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# HIGH FLYER FALLS FLAT

It's not everyone who can trace the light bulb moment to an actual lamp post. But for 55-year-old Pamela Butler that's exactly what happened.

Pamela had a successful career with all the trappings - the company car, the expense account, and several investment properties. She was totally focussed on her work and it was paying rich dividends.

Yet she felt something was missing, but she couldn't put her finger on what. "I was successful but I can't say I was really happy. I felt empty," she admits.

Pamela had grown up in a stable and loving family and she attributes regular church attendance to being a big part of that happiness.

"My family and I were devout church-goers," she remembers. "I was baptised, took Holy Communion and got married in church. We went every weekend.

"I now realise I knew about God but I didn't have a relationship with Him. I was prideful, full of anger, jealousy and resentment but I thought that was just the human condition."

Work took Pamela to Johannesburg, away from her godly parents. She got married and had two sons and soon drifted from church. "There weren't any churches nearby so I just stopped attending," she admits.

"My mother kept reminding me to find a church, which I finally did," she recalls, adding that she had grown aware of how much she missed her childhood connection with God.

She found a church and soon became involved in its many social programs but tells *Challenge News* that it was all still just "good works. I still didn't have a relationship with Jesus Christ."

After several years, her marriage



Pamela and her daughter.

hit the rocks. The couple separated and Pam went from wife to party girl - drinking and partying till all hours. She met someone else; they got engaged and decided to make a fresh start by moving.

It was on the drive to their new home that Pamela saw the lamp

post that would change her life. More accurately, she saw the poster on the lamp post. It was an advertisement for a Christian rally and it said: "Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?"

That question struck an immediate chord with Pamela. "I decided

then and there we just had to go," she laughs. "By this time my fiancé and I were looking in earnest for a church home."

At the meeting that night, Pamela and her fiancé responded to the speaker's invitation to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. "It

felt so right," she reminisces. "I had done this sort of thing before and I expected to hear bells and whistles but I never did. But this time it was different.

"It was God's timing; suddenly everything we had learned before just fell into place; everything made sense. It was like we were hearing the Gospel (the good news of Jesus Christ dying for our sins) for the first time.

"We went back night after night and never felt tired even though we had to go to work the next day. We soaked everything in like sponges; we just couldn't get enough."

Pamela and her fiancé were baptised that very weekend - April 10, 2010.

In a matter of weeks Pamela had resigned from her job, saying goodbye to the company car, the entertainment account and the high life. "I didn't do this recklessly," she says seriously. "I prayed about it a lot and I took the step believing our Lord would provide and protect me and my family."

She dived into deep and unknown waters, starting a small food truck business - and floundered. Her fiancé was not working and business was slow. "I was completely out of my comfort zone," she says with a slight shudder as she remembers that difficult period. "During this time the Lord taught us to rely on Him completely - and He never failed. We saw His faithfulness in miraculous ways."

She snagged contract work and her fiancé got a permanent job. They found affordable accommodation when all avenues had closed for one reason or another.

Pamela's food truck business morphed into a transport/shuttle service for school children.

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## The best resolution for 2022

BY NICO BOUGAS

THE phrase, "God helps those that help themselves", is often quoted as a favourite Bible verse (especially amongst pickpockets and shoplifters). If you thought that this non-Biblical verse comes from the Bible you are in good company. According to an official survey 82 percent of Americans thought so as well.

We get a sense of the widespread Biblical ignorance when we find that fewer than half of all adults can name the four gospels. Many Christians cannot identify more than two or three of the disciples. According to data from the Barna Research Group, 60 percent of the US population can't name even five of the Ten Commandments.

And at least 12 percent of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife. Another survey of students graduating from high school revealed that over 50 percent thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. And many thought that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham.

Truly although the Bible is still a best seller, we have become a generation of biblical illiterates.

Early on in his ministry, evangelist Billy Graham said, "When the Bible goes down, anarchy and confusion will take its place. This will be followed by a condition such as the world has never known. This generation has to face the appalling fact that it is either back to the Bible or back to the jungle."

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# High flyer falls flat

• From page 1

"The Lord kept growing my business," she says. "The Holy Spirit showed me that if we are obedient in spite of our fears, our Lord is so faithful."

Pamela now heads the Compassionate Ministry at her church in Gauteng, South Africa, which assists about 50 people every month with care packs of food, groceries and other essentials. Her whole family is committed to various outreach programs.

Once you're a Christian, Pamela says, it is hard to see "people take the question of their salvation so lightly."

"I was once also so lukewarm in my faith. When things were bad in my life I would turn to God, but when they were good I would forget all about Him. Now I know that without Him in our lives we are nothing."

"When you put your life in His hands, He shows you what a great and awesome God He is. He has changed everything about me and it has a domino effect - it affects everyone I come into contact with."

Her heartfelt plea is for people to realise they don't have to be perfect to come to God. "You just need to believe in His love and plans for your life."

# Sick girl finds unexpected answers

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

Because she was sickly, little Satabdi Banerjee was consecrated to Kali, the revered Hindu goddess who would bring healing.

But when Satabdi got older, she read the Bible to appease her conscience. All was going well until she hit the book of Romans, which shattered her view that all religions lead to the same godhead.

"If you read the book of Romans with an open heart, you will see God talking to you," Satabdi says on her own YouTube channel. "I used to look down on Christian missionaries because I thought they did not understand one very simple concept: All the rivers are ending up in the ocean."

Satabdi Banerjee was born to a Bengali Brahmin family and took pride from her high caste birth and her family's devotion to the Ramakrishna brand of Hinduism, the belief that no matter what the religion, they all provide salvation.

Her family members prayed hours every day in a dedicated prayer room at their house. They had lots of Hindu idols, decorated them for holidays and invited relatives over for special meals on those holidays.

"We used to celebrate everything - Christmas, the birth of Buddha. But at the same time, we thought it was all the same thing," she says. "We celebrated everything. We used to do carols and cut cake for Jesus."

"We were so dedicated. I was so dedicated," she says. "I just had one

goal. I wanted to please the gods so that I could meet the gods and be with the gods. I thought I was very close to the gods."

But she was also painfully aware of the sin in her heart.

"There was this other side of me. I had committed so much sin. Nobody knew my inner heart."

