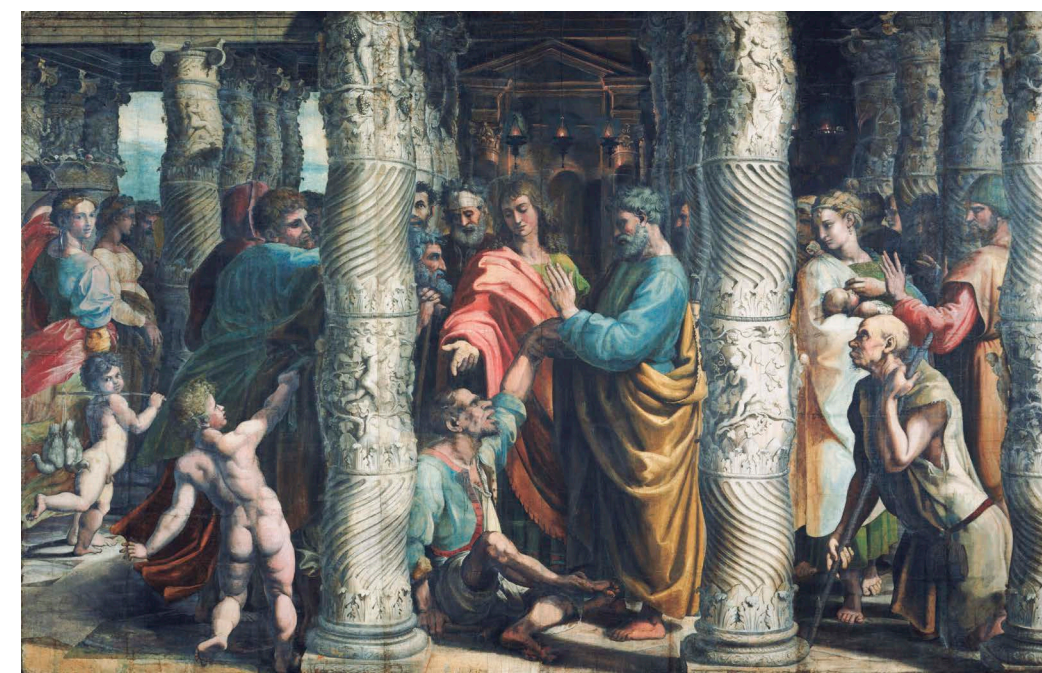
Only at the end of the 17th century, on the orders of King William III, were the car-

toon strips pasted together onto canvases as complete designs. They were then hung in a gallery at Hampton Court Palace, where they could be enjoyed in their entirety.

To find out more about Raphael's cartoons and the Victoria and Albert Museum's Raphael Court refurbishment visit VAM.ac.uk



(Left) "Christ's Charge to Peter (Matthew 16: 18-19 and John 21: 15-17)," 1515-16, by Raphael. Body color on paper, laid onto canvas. (Right) "The Healing of the Lame Man (Acts 3: 1-8)," 1515-16, by Raphael. Body color on paper, laid onto canvas.



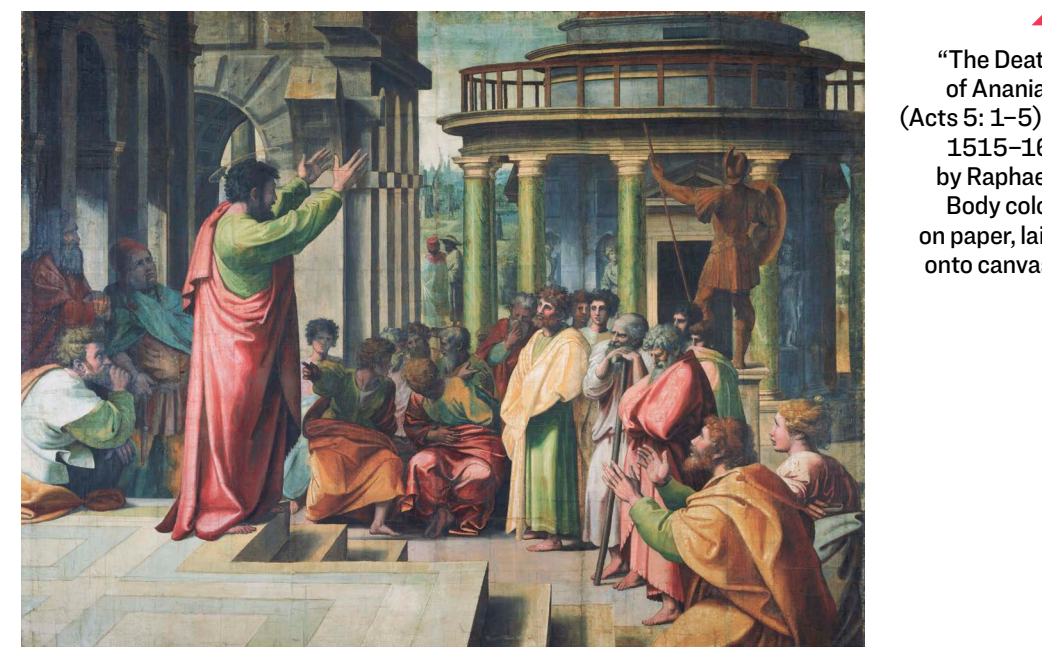
"The Conversion of the Proconsul," or "The Blinding of Elymas (Acts 13: 6-12)," 1515-16, by Raphael. Body color on paper, laid onto canvas.



"The Death of Ananias (Acts 5: 1-5)," 1515-16, by Raphael. Body color on paper, laid onto canvas.



(Left) "The Sacrifice at Lystra (Acts 14: 8-18)," 1515-16, by Raphael. Body color on paper, laid onto canvas. (Right) "Paul Preaching at Athens (Acts 17: 16-34)," 1515-16, by Raphael. Body color on paper, laid onto canvas.





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