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# MISS USA HAS DONE IT TOUGH

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

Not everything was beautiful in the new Miss America's early life.

When Asya Branch was 10, her father was arrested at home for involvement with an armed robbery. Little Asya watched, terrified, from the car as her dad was hauled away.

"That day our lives changed forever," Asya told the *New York Daily News*. "We had a beautiful home and a great life. When they found out that my father was in prison, people looked at us differently. That was a critical stage in my life and it ended up changing me. I felt this overwhelming shame."

Three things followed this event. Asya and her family lost their farm home as the bank foreclosed. She felt alone and abandoned. And she grew closer to Jesus.

"My father's incarceration played an enormous role in my life and helped me develop characteristics I never imagined. It taught me responsibility at a young age and to count my blessings," Asya said on Mississippi Pageant. "But most of all, it strengthened my personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

Asya was born the sixth of eight siblings to her parents, living in Booneville, Mississippi at the time.

Before stepping into a wayward life, her dad was a retired military veteran. Her mom was a teacher's assistant. She was a gregarious kid who spent her days entertaining family members. If no one was around, she would bury herself in a book. Asked what one book she would take to a deserted island, she answered unequivocally: "My Bible, not only for the quality reading but for inspiration and guidance in the circumstances in which I would find myself."

A self-described "daddy's girl," Asya said there was no one to help her through the trying times of losing her dad to the prison system. Her father, she says, had tried to help a drifter by taking him in. But that young man had committed an armed robbery, and for trying to help a needy soul, her daddy paid a high price.

"There were no resources nor advocates available for me," she says. "People don't recognise the hardships I have faced in my life because I have learned to be strong through my circumstance, keep a smile on my face and lean upon the Lord." (Asya is advocating for prison reform and even spoke to President Trump about it.)

"Initially, I struggled with my self-worth and closed myself off, praying for answers about why this

happened," she wrote in Guideposts. Realising eventually that "maybe God is teaching me to be independent and grateful."

In desperation and loneliness one night, she cried out to Jesus and renewed her relationship.

"It was seen by me in one of my nightly devotions," she says. "I had become overwhelmed, discouraged and had begun to give up when I had a personal, spiritual encounter with God where He spoke to me and let me know He was still working on me and had incredible plans for my life and I could not give up."

After taking summer classes at Harvard University, the now-22-year-old graduated from Ole Miss with a degree in broadcast journalism.

She has launched a line of beauty products called Branch Beauty and was crowned Miss America on 9 November, 2020 in a Covid-delayed pageant. "Having the backbone and financial base of our family stripped away through incarceration and arrest left me hurt, confused, scared, bullied, and withdrawn," Asya said.

"Now, I am boldly working to help other children who find themselves in unfortunate circumstances to fulfil their greatest potential and realise they have an uninhibited future."



Miss USA Asya Branch at Runway Of Dreams Foundation NYFW 2021 on September 9, 2021 in New York City. (Photo by Monica Schipper/Getty Images for Runway Of Dreams)

## TOTALLY SINCERE BUT TOTALLY WRONG!

BY NICO BOUGAS

**CARBON** monoxide, instead of oxygen, was once administered to a hospital patient who passed away almost instantly. The tragedy occurred while the patient was being prepared for a minor operation. A trained anaesthetist was administering a controlled mixture of oxygen and anaesthetic gas when the tank of oxygen was emptied and a new tank, labelled "Oxygen," was substituted. Almost immediately, according to the police report, the patient died. The attending surgeon and hospital officials suspected some type of accident and called the coroner.

An autopsy revealed carbon monoxide poisoning. Upon examination, the oxygen tank was found to contain carbon monoxide. The tank had been mislabelled before it had reached the hospital. The manufacturer was

sincere, the hospital authorities were sincere, the anaesthetist was sincere, the surgeon was sincere and certainly, the patient was sincere. No one wanted the tragedy to happen. But all were sincerely mistaken about the "Oxygen".

The incident demonstrates that sincerity is not enough. Sincerity must be coupled with certainty.

There is a scripture that says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." - Proverbs 14:12.