In 11th grade, Satabdi met a Catholic girl and lied to her that she had read the Bible.

"I started to feel very guilty. Why did I tell this lie? I had this other sin added to my conscience."

Year by year, the Gideons came through her neighborhood handing out New Testaments, and Satabdi disdained them. But under a burden of guilt, she relented and read her New Testament.

"I never used to want to read it but just to make my words true, I started to read it," she says.

She made her way through the Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Even her revered Ramakrishna, the founder of the branch of Hinduism she and her family followed, admired the teachings of Christ, so it was no big deal.

She didn't really understand the book of Acts, but when she hit Romans, the power of the Word hit her. Chapter 1 confronted her - as it confronts anyone - with personal sin.

For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. Rom 1:18-19.

"I thought that's exactly what our forefathers, the Aryans, taught that God is invisible. They never had idols. But my forefathers then made idols," she says.

Not only did the Bible confirm her philosophical beliefs derived from



Satabdi Banerjee gesticulates as she shares on her YouTube channel.

Hinduism, but it also named "all the sins you could ever think of," she says. "The society that I belong to has gone away from God," she realized. "My forefathers made all of these lies."

"Who gave me the right to say that somebody was a shudra or an untouchable or a dalit? They are not anything worse than I. They have two eyes and two ears and one nose just like I do - and one brain. It was my own forefathers who made those rules for our benefit, not for everybody's benefit."

In the Hindu caste system, the shudras are the working caste, and the dalit are the untouchables. By birth, they are excluded from many privileges in society and are condemned to live life in lowly states doing menial tasks.

"The caste that I was so proud to belong to has gone away from God," she concluded.

In chapter three of Romans, she was confronted with her personal sin. "I remembered all the dark part of me, the skeletons in the closet that you have and I have."

Next, Romans dismantled Hindu's system of sacrifice, she says. "If God is holy and just, then He cannot accept the flowers I'm giving, all the money I'm giving, all the food I'm giving. If He is just, how can he just gloss over all of my sin?"

Only the sacrifice of Christ

could take away sins, she realized.

"God took on humanity, and He took your place and He took my place," Satabdi says. "All my sins He took on Himself and He paid the punishment for me. He suffered my consequence. That is love. Only because of love can one sacrifice himself. For no other reason will someone sacrifice himself, only if one is deeply in love."

None of the other gods and gurus had done what Jesus had done. Vishnu came to destroy, not redeem the wicked. Kali, who was supposed to heal Satabdi, did not come to take her punishment.

"Only Jesus broke the power of death and sin," she says. "The Giver of Life rose from the dead. Death could not hold Him back."

This article first appeared on godreports.com and is used with kind permission.



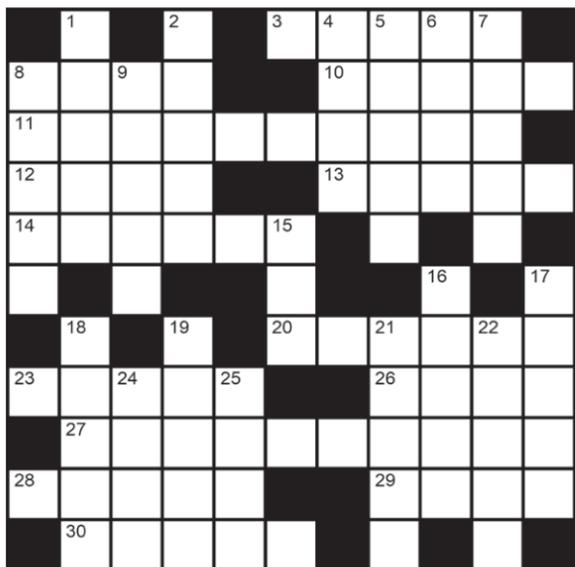
## Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

### ACROSS

- 3 Double babies
- 8 Retail business
- 10 Standard
- 11 Far-flung
- 12 Steel ingredient
- 13 Premature
- 14 TV-filming room
- 20 Utensil
- 23 .... Barrier Reef
- 26 Covering
- 27 Approval
- 28 Burnt log remains
- 29 Fruit
- 30 Sends via snail mail

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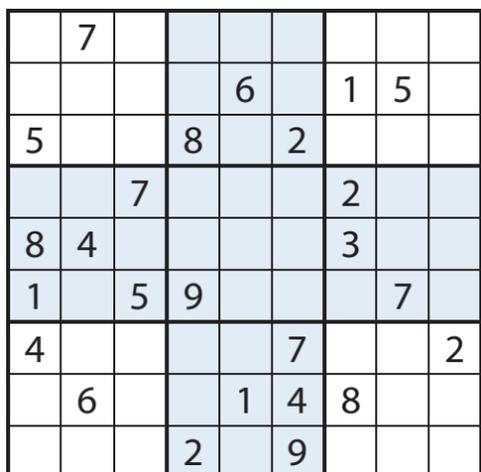
- 1 Garment
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- 9 Smell
- 15 Furniture wood
- 16 Rock
- 17 Direct for information
- 18 Grip or understand
- 19 Dashes or sprints
- 21 Snares
- 22 Nearby
- 24 Repeating sound in a canyon
- 25 Trial; examination



### SOLUTIONS PAGE 7



"We are communicating better, but we are still not out of the woods."



# The best resolution for 2022

• From page 1

We neglect the study of the Bible at our peril. The Bible makes it clear that the way to progress and develop your spiritual life is to spend time studying and meditating on the Word of God.

When Joshua took over from Moses to lead the Children of Israel into the Promised Land he was given this advice: "Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do." Joshua 1.8 NLT

No book has had so much impact on the world as the Bible. George Washington said, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

Former British Prime Minister, William Gladstone said, "I have known 95 great men of the world in my time and of these 87 were followers of the Bible."

Abraham Lincoln said, "This book is God's greatest gift to mankind. All the good things we know about God are communicated to us through this book."

Napoleon Bonaparte said, "This is no mere book but a living creature with a power to conquer all that would oppose it."

And then there were the doubters. Voltaire said, "Within 100 years you will only find the Bible in museums - today his own house is the office for the Geneva Bible Society."

The American agnostic, Robert Ingersoll, predicted that within 15 years the Bible would be in a morgue

- not long afterwards he was in a morgue and the Bible is still a best seller.

It is time for us to get back to the Bible or back to the jungle. It is time for us to read, study and meditate on the Word of God. It is sharper than any two edged sword; it is alive and powerful; it is like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces, a fire that burnt up the chaff, and a sword that pierces into your inmost soul until you are no longer reading the Bible but the Bible is reading you.

Along with your other New Year's resolutions - to lose weight or cut down on your alcohol consumption - why not make a positive goal of reading through the Bible this year? It could just be the most life-changing thing you ever do.

# From New Age to new life



started looking for something more than what this world could offer.”

Enter *Eat Pray Love*, the best-selling book chronicling Elizabeth Gilbert’s journey past a marriage breakdown, self-discovery and recovery as she travelled through Italy (Eat), India (Pray) and Indonesia (Love).

Keke found the book, especially its exploration of new age spirituality, spoke straight into her seeking heart.

“I related with Elizabeth Gilbert’s story and that was my gateway into the new age movement,” she says. “I really developed an interest in

meditation.”

It certainly appealed much more to her than Christianity, which she had been brought up with.

“New Age beliefs sound so alluring and uniting and appealing,” she explains. “They make the Christian faith sound so narrow and rigid.

“It teaches that there’s no such thing as sin ... that you yourself are actually God. You just need to enlighten yourself ... and then you can be like God.”

For the next few years, Keke delved deep into New Age beliefs and became a devout yogi. She also started a business and was doing well financially. But romance was a different matter altogether. Try as she might, her relationships always hit the rocks.

“There was just something off about my romances,” she says with a wince. Concluding she must be the problem, she took a five-year hiatus from dating. But even that didn’t solve the problem.

“After those five years I ventured into another relationship, but that didn’t work out either,” she says. “That was a major blow for me.”

A string of bad decisions left Keke despondent. “By 2019 I knew that a true change was needed in my life. I kept making bad decisions because I wasn’t consulting anyone or anything higher than me.

“I was just so tired of all of this self-help spirituality stuff - it felt like a dead-end. I realized that I was the main governing authority in my life. I knew I needed God but I hadn’t prayed for more than five years.”

Yet Keke still fought against traditional Christianity. “I didn’t want anything to do with the Bible or Jesus because I still believed He was just a man.

“I did not understand why Christians worshipped Him. I was so against Christianity. I was very stubborn. God was so patient with me.”

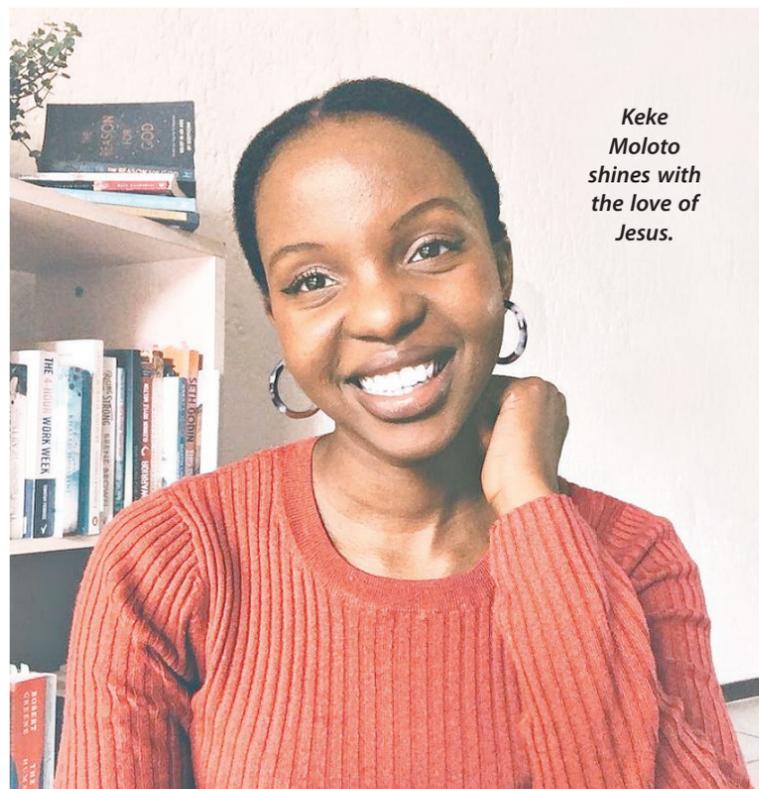
Again, it was a book that turned the tide - *The Reason for God* by Pastor Timothy Keller.

“The book walks through many of the common questions and concerns that are posed to him by non-believers,” explains Keke. “One by one he answered questions like ‘is the Bible reliable?’ and ‘what about Jesus?’

“He basically stripped away every misconception that I had about Christianity. By the time I put that book down I knew that the case that he had made for Christianity was true.”

The differences between Christianity and her new age beliefs became very stark.

“New age believes good and evil



Keke Moloto shines with the love of Jesus.

are all in our minds,” she recalls. “It hides you from the fact that there is real evil out there and that’s exactly how people find themselves in spiritual danger.

“Some of the common New Age practices are things like chakra meditation, chanting affirmations, crystals and yoga. Some people practice astral projection and take psychedelics and contact spirit guides — through these occult practices you invite spirits into your life without even knowing it.

“I honestly thought that the New Age stuff was making me a better person. It makes you believe everything is about you, that the universe revolves around you.”

One night while listening to some Christian music, Keke says she was suddenly overcome. Falling to her knees she cried uncontrollably. “The atmosphere around me changed,” she whispers.

“It’s as though I could feel the presence of Jesus. At that moment I fully committed myself to Him.”

Bubbling over with joy, Keke

shares that things have “changed profoundly” for her. “I feel this incredible sense of newness and regeneration,” she grins. “No amount of yoga or meditation was able to give me the sense of revival that Jesus gave me.

“I never really understood the phrase ‘born again’ but now I do because I literally feel like a new person.”

What does that look like in real life? Keke says she no longer overexerts herself in business or in her relationships, choosing instead to trust God for His provision.

“It is just such a relief. God actually chose to save the girl who was so critical of His people and of Jesus for such a long time. That’s just such a testament to God’s unrelenting love.”

“We were created to have a personal relationship with God. He is our Creator so we can only navigate our lives with Him guiding us. As long as we avoid doing that we will search for fulfilment in [all the wrong] places.”

## I WAS JUST SO TIRED OF ALL OF THIS SELF-HELP SPIRITUALITY STUFF

## The sweet taste of forgiveness

Jenipher Chikutu was a sickly child born into a polygamous family where her father had many wives. She was ill almost every month and extremely thin and unhealthy looking.

Things got harder for Jenipher and her mother when her father died. His brothers became verbally abusive towards her mom, which made Jenipher furious.

“I was a very angry girl. I hated my uncles shouting at my mother all the time and I was full of bitterness about our situation,” she confesses.

Then, in 1991, when Jenipher was 16, she attended a religious revival in Chilonga, Zambia that changed her life.

“I heard that Jesus is the way – the only way – to escape the wrath of God. Because, even though God is loving and kind and full of compassion, He is also holy and must judge sin. I needed someone to wash away my sins and at the revival I heard that the blood of Jesus shed on the cross could do that.

“I invited Jesus Christ into my life. I realised that I was a sinner. I prayed to God even though the whole family tried to stop me,” declares Jenipher. “But eventually they understood and they all became Christians too.”

That was 28 years before Jenipher spoke to *Challenge News*. She says



Jenipher Chikutu

the biggest change in her life has been how God has enable her to forgive others, as God has forgiven her.

She also let go of her anger and it is apparently now quite difficult to get her to lose her temper!

“Self-control is a precious gift that the Holy Spirit [God’s invisible power] gives you to be able to handle temptations,” Jenipher says.

“A Christian is always faced with challenges but Jesus, by His Spirit, is with us to help us whenever we need Him.”

Jenipher works as a pastor and loves the Bible. Her favourite verse is Isaiah 54:8, where God tells His people, “With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,” says the Lord, your Redeemer.”

## SELF-CONTROL IS A PRECIOUS GIFT

## Teenage drunk now has new hope

PHILIP Nyekwal remembers his youth, a time where darkness and despair were paramount in his life. He admits, “I was a drunkard. I was angry and I had an issue with lying.”

When Philip was a child, he struggled to get the bare necessities such as food, clothing or shelter because of his alcoholic parents. “My parents didn’t know about God or church,” he says. “They used to brew alcohol.”

The one bright spot in Philip’s tumultuous life was his Christian religion classes at school. “I used to hear about God,” he remembers.

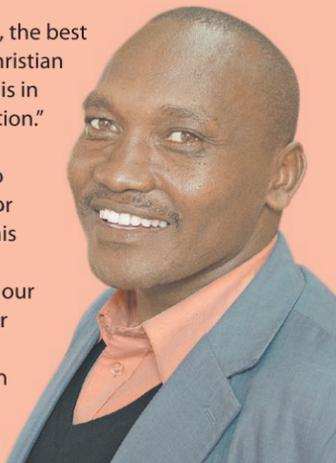
During high school, Philip was faced with a life-changing decision. A visiting preacher talked about Jesus and the Bible verse 1 John 5:5 which says, “Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

That verse struck a chord in Philip’s heart. He wanted to give his life over to Jesus. “The preacher prayed for me and laid his hands on me. I believed in the Word of God and have ever since.”

Reflecting on that day, October 10, 1990, Philip acknowledges that Jesus has been the ultimate source of change in his life. “I have Christ’s peace. I have no more anger and no more desire to sin. Faithfulness is the order of the day.”

According to Philip, the best part about being a Christian “is knowing that God is in control in every situation.” The hardest part? For Philip, it’s people who do not understand nor want to understand his Christian faith.

“Jesus came to pay our sinful debt and it’s our role to believe in this for our salvation [from sins],” the 46-year-old proclaims.



# 'Bewitched' by mistress's love potion

**P**astor Chikumba was involved in an outreach in Zomba, Malawi when he met a man named Michael who seemed to be in distress.

The pastor struck up a conversation with Michael and discovered the source of his distress, according to a report by African Enterprise.

Michael was a married man but had been having an affair with a woman who was causing him great psychological and financial distress.

His mistress was demanding more money from him, but he was broke. He knew his duplicity was hurting his family. He wanted to end the affair but felt powerless to do so.

Michael's conclusion was that his mistress had bewitched him with a love potion, making him unable to quit even when he wanted to.

"Do you know a witch doctor who could break the spell that is controlling me?" Michael asked.

Grateful for the opportunity, Pastor Chikumba shared the Gospel with Michael and introduced him to the Lord Jesus Christ — the One who has the power to break every bondage.

Michael gave his life to Christ and prayed for deliverance from his bondage to sin. Praise be to God! Michael was delivered from his bondage.

Michael's wife is grateful for the miracle God performed. "I had no hope for our marriage," she recounted. "He would stay out late at night until eventually he stopped coming home altogether. He stopped supporting the family and cut contact with us. I had to sustain my family by farming and doing small businesses.

"I moved from church to church in a search for solutions but my husband was nowhere to be seen. After a while, he would occasionally come back home but was very impolite to the point that we used to fight a lot. All his clothes were at the mistress' place.

"Since he gave his life to Christ and we began praying and being counselled together, I have seen tremendous change in his behaviour. His eating habits have improved, he sleeps better, we pray together and he is providing for his family again. I thank God for leading the Pastor to meet and share the gospel with him. We have now committed to be members of his church so that as a family we may be rooted and grow in Christ."

From African Enterprise, from godreports.org

# Chipo chikuru

## Zulu translation

**P**atricia Marachiel aiva nemakore gumi nemashanu okuberekwa paakatanga kutsvaga ndokuzowana chipo chikuru panyika.

Anotaura nezvemakore akazomusvitsa pachitiko ichi. "Pandaiva mwana mudiki, ndainyanya kushupikana nekutsamwa nekusaregerera. Ndaikasika kutsamwa uye zvaisava nyore kuti ndiregerere vaindita-dzira. Ndaiva mutadzi mukuru!"

Patricia anoti aiva asina kumbobvira anzwa nezveku namata kunyangwe chiKirisitu mukukura kwake. Zvaiva zvitsva kwaari.

Paakasvitsa makore gumi nemashanu okuberekwa, akaenda kumusangano wenyika yose wema Kirisitu ndokunonzwa "shoko rakanaka" raJesu Kirisitu, kuti aiva mwananakomana waMwari akauya pano panyika kuzofira zvitadzo zvedu.

Ava nemakore makumi maviri nepfumbamwe okuberekwa Patricia akanzwa zvekare shoko raakanzwa zuva riya anemakore gumi nemashanu. "Ndinorangarira kuti ndakadzidziswa kunaka kwaKirisitu nekuva mukirisitu. Ndakanzwa mumoyo mangu kuti ndinofanirwa kupu hupenyu

hwangu kunaJesu Kirisitu nekunamatira kuti ndive mukirisitu wechokwadi.

Patricia akasarudza kutsvagisisa zvimwe pamusoro pekutenda kwake kutsva ndokutanga kutsvaga kuda kuziva Mwari zvizere.

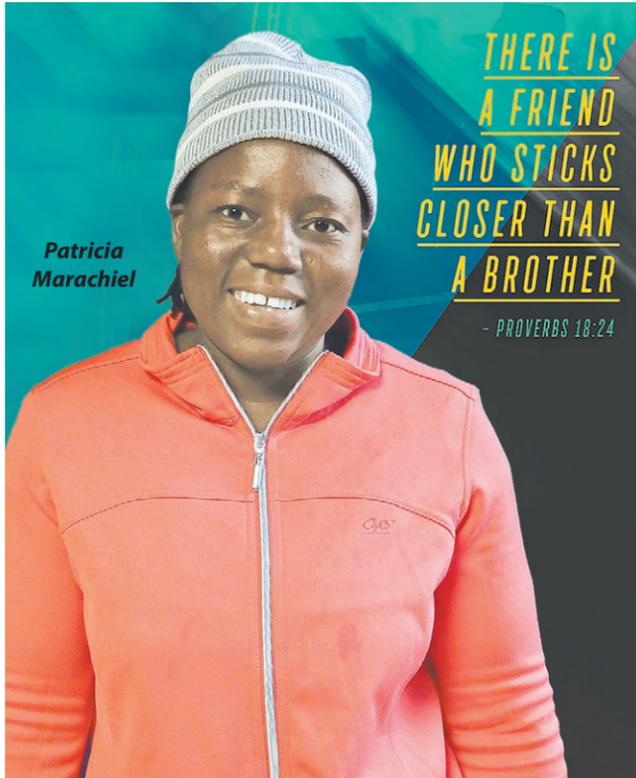
Kuwana chipo chikuru uku kwaPatricia kwakaitika makore matanhatu apfuura asi rufaro nerusununguko rwune muchengeti wekuZimbabwe anemakore makumi matatu nemashanu kwaakawana musi iwowo kuchiri kutsva sezvaainzwa pama-zuva akapfuura.

"Pane shanduko huru muopenyu hwangu zvino zvandava muKirisitu," anopupura. "Ndava kunonoka kutsamwa. Ndava kukwanisawo kuregerera. Ndinokwanisa zvekare kuparidza shoko raMwari kune vamwe uye kuvadzidzisa nezveku namata kwaMwari. Chazvakanakira ndechekuti unorarama upenyu uchiziva kuti kuna Mwari, Baba vanokupa zvose zvaunoshuwira."

Marachiel ane moyo kune vose vasati vaziva Jesu. "Ndinoda kuvadza kuti vatsvage Mwari uye vanamate kuti ave muponesi wavo."

Ku vatendi vangave vachinsekana mukufamba kwavonaIshe, anovakurudzira kuti "rambai muchinamata! Musamira. Mwari Baba vokudenga ndivo vane masimba pamusoro pezvinhu zvose."

Shoko raanofarira kubva mubhaibheri rinobva kuna Zvirevo 18:24 – "Munhu aneshamwiri zhinji unoparadzwa, asi kune shamwari (Mwari) inonamatira kupfuura hama" Shoko iri rinomuyeuchidza kuti Mwari vanaye, kunyangwe paanangana nenguva dzakaoma muopenyu hwake.



Patricia Marachiel

## Afrikaans translation

# DIE GROOTSTE SKAT

**P**atricia Marachiel was slegs 15 jaar oud toe sy begin soek het na – en uiteindelik die grootste skat op aarde gevind het.

Sy gesels oor die jare wat tot hierdie gebeurtenis gelei het. "Toe ek nog jonk was het ek spesifieke probleme gehad met woede en onvergewensgesindheid. Ek het vinnig kwaad geword want dit was nie maklik vir my om te vergewe nie. Ek was 'n groot sondaar!"

Patricia sê dat sy nog nooit iets oor gebed of Christenskap gehoor het toe sy groot geword het nie. Dit was 'n vreemde konsep vir haar.

Toe sy 15 geword het, het sy 'n Nasionale Christen Konferensie bygewoon, en het vir die eerste keer die 'goeie nuus' van Jesus Christus gehoor, dat Hy die Seun van God is, wat na die aarde toe gekom het om vir ons sondes te sterf.

Op die ouderdom van 29 was Patricia weereens geraak deur die boodskap wat sy gehoor het toe sy 15 jaar oud was. "Ek onthou ek was van die goedheid van God geleer, en oor hoe om 'n Christen te wees. Ek het net binne in my hart gevoel dat ek my lewe aan Jesus moet oorgee en bid om 'n ware Christen te word."

Sy het besluit dat sy meer oor haar nuwe geloof moet uitvind, en het toe begin soek om God regtig te leer ken.

Die bevinding van hierdie groot skat het meer as ses jaar gelede gebeur, maar die vreugde en vryheid wat hierdie 35 jaar oue versorger van Zimbabwe ervaar het, is nog net so vars soos wat dit toe was.

"Daar is 'n groot verandering in my lewe nou dat ek 'n Christen is," getuig sy. "Ek word nie meer so vinnig kwaad nie. Ek kan vergewe. Ek kan ook die Woord van God met ander deel en vir hulle van die goedheid van God leer. Die beste deel is dat jy jou lewe lei, wetend dat daar 'n God is, 'n Vader wat vir jou met alles wat jy nodig het voorsien."

Marachiel het 'n hart vir ander wat nog nie vir Jesus ken nie. "Ek wil vir almal vertel dat hulle moet soekend na God wees en Hom vra om hulle Saligmaker te wees."

Vir Christene wat in hulle wandel met God struikel, moedig sy hulle aan om "aan te hou bid! Moenie ophou nie. God die Vader is in beheer van alles."

Haar gunsteling Bybelvers is Spreuke 18:24 "n Man met baie vriende word geruïneer, maar daar is 'n vriend wat sterker aanhang as 'n broer.' Dit herinner haar dat God altyd by haar is, selfs as sy deur moeilike tye gaan.

# THE GREATEST TREASURE

**P**atricia Marachiel was only 15 when she started to search for – and eventually found the greatest treasure on earth.

She talks about the years leading up to this event. "When I was young, I specifically struggled with anger and unforgiveness. I was quick to get angry as it was not easy for me to forgive. I was a great sinner!"

Patricia says she never heard anything about prayer or Christianity when she was growing up. It was completely foreign to her.

Then, when she turned 15, she attended a national Christian conference and for the first time heard 'the good news' of Jesus Christ, that He was the Son of God who came to earth to die for our sins.

At the age of 29 Patricia was moved once again by the message she heard that day at the age of 15. "I remember I was taught about the goodness of Christ and of being a Christian. I just felt inside my heart that I should commit my life to Jesus Christ and pray to become a true Christian."

She decided she should find out more about her new faith, and thus began her search to really know God.

Finding that great treasure happened over six years ago now, but the joy and freedom the 35-year-old care-giver from Zimbabwe, experienced that day, is as fresh today as it was then.

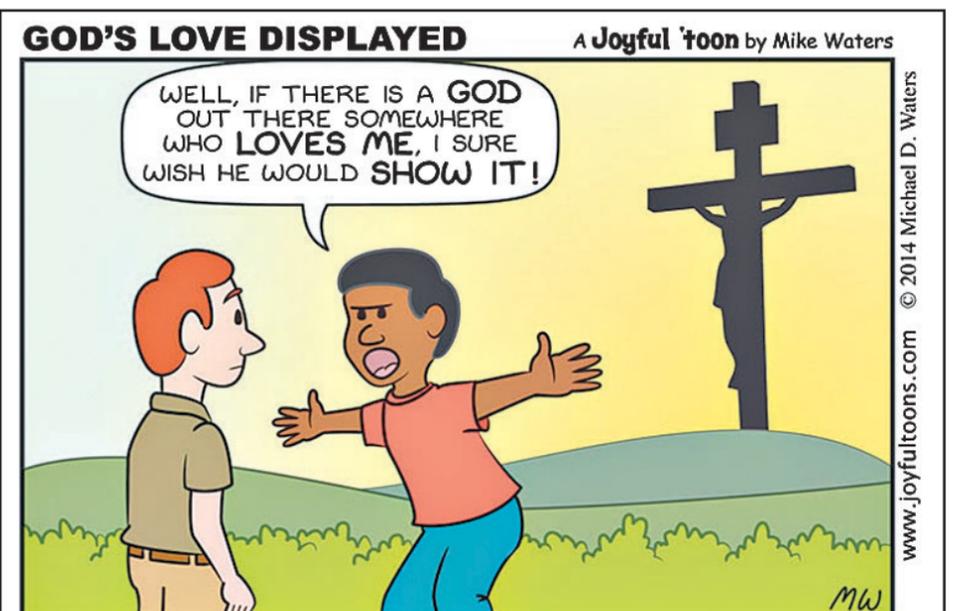
"There is a big change in my life now I am a Christian," she testifies. "I am slow to anger. I can forgive. I can also share the Word of God with others and teach them about the goodness of God. The best part is that you live life knowing there's a God, a Father who provides you with everything you need."

Marachiel has a heart for others who do not yet know Jesus. "I would like to tell them that they should seek God and pray for Him to be their Saviour."

To Christians who may be struggling in their walk with God, she encourages them to "keep praying! Never stop. God the Father is in control of everything."

Her favourite Bible verse is Proverbs 18:24 – "One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a Friend [God] who sticks closer than a brother." It reminds her that God is always with her, even when she goes through tough times.

## English translation



But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. – ROMANS 5:8 NIV

# Twice adopted, deeply loved

**A**lcoholism nearly destroyed Piet's life, but on the brink of disaster, with severe damage to his brain, he admitted he could not help himself, and surrendered to God.

Piet van der Merwe was born Peter Taite in 1962 in Port Elizabeth. At almost a year old he and his sister were taken into care due to abuse, and placed in an orphanage in Bloemfontein. After a couple of years Piet was adopted by a childless couple, whom he lived with permanently from the age of about 4. During this time, a new home was also found for Piet's sister.

The home Piet grew up in was very patriarchal. His adoptive father was a hardworking and prosperous man, who became a well-known businessman and farmer. Following his military training after school, Piet became a tradesman and went to work for his dad. The image of "a man" that Piet was raised with, was

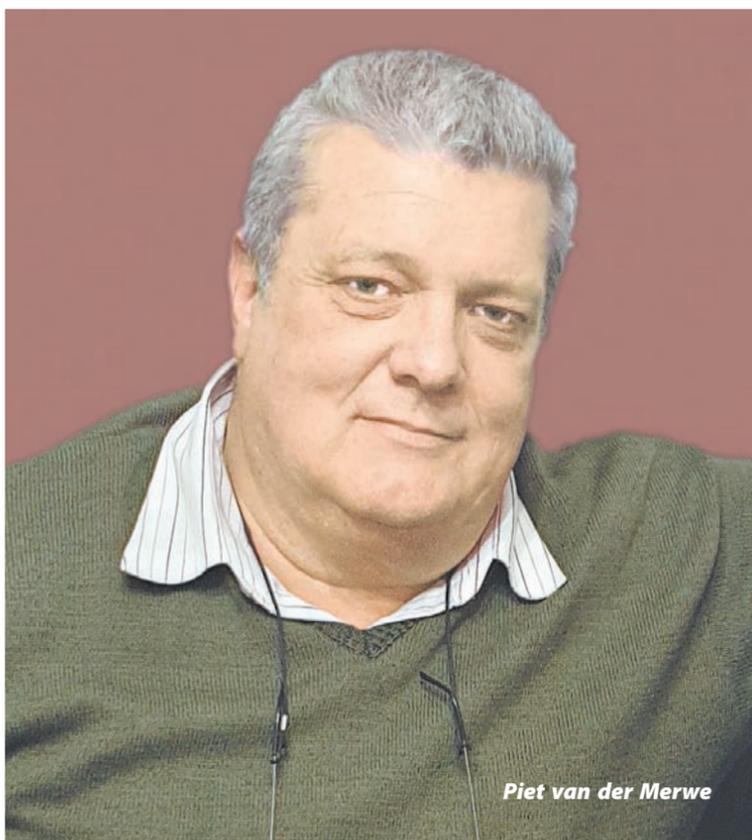
one who was strong, stern and drank heavily. So Piet turned to drinking to fill the void left by his father's lack of affirmation, in the hopes it would make him feel accepted and fulfilled.

Needless to say, he was soon hopelessly addicted, drinking two bottles a day, and yet still feeling empty and inadequate inside.

A regular church goer, Piet had heard about Jesus but had never been invited to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus or ask Him to forgive his sins. In his teen years, he heard the gospel at an AGS camp but was reluctant to believe all he was told.

Much later, in 1992, Piet realised one night that if he continued on the alcoholic path that he was on he would lose his wife and child. He ended up in an addiction recovery clinic, where he was told after tests and a CT scan that his drinking had destroyed a large portion of his brain. Disheartened, shocked and lost, Piet knelt before the Lord and asked God to forgive him and heal him and make him whole.

Change didn't come easily. He fell back into old habits. Ashamed and totally broken he went back to God and begged Him to forgive him and show him mercy. Piet felt



Piet van der Merwe

like the prodigal son who in Luke 15:18 says: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you'."

Piet says one of the hardest things he had to do after becoming a Christian was look his wife in the eyes and ask for her forgiveness, but one of the best things was the forgiveness he saw there! That forgiveness mirrored the grace he had received from God.

Piet encourages others: "No matter how great your sins are, God will forgive you. He pulled me out of the mud, cleaned me up, and said 'enough is enough'. He does that for everyone who accepts Him as Saviour and Lord."

Piet's favourite Bible verses are: John 14:6, which says, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and

the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" And "In the day of my anxiety I called to you, because you hear me."

"Through all the happenings and hardships, my heavenly Father gave me a gem of a wife. A wife who has stood by me and supported me," says Piet. "Through everything she has relied on God and led our two daughters to the Lord."

Piet and his wife were baptised as adults in 2002. It took a long time for them to become convinced that this was a necessary step, since they had been christened as infants, but eventually they realised from reading the Bible that it was an important public declaration of their dying to their old lives and being born again as new creations. Now retired, Piet has been a committed Christian for nearly three decades.

# Giving thanks after being robbed

BY MIKE SHREVE OF SHREVE MINISTRIES

**ONE** of my favorite stories about maintaining a thankful heart comes from the respected Bible commentator, Matthew Henry. At a certain point in his walk with God, he made a commitment to always abide by the often-quoted biblical command: "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 18).

Of course, this verse does not mean we give thanks to God for the problems of life, but rather, we thank God in spite of the problems of life — thus, rising above them.

Not surprisingly, Matthew Henry's commitment was put to a test soon after he made it. He was robbed.

At first, he felt compelled to react in negative ways: upset, angry, depressed, and fearful. But then, he remembered his commitment. So, he sat down, took hold of his mind, and prayerfully pondered how to respond to the situation. Feeling inspired, he wrote down four things he decided he could be thankful for, despite the life-threatening encounter he had just endured. This is the proclamation he penned to God:

"Let me be thankful first because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed."

When I was confronted with this story and realized how thankfulness calmed Henry's mind and realigned his faith, I was immediately convicted of areas of negativity in my own thought life and speech that needed to be adjusted.

I thought, "If Matthew Henry could be that thankful after being robbed literally, then I need to be more thankful when it seems I've been robbed—mentally, emotionally, or even physically — by circumstances of life."

For instance, when I am robbed by unexpected adversities, by the lower nature, by the corrupt world system, by harmful relationships, or even by evil spirits whose agenda is to "steal, and kill, and destroy" (John 10:10).

**Editor's note:** Like Pollyanna in the book of the same name by Eleanor H. Porter, we can always find things to be grateful for if we look hard enough. There are always people worse off than we are, and so much that we do have we take for granted, like good health, good relationships, having a job, sunshine (or rain) or having a meal.

Once we start to look for the good in each situation, we find that there is more there than we at first believed.

"The game was to just find something about everything to be glad about, no matter what 'twas ... you see when you're hunting for the good things, you sort of forget the other kind" - Pollyanna.



## HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

**What?** Salvation is an eternal relationship with God – now on Earth and, after we die, in Heaven.

*The Lord Jesus says: "I tell you the truth. Everyone who believes in Me has eternal life." John 6:47*

*"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33*

**Who?** Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through Jesus Christ, regardless of how you have previously lived or what you have previously believed.

*God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16*

**Why?** Because sin separates us from a holy God. Sin is all the wrong things we do, say and think, as well as our desire to be our own boss.

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Roman 3:23*

**How?** The Bible says you become a Christian by confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.

*If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Romans 10:8b-10*

**Ready to change your life forever?** Here is a prayer you can pray, but you can also use your own words. The words are not as important as the heart attitude – which only God can see.

Almighty God, Creator of Heaven and Earth,

I acknowledge that I am a sinner. Please forgive me for all the ways I have disobeyed and defied You.

Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to live the perfect life I couldn't, and die on the cross for my sins. Thank You that His blood was sufficient to pay my debt to You, and His resurrection proves that there is life beyond death. I accept that His sacrifice is all I need to get right with You – I bring nothing I have done but I give you everything I am. Help me to live for You. Please be my Saviour and my Master. Amen.

### What now?

1. Tell someone - either a Christian that you know or email us at info@challengenews.org
2. Use the resources in the green box on this page to find a Bible to read and more information regarding Christianity.
3. Keep praying. Talk to God anywhere, about anything. He is always listening, and you don't need a formula.
4. Find a Bible-teaching church to attend.

### AS A NEXT STEP:

I have prayed this prayer.

Please send me:

- A Bible portion
- Some 'starting off' literature
- Information on a helpful church

\* Please tick and write clearly \*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

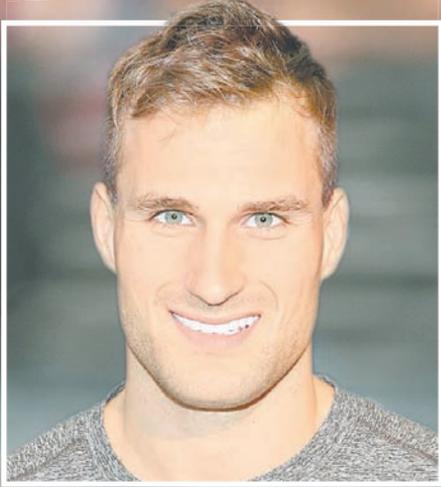
Send to: [cobusbritz@challnews.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:cobusbritz@challnews.onmicrosoft.com)  
Whatsapp Cobus at +27 78 887 7030

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

## Want to explore more?

Here are some **free**, helpful, Christian online resources:

Online Bible - <b>Olive Tree app</b> (we recommend that you start with an easy-to-read version like the ESV)	
Audio Bible - <b>Bible.is app</b> , or <b>Youversion Bible app</b>	
Christian radio station - <b>CBN radio app</b> (different channels for all genres of music)	
Christian podcasts and sermons - <b>Edifi app</b>	
Christian movies - <b>New Faith Network app</b> (7-day free trial)	
Daily thoughts and inspiration - <b>Our Daily Bread app</b>	
Advice on specific issues, Bible reading plans and studies for new believers - <b>Youversion Bible app</b> .	
The Bible explained with visual aides - <b>the Bible Project on YouTube</b> .	
<b>Alpha Film Series on Youtube</b> - an online introduction to Christianity.	
For kids - <b>Superbook Kids Bible, videos and games app</b>	
Comic book Bible online- <b>goodandevilbook.com</b>	
More inspiring faith stories - <b>back issues of Challenge News at challengenews.online</b>	



Minnesota Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins being pressured by San Francisco 49ers defensive end Arik Armstead during an NFL football game in California in January 2020. (Photo by Elizabeth Flores/Star Tribune via Getty Images)

INSET: Kirk Cousins at an ESPN party in 2016. Photo: Robin Marchant/Getty Images for ESPN

# DEFINED BY TWO DECISIONS

From the time he was a little kid, Kirk Cousins would walk around the house holding a football, almost as if he just knew that he wanted to be a ball-player one day.

Now 33, and the quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings, Kirk recalls two big decisions he has made in the intervening time that have defined his life and career.

The first was a decision he made when he was seven, to become a Christian.

In an interview with [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org), he explained: “When your dad is a pastor, you get the opportunity to give your life to the Lord at a pretty young age. So I was probably seven or eight years old when the gospel was explained to me. I made that decision, as much as you can as a seven- or eight-year-old. I was in a Christian school all the way through high school.

“It was probably midway through high school that I had a Bible teacher who challenged me and my fellow classmates about what it meant to not just pray the [sinner’s] prayer, but to actually become a disciple of Jesus. To be a fully devoted follower, as the Bible says in 1 John 2:6, ‘Those who claim to be in Him [Jesus] must walk as He walked.’

“The Bible teacher challenged us; ‘How does your walk really look and does it really resemble the rabbi Jesus and His walk? Are you the real deal or are you just an

imposter?’

“And so in high school, that’s when it became real for me. I said, ‘Okay, I’m going to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ, whatever that may cost me or whatever that may change in my life, I’m all in at this point.’”

Going to a small school, that had recently started a football program meant that Kirk was not going to be seen by the selectors until junior year in college. That first year would be crucial for his career goals – however, he broke his ankle in the first game of his first varsity season.

That was when Kirk made the second life-changing decision.

“I remember coming home with a cast on my leg, calling my dad, giving him the update that I had broken my ankle and there were tears in my eyes and I said, ‘Dad, this means that I’ll never be able to play college football at a high level.’ Because I was already an under-recruited player, no one knew about me. I knew I was not going to be able to play my junior year.

“My dad said, ‘Kirk, you don’t know that. You need to trust in the Lord and His plan for your life.’ And he referenced Proverbs 3:5-6: ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him

and He will direct your steps.’

He challenged me that day to take that verse deep into my heart, and make it a reality for me. At that moment, I decided, ‘Okay. Whether it’s my football career or the path of my entire life, I’m going to trust you, Lord, to lead.’

“And the Lord found a way for me to play college football and He was so much bigger than a broken ankle. Looking back now, I realize that He’s so much bigger than so many things. What we see as a mountain, God sees as just nothing.”

Kirk led the Vikings to a 26-20 victory over the New Orleans Saints in early January 2020 and afterwards told FOX: “My faith is important to me, it’s the foundation of my life. And ultimately that’s where I gain my peace and my strength. Win or lose today, God is still on the throne and I take comfort in that.”

“The ultimate foundation of my life is to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus,” he told the Sports Spectrum Podcast last year. “And that means so much more than just checking a box and saying you’re a Christian.”

Kirk, who is now a married father, says prayer is not a religious ritual for him but part of his relationship with God. “I want to talk

**[GOD] WAS SO MUCH BIGGER THAN A BROKEN ANKLE.**



to Him; I want to be giving Him my requests and my worries and my stresses and the pressures I face,” he says. “I want to give that over to Him because He says, ‘Cast your burdens on Me because I care for you.’ (1 Peter 5 verse 7)

“Some of my favorite verses are Colossians 3:23-24: ‘Whatever you do work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.’

“While I seek to apply this verse to football, I know that football will one day end. Jesus however, and all who know Him, will live forever. This great truth means I have an

identity, a foundation that can never be taken from me,” the wise player explains.

In 2018 when he ran a football camp to encourage young athletes, Kirk told them to use the Bible as a “playbook for life. Choosing to follow Jesus instead of the world ... in the long run, it pays off.”

Maybe that explains the paradox of Kirk’s career, as his dad once described it: “He’s consistently been overlooked and underestimated. He’s seldom the biggest, fastest or strongest, but in the end he’s had a lot of success.”

Maybe that is because ‘Captain Kirk’, as he has been called, has the biggest, fastest and strongest God on his side. ●

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