

In 1787, my ancestor, Ann Forbes, stole 10 yards of printed cotton from a London market. In other words, she was a convict and she sailed on the very First Fleet from Portsmouth to Botany Bay – that's PART of how my family ended up in Australia.

In England such a revelation is considered a skeleton in the closet or a blight on the family tree. In Australia it's an absolute badge of honour. All my Australian friends *wish* they were related to a genuine convict. Well I am the offspring of a thief. In fact, when you think about it, much of my life is the product of one theft.

One morning in 1787 determined the course of Ann Forbes' life. And it determined the course of *my* life too. Actually thousands have been affected by a single act.

You will have stories like this in your family tree. At one stage, one of your fore-bears moved across an ocean, fathered an illegitimate child, moved to the big city to find work, survived the war, left the convent, turned down the rich man's proposal, ran away with the servant... All these decisions from the past were kind of small, kind of huge. They have determined our lives for better or for worse.

But we don't usually think about this stuff these days. Today we like to feel that I determine my OWN life. I am the product of MY CHOICES.

If we meet at a party, you're going to tell me who you are by telling me your choices: You choose to like this music. You choose to like this film. You chose to study that subject. You took this job. You married this person. These are all CHOICES you've made. And they're important.

But how much of our lives have been shaped by the decisions of OTHERS, and we had no option. How much of our lives are actually about choices we tried to make, but they never came off. John Lennon said "Life's what happens TO YOU, while you're busy making plans." That's dead right.

Think of the Ann Forbes story – how much of my life was set in stone, centuries before I was even born. We don't choose WHERE we're born, WHEN we're born. We don't choose our family, our genetics, our upbringing. And yet those things shape us SO powerfully...

Our choices ARE important. They shape our stories... a bit. But our stories are so much bigger than us and bigger than the decisions we've made. The story of ME is caught up in a much bigger story.

And in this video we're thinking about that bigger story. Here we're thinking about the truth of **TWO**: The big story is not about me. **The Story of the World is the Story of TWO men** – TWO representatives. There's **Adam** and there's **Jesus**.

Let's think about Adam. The Bible tells us that the human race is related. Ultimately we're part of one BIG family tree. And at the top stands a figure very much like Ann Forbes. We have an ancestor who has committed a crime. And his exile from God was ours.

I don't know what you make about that claim. Maybe you think that can't be TRUE. Maybe you think: that can't be FAIR. But before you disagree with the claim, I want to show you – it explains your life and it explains your world.

Because the claim is that humanity is a family – therefore we share a family **history**, we share some family **traits** and we share a family **inheritance**.

Our **history** is that we've been **disconnected** from our true home. Just as Ann Forbes was sent away from the mother country, we have been disconnected from God. And every generation since has been born Away From Home.

We're just not at home with God in this world. We don't *feel* a natural connection with God. It's like, if we ever pray, our prayers just bounce off the ceiling. Because of our common family history, there's a disconnection.

We also share certain **family traits**. There's a quite a few family traits that we share, let me unpack a few of them...

In Genesis chapter 3 we read the story of the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve stop trusting their Generous Maker. He'd given them everything freely as a gift. But because of only ONE forbidden fruit in all creation, they imagined He's a miserly-kill-joy. They mistrust God, and grasp at life for themselves. They take the forbidden fruit and ever since, Doubting God has been a universal family trait.

By nature we don't trust God do we? Even if you grew up believing in god, I'll bet you have struggled to TRUST that He's good and generous and joyful and life-giving. We all doubt God and turn to other things to give us that life and joy and security.

And as we turn to other things, we're turning to other gods really. Little gods, like money, or popularity, or experiences, or achievements. We live for people's love, we live for people's respect. We live for the weekend. But all these little gods make us anxious. Because they might fail us. And we might fail them. If our god is our career,

we'd better not lose our job. If our god is good looks, we'd better not get old. If our god is family life – everyone had better be happy and healthy.

Do you see, everything's uncertain when these things are our GODS. And we live anxious lives, trying to please gods that are always demanding MORE from us. It's **Slavery**.

But our family doesn't just share the slavery trait, we also share the **selfish** trait. BECAUSE we think God can't be trusted – we need to make sure we get what WE want from life. And occasionally you'll help me get what I want, and that's nice. But if you stand in my way – look out. Because I'm number one here. There's a horrible selfishness to the family of Adam.

And beyond the slavery and the selfishness, there's just plain old **Stuff-ups**. We have an infuriating knack for messing everything up.

I'll speak for myself, but I'm sure you can relate. I sabotage my own happiness, continually. I sabotage my own SUCCESS too, I manage to sabotage it better than anyone else. I am my own worst enemy. And then, out of the blue, I turn on others as their enemy. And usually those others are the people I love the most. I can unleash shocking cruelty on the people I adore. And I can't say "I don't know what came over me". Nothing came over me. All that stuff came OUT of me. It came out of somewhere very deep and very dark.

The greatest moral teachers in the world have felt this. The Apostle Paul wrote half the New Testament and he confesses at one point: "**The good I want to do, I do not do. No, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.**" (Romans 7:19)

I REALLY want to change and I try to make good CHOICES. But these slaveries still get me, this selfishness still dominates me, these Stuff-ups still burst out of me. There's something wrong in me and it goes deeper than bad choices.

Can you relate? Of course you can relate. We're related.

See... I don't know if you think the Adam story is TRUE. I don't know if you think it's FAIR. You can discuss those things. I'm telling you, it's HAPPENING. This is the bigger story that makes sense of your life and your world. You and I are caught up in a family history and in family traits that are bigger than us.

And besides a family **history** and family **traits**, we also share in a family **inheritance**. It's called death.

Disconnected from God we are like Christmas trees, cut down and wrenched from their Life-source.

[Cut to clips from animation – Christmas tree cut down...]

Like a Christmas tree, we don't look dead, we don't look disconnected. We look great – for a while. Like a Christmas tree, we can dress ourselves up in decorations – we can do impressive things, good things. But, like a Christmas tree, we're perishing. We have no life in us – we've ALREADY been disconnected from the life-source and we're headed for the rubbish dump.

It's a physical truth but the bible says it's also a spiritual truth. We're perishing PHYSICALLY and one day we will be dead DECISIVELY. But we're also disconnected SPIRITUALLY and, if nothing happens, one day we'll be disconnected DECISIVELY. Our family inheritance is Death – physical death and spiritual death.

Jesus says we all GO ON after our physical death. But if our spiritual disconnected-ness is not dealt with, then that spiritual death will keep going. Jesus describes it as being lost in Outer Darkness. It's a Future that's far from the Light and Life of God. It's "Outer darkness."

And you say "How horrible!" and Jesus agrees: How absolutely, pointlessly, insanely horrible. Which is EXACTLY why Jesus came.

God does not want ANYONE, ANYWHERE to perish like this.

[Perhaps have the following references to scroll up the screen over my shoulder... Ezekiel 18:23; Ezekiel 18:30-32; Ezekiel 33:11; Matthew 23:37; John 3:15-18; Acts 17:30; Romans 11:32; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 3:9]

Repeatedly the Bible says, God doesn't want ANYONE, ANYWHERE to remain lost in the darkness. That's why He sends a Second Adam to undo the work of the first.

There's a very simple story that illustrates this. It was first told by a man who converted to Christianity late in life. He'd been involved in many different religions and when people asked him: "What's different about Jesus?" he said: Imagine a man who fell down a deep hole. Try as he might, he couldn't climb out. One religious leader came to the top of the hole and said "You should have listened to me" and walks on. Another religious leader said "You need to pray more" and *he* walks on. Another says "Come up here and we'll talk." Jesus comes to the hole, sees the man in trouble, and jumps into the pit.

That's the truth of TWO: Jesus is a SECOND Adam taking responsibility for the FIRST Adam and putting things right.

As I said in the last video **“Jesus joins us in our mess, so we can join Him in His Family.”**

How do you think of Jesus? Who do you think He is?

Perhaps you see Him as a great teacher, a revolutionary, a good man. Thing is, He kept claiming to be the Son of God. He kept claiming to have been there “In the beginning” (John 1:1-18; John 17:5; John 17:24). He claims to be THE ONE Specially Loved by God the Father. And the One Specially Full of the Holy Spirit. He's the One at the heart of the Ultimate Family. He's God the Son. But at Christmas He became God our Brother.

Born in a shed, laid in a feeding trough, He came into the poorest of poor families. He spent his childhood on the run from death threats. He became an asylum seeker in Egypt, then He grew up in a northern backwater of Israel – a tiny oppressed nation, ruled by the Romans.

Joseph, His adoptive father, taught Jesus his trade. He was a builder's labourer, until, aged 30, Jesus began His public ministry at the Jordan River. As everyone was confessing their failures and being baptized – Jesus joins the failures in the River and everything He does from that moment on is about SOLIDARITY – with the Sinful and the Suffering. In everything He does, He is the Champion for those in the pit.

He gathers together an unlikely bunch of followers. Ill-educated fishermen, despised tax collectors, political zealots, notorious sinners. He's not interested in the cream of the crop, He goes for the nobodies. And every move He makes is a move away from the powerful, the privileged, the respectable and the self-righteous. Instead His every move is towards the weak, the poor, the shameful and the lost.

At one point some self-righteous, religious-types – called Pharisees – complain to Jesus. “Why do you spend all your time with notorious sinners?” Jesus said **“It's not the healthy who need a doctor, it's the sick. I haven't come for the righteous, I've come for sinners.”** Jesus is a Doctor for the sick, a Champion for failures, a Saviour for sinners. He comes into our pit, and He's only really interested in those who know they've fallen.

So sinners and sufferers flock to Jesus and He's like a little oasis of paradise walking around. He forgives sins, He feeds the hungry, He heals the sick, He cleanses the

unclean, He liberates those who are enslaved. In the presence of Jesus, everything that's broken gets fixed. He's like a personal Garden of Eden, putting the world right.

For 33 years, Jesus lives the Good Life that I couldn't live for 5 minutes. He lives the perfect life of love – a life that puts me to shame. But here's the thing. Jesus didn't come to put me to shame. He came to lift me up. He came to be our Champion. He came to put Himself in our shoes and to take responsibility for all our Adam-like ways. First He lived the life we should live. And then on the cross, He died the death that we should die.

Do you know why Jesus had to die? Do you know why He had to die a godforsaken death? Because we have to die a godforsaken death.

The whole family of Adam is disconnected from God and heading for spiritual and eternal death. And Jesus says "No! I'm plunging down into their hell. I will take their sins to myself, I will even take their spiritual death onto myself." And on that cross, Jesus bears the weight of a world's sin. As one bible writer says:

"He was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all." (Isaiah 53:5-6, NLT)

Jesus took our disconnection and death on Himself. And after it was all finished – all paid for in full – three days later He rose to New Life, beyond death, beyond sin, beyond judgement.

You and I were born into Adam's family – Jesus offers us a new family. If we're related to Jesus, He takes responsibility for our slaveries, our selfishness, our stuff-ups. He takes responsibility for our spiritual death and in return we get His new life.

What do you think?

Do you think we're family?

Do you think this old human family is in trouble?

Do you think we're in a pit?

Do you think we can climb out of it?

Who do you think Jesus is? That's really the central question. He claims to be the Son of God – becoming our Brother – sticking up for us, taking responsibility for us – living our life and dying our death. Is that who Jesus really is? If He is – He's the answer to Adam, the answer to all our slaveries, our selfishness, our stuff-ups. And He comes into our Family to invite us into *His*.

Everyone dies because all of us are related to Adam, the first man. But all who are related to Christ, the other man, will be given new life. (1 Corinthians 15:22, NLT).