Too many people are saying, "As long as I am sincere, and my intentions are good, I'll come out alright in the end." But they are sincerely mistaken. One must be absolutely certain when it comes to your eternal destination. The Bible declares that we can be certain and have the assurance of eternal life. The Apostle John tells

his readers: "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." - 1 John 5:13.

Too many things in our lives are mislabelled, "Forgiveness", "Salvation", "Life", "Peace", "Security", and "Satisfaction". How can one be absolutely certain in such all important matters? By taking the Lord Jesus

Christ at His Word. No one is greater than He is and no one is truer than He is.

He said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me." - John 14:6. And He proved it by rising from the dead and appearing to over 500 people over a period of 40 days.

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BACK PAGE

**FAST FEAT**  
JANINE BECKIE

# Lessons from an inept sailor

BY JANICE TEO

ONE day in my life stands out with great clarity. Not the good epiphany kind of clarity; more the my-life-flashed-before-me variety. It was the day my husband and I took part in a sailing competition.

Up to then we had been happy casual sailors, satisfied with jaunts along the coast, safely within reach of medical care and proper toilets because no, the back of the boat doesn't count.

Sailing can teach you many lessons, foremost of which is this one: life can throw a storm at you any time, anywhere, without any warning. This is precisely what happened to us.

One minute we were exchanging the usual pleasantries of any seafaring couple – "Stop yelling!" "I'M NOT YELLING!!" – and the next the sky was dark and the waves looked like the ash cloud from Mount Vesuvius.

The boat, which up to then had been bobbing along with absolutely no hope of finishing in the top three, suddenly caught the wind in its sails and decided it would try, *Chariots of Fire* style, to stage a stunning comeback.

In less experienced hands, this would have been a problem. In our less than less experienced hands, it was a disaster. We tossed, we turned, we capsized.

My husband climbed back in with all the dexterity of an Army man used to obstacle courses. I, being of the species *Sailorus Ineptus*, couldn't. The officials in the rescue boat hurtling towards us were laughing so hard I

wished they would capsize too.

It was seriously difficult to get back into the boat. It seemed like all the forces of nature were conspiring against me. The lashing rain made it hard to see, the boat was bucking like a bronco on steroids, the current and the waves tossed me about, and the life jacket kept pushing up around my head as though seeking to decapitate me.

Finally getting a firm grip, I pushed down with all the strength I could muster and pulled myself up back into the boat while my husband made sure the madly swinging boom didn't knock me unconscious on my way back in. There's just so much to love about sailing I wonder why fewer and fewer people are taking it up.

You can see why my mortality suddenly loomed large.

Yet in life we sometimes feel overpowered by circumstances, don't we? Sometimes they are situations of our own making – I mean, what on earth made us sign up for the race? And sometimes calamity can strike without you having done a thing to warrant it.

Of course, the storm wasn't half as bad as I've described; it only felt that way. The forces for me were as many as the ones against me – my husband's sure handling of the boat, the rescue officials who pulled alongside when they finally stopped laughing long enough, the fact that the storm in truth was nothing more than heavy rain.

A Christian's life is just as susceptible to upheavals, but there is a difference – we know Christ is

always in the boat with us. He is the perfect captain, not only able not only to steer us through high winds and poor visibility but also bring us into safe harbour again.

Reflecting on my experience in the storm that day gave me the chance to think about what my life would be like if I didn't have Christ in the boat with me. It was not a pretty picture – life's high seas seldom are.

That's why I am so grateful I have given control of my boat of life to the Lord Jesus Christ. As the captain of my ship His sure hand has navigated me through many storms. Sometimes the waves and currents take me in the wrong direction and leave me sputtering, but I have always come back to safe harbor.

Without Jesus I do wonder what may have become of me otherwise.

There is a famous painting, called Christ our Pilot. It shows a young man steering a boat. Jesus stands behind him, one hand on the boy's shoulder the other pointing the way.

What a beautiful illustration of what it means to have Jesus as our master helmsman helping us steer the proper course for our lives. We just need to surrender to His navigation.



Paul E. Momoh and his wife Elisheba Momoh, who have been married for 32 years.

## Meeting God at the family shop

Eleven-year-old Paul E. Momoh was lying flat on the floor of his mother's shop crying. To any customers and passers-by he may have looked a little crazy, but the truth was he was going through a huge life transformation and he didn't care who saw it.

The now 56-year-old remembers that moment. "Something dramatic was happening. I was having an encounter with the living Christ."

Paul was raised in a church-going family in Nigeria and learned "a basic knowledge of God." He and his twin brother, Peter, were often seen together sitting in the pew. The regular habits of church-going and Bible-reading were instilled in them as young boys.



"Two little dicky birds sitting on the wall, one named Peter, one named Paul' was a nursery rhyme we heard often as people exchanged greetings with us at church," he says with a smile.

"Little by little, the Lord was drawing our little hearts towards Him."

### A Hunger For God

This desire to know more about God increased as the years rolled by. On his own initiative, Paul would spend his school nights reading a Gideon's New Testament Bible, cover to cover, and searching hungrily for the truth.

"Although my local church did not teach salvation (Jesus saving us from our sins) or make any altar calls," he says. "To their credit, they taught that there is a God out there who draws close to those who would draw close to Him." Paul's habit of reading the Bible so regularly was about to bear fruit.

### The Encounter

In November of 1975, Paul was

alone looking after his mother's shop. As usual, he was reading the Bible. That, he says, was the last thing he remembered doing before a revelation dawned on him.

"I suddenly became very aware of my sins and that I was a sinner," he says. "I became conscious of the truth that my sins made Christ suffer and die for me. This filled me with great anguish as I had never before understood it in that way. The awareness of this truth was just so strong."

The next thing he knew, he had fallen flat on his face on the shop floor, crying and pleading with God to forgive all of his sins. "I was just lying there and praying out my heart on the floor, for how long ... I have no idea," he recalls. "Then,

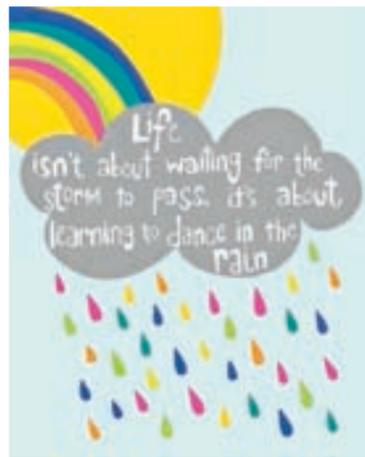
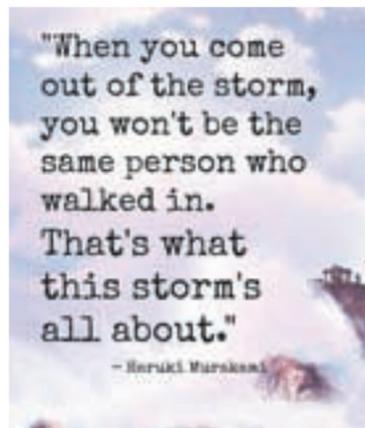
I felt a heavy weight lifted off me. I found myself on my feet again, but this time I was rejoicing and praising God for removing my sins. I knew that weight was gone!

"I arose to my feet a new person, singing, rejoicing, thanking and praising God!" he beams.

Paul has now been in a relationship with Jesus for 45 years.

"Any time I share this story, I can't help but sing my own version of that old hymn: 'At the shop (at the shop), where I first saw the light and the burden of my sin rolled away; It was there by faith, I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!'"

Paul, his wife and three adult children now live in Queensland. He is an ordained church minister in full-time ministry since April 1988. He continues to be passionate about sharing the good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, including through the printed word and crusade meetings.



## Totally sincere but totally wrong!

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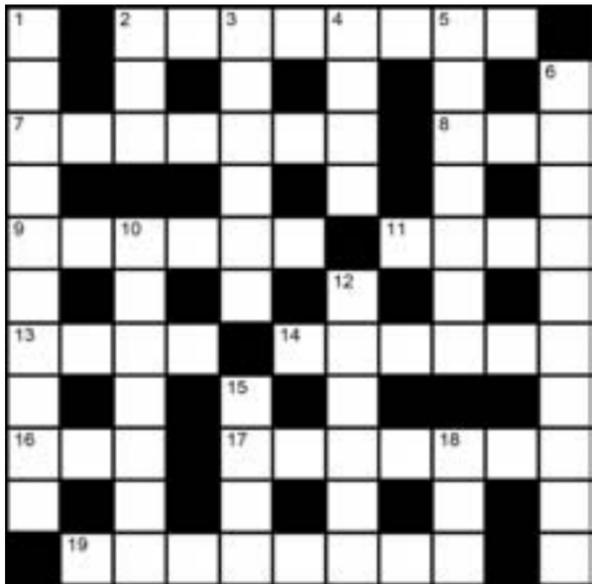
He loved us to the point of dying for our sins on the Cross of Calvary. He now lives in the power of an endless life and saves all who come to God by Him.

All who make Him their Lord and Saviour can say with the Apostle Peter, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39. Peter also said, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." - Acts 4:12.

## Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

### ACROSS

- 2 Energetic type
- 7 Failure, fiasco
- 8 Take to the slopes
- 9 Chicago gangster
- 11 President after Reagan
- 13 A wild mountain goat
- 14 Flower patch
- 16 Signifying maiden name
- 17 Ocean direction
- 19 Five-armed sea creature



### DOWN

- 1 Habit formers
- 2 Scientist's work place
- 3 Not lived in
- 4 Gardener's annoyance
- 5 Redeemed, saved
- 6 Stranded, helpless (4,3,3)
- 10 Stop happening
- 12 A kind of sausage
- 15 One that uses
- 18 Volcanic fallout

### SOLUTIONS PAGE 7



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# Hot temper doused by forgiveness

“Leonard Pkerker tells *Challenge* there were instances where his hot temper and unforgiving spirit got the better of him.

But today he is a completely different person. He is happily married, works as a prison officer, and is gracious and compassionate with others. He attributes his change of heart to Jesus Christ.

Leonard says he was brought up in a Christian family but did not understand anything about who Jesus was or why He was worshipped. He certainly knew nothing of what it meant to have a personal relationship with Him.

That is until he went to high school.

“I was 14 years old in high school,” he recalls. “I was in the school’s church and I heard the good news about Jesus and what He had done to save us from our sins. I wanted to be saved so I could enter into eternal life.”

The Bible says Jesus became a sacrifice for the sins of the world when He was crucified, died and rose from the dead more than 2000 years ago.

Leonard was so moved he decided to become a Christian by praying and asking Jesus to come into his life.

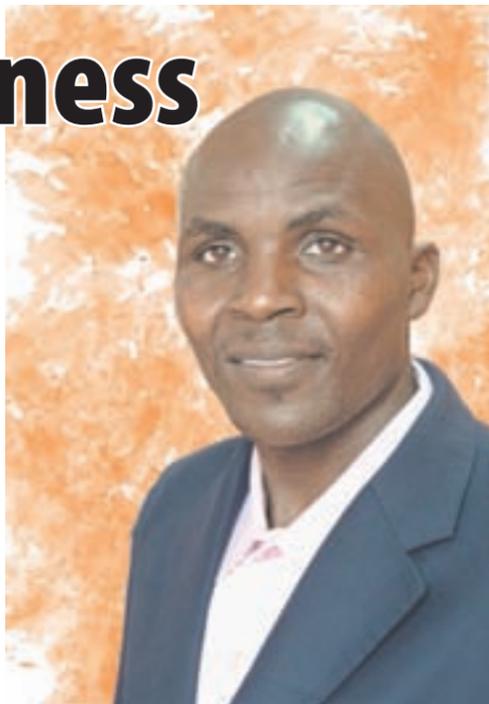
“I wanted to forgive others and understand more about God and His people,” he says. “I became saved in Jesus Christ! Later, I was baptised [immersed in water as an outward sign of my conversion].”

Leonard is still seeing changes in his life.

“I started to know who Jesus Christ is,” he says happily. “I attend church and now I am doing Bible studies to understand the Bible better.”

Leonard says that the best thing about being a Christian is “the assurance of being saved”.

One of his favourite stories from the Bible is



Leonard Pkerker

about the Good Shepherd, which is found in Matthew 18:12-14. “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than the ninety nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

Leonard wants to tell others about his experiences and share with them the joy of knowing Jesus for themselves.

“I want them to change their views and look to the cross and Jesus to be saved from their sins and to become forgiven. I want to tell them that Jesus Christ is their Saviour!”



# Envy and jealousy nearly ruined him

Prostitutes, robbery and debt had trapped Tshepo Maine like an animal in a snare by the time he was in his twenties.

“My life was all darkness and gloom,” he shares. “I had a job at a restaurant but I spent the money on things like prostitutes.

Then I got greedy and lost my job after about a year. So I got into debt. I was studying at that time and I didn’t have enough money to pay for my studies.”

The South African looked around and envied those he saw living the life he wanted but could not have.

“I was very jealous of other people; in fact, I hated them,” he admits as he remembered how unhappy he was then. “I was also very selfish and stubborn.”

Then three years ago Tshepo received an invitation that would change his life. He was asked if he would like to attend a Christian revival meeting.

There he heard for the first time the good news about Jesus Christ, that he came to Earth, lived a sinless life, died on a cross to save people from their sins, and rose from the dead. If a person believes that and gives their life to Jesus, all their past is washed clean and they are put in right relationship to God.

A light came on for the troubled man. At the end of the sermon, when the speaker asked if anyone wanted to commit their lives to Jesus Christ, Tshepo put his hand up immediately and instantly felt God’s presence envelope him.

“I had never thought of spiritual things [before],” he acknowledges. “In fact I was spiritually dead. I always wanted to feel peace but there was no peace in my life. Then that night when I heard the preacher I finally felt it!”

“At last I had the peace I was searching for,” he enthuses.

To say his life and his attitudes have changed would be an understatement. Tshepo says he now loves “doing good and being kind and gentle to others.

“God has filled my life with the Holy Spirit (the unseen presence of God),” he says. “Now I have self-control, I can pray and I am able to love others.

“I just want to serve the Lord and be faithful and loyal to Him. I want to be a light to those who like me were in darkness. I want to tell them that Jesus came for those who are lost, not those who are good.”

Tshepo likes the passage in the Bible where Jesus says in Luke 15:7, “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (turns away from their sin) than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”

# MOM OF SEVEN ATTACKED ON EASTER SUNDAY

A mother of seven children in eastern Uganda suffered serious wounds and is cut off from her family after her husband and other Muslim relatives attacked her on Easter Sunday for putting her faith in Christ, sources said.

Salimati Naibira, 37, of Bukoba B village, lost consciousness after her husband cut her with a dagger known as a Somali sword in the thigh and back, on April 4th as she attended a worship service for the first time in the area, she said.

She had converted from Islam to Christianity three days prior to Easter.

Salimati said she was on her way to the church service when she met her brother-in-law who asked her where she was going. He likely became suspicious after she told him she was going to visit a friend, she said.

One hour into the worship service, she saw through a window that her husband and other relatives were approaching.

“I saw my husband, brother-in-law, and some family members enter the church gate shouting ‘Allah Akbar [‘God is greater’],” Salimati told Morning Star News.

“The church members took off from church worship to save their lives.”

The Muslim relatives entered the church building with sticks and the Somali sword. The pastor and some church elders tried to protect her but were overpowered, and the assailants forced her into a van and drove her to a nearby forest.

“They started beating me with sticks, then my husband cut me with the Somali sword at the thigh and the back,” she said. “I regained consciousness only after several hours.”

A passing herdsman found her lying in a pool of blood at about 3 pm and he and others took the still unconscious Salimati to a clinic in nearby Kityerera town.

On April 5th hospital staff members managed to make contact with a Christian friend of Salimati, and on April 8th she picked her up from the hospital. At this writing Salimati is at an undisclosed location recovering from wounds

on her face, thigh and back.

A week earlier, she had been visiting the friend’s workplace in Kaluba town, telling her how doctors had not been able to give Salimati any relief from heavy menstrual bleeding for four years, she said.

A Christian evangelist arrived, told her about Christ and asked if he could pray for them, Salimati said.

## I FELT SOMETHING LIKE AN ELECTRIC POWER TOUCH MY BODY.



things are possible. As he prayed for me, I felt something like an electric power touch my body.”

Hearing that God’s love was revealed in Christ’s sacrifice for sins, Salimati received Him as Lord and Savior, she said. The evangelist told her to visit any nearby church for fellowship and



Salimati Naibira after she was attacked.

to celebrate the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday, April 4th.

“Before leaving my friend, I was full of joy,” Salimati said. “At night I got a dream of watching a film of Jesus crucified on the cross.”

She awoke with a feeling of excitement and the issue of blood stopped! Jesus healed her!

Salimati said she does not see how she can gain custody of her children, who range in age from 4 to 17 years old. She said she cannot return home.

“I hope my children are safe,” she said.

The assault was the latest of many instances of persecution of Christians in Uganda that *Morning Star News* has documented.

Uganda’s constitution and other laws provide for religious freedom, including the right to propagate one’s faith and convert from one faith to another. Muslims make up no more than 12 percent of Uganda’s population, with high concentrations in eastern areas of the country.

— Morning Star News via godreports.com and used with kind permission.

## Zulu translation

# Owayeba imbuzi usengumelusi othembekile

U John Motaung wazalelwa futhi wakhulela eReitz ezalwa isangoma nobaba owambalekela. Babewu 8 ngeminyaka yabo 1940 no 50 elusa imbuzi, entshontsha imfuyo eplazini, ephuza isintu enguphumasilwe.

Sasihlupheka ngeba izimvu, inkukhu nembuzi ukuze sidle”, ekhumbula u John.

Eneminyaka ewu 25 wezwa ivangeli okokuqalalakubafundisi ababevakashile eplazini langakubo.

“Nganginganakuthula enhlizweni yami ngenxa yezono zami” evuma ngowakhe. ‘Ngalangazelelaurufana nalabafundisi. Omunye wangibuzwa ukuthi ngizoyaphi uma ngifa ngangazi ukuthi ngiya eshogweni. Wase engitshela ngo Jesu wangimema nasenkonzweni elandelayo.”

U John ukhumbula ukuthi ngo 3 ngomqibelo ntambama, enkonzweni elandelayo, wathandaza enxusa uNkulunkulu amthethelele izono ezinikela ekumlandeleni uNkulunkulu, waba umKristu.

“Ngazi uma ngiphuma lapho ukuthi ngingumntwana kaNkulunkulu. Ntambama uma ngisenga, intokozo eyisimanga yagcwalisa inhliziyo yami, ngazi kusukela lapho ukuthi ngisindisiwe.”

Ngelanga elilandelayo waqala ukushumayela!

Mabili amavesi awanikezwa kwandulela isinqumo esashintsha impilo yakhe: Isaya 1:18 wozani ke, sithethe indaba, noma izono zenu zibomvu kakhulu, ziyakubamhlophe njengeqhwa, noma zibomvu njengobubende, ziyakubamhlophe njenogoboya bezimvu, Johane 1:19 uma sizivuma izono zethu, Wethembekile futhi ulungile ukusihlanza nokusithethelela kukho konke ukungalungi.

Emva kokusindiswa kwakhe, uJohn wayekela ukweba, kwaba nzima ukondla umndeni wakubo. Wakhathazeka kakhulu ngengunaphakade likankosikazi wakhe u Liena, nomawakhe namanye amalunga omndeni wakhe.

“Ngabathandazela futhi ngabashumayeza. U Liena wazinikela ku Kristu emva konyaka nomamawakhe kanye nomndeni wakhe.

“Emva kokusindiswa, ngakuzonda ukukhonza amadlozi nezinto zobumnyama engangizwa phambilini,” ngalithanda izwi leNkosi waqala ukushumayela.

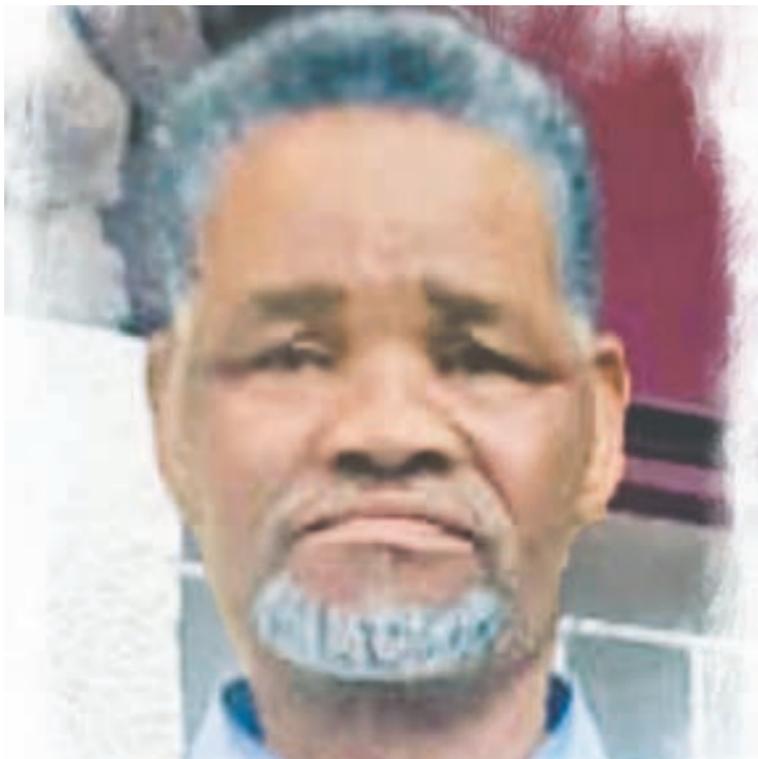
“Ngakhokhela unkosikazi womlimi imali yenkukhu engazeba eminyakeni edlule. Umlimi wabona ukuthi ngiphendukile wangikhokhela ukuthi ngiyofunda eBible College.”

Ngonyaka olandelayo uJohn wayofunda e Hammanskraal, emva kweminyaka emihlanu watshala ibandla lakhe lokuqala eBloemfontein, nelinye e Kroonstad.

Ngo 1986 u John waqala ibandla e Botshabelo, solokhu alapho, etshala amabandla waze wabeka nabafundisi abangu 53.

Yena no Liena banabantwana ababili. Useminyaka 77 nonkosikazi ongasekho.

“Ngakhula kanzima kodwa uNkulunkulu wayehlala ekhona,” efakaza, usemuhle, nanamhlanje.”



## Afrikaans translation

## Van 'n Bokdief tot 'n Vertroude Herder

John Motaung was gebore en grootgemaak in Reitz. Sy ma was 'n sangoma en sy pa was afwesig. Hy was een van agt kinders en het tussen 1940 en 1950 grootgeword. Hy het bokke opgepas, vee van die plaas gesteel, tuisbrou gedrink en baklei.

“Ons was baie arm en ek het skape, hoenders en bokke gesteel sodat ons kon eet,” het John onthou.

Toe hy 25 jaar oud was, het John vir die eerste keer die evangelie gehoor by verskeie reisende pastore wat die plase in die omgewing besoek het.

“Ek het nooit vrede in my hart gehad oor my sondes nie,” het hy erken. “Ek het gewens ek kon soos die pastore wees. Een pastoor het my gevra waar ek sou gaan as ek sterf, en ek het geweet ek sou hel toe gaan. Hy het my vertel oor Jesus wat die weg en die waarheid is. Daarna hy het my na 'n diens dieselfde middag genooi.”

John onthou dat hy na die diens teen drie uur namiddag daardie Saterdag, 'n gebed gedoen het om vir God te vra om sy sondes te vergewe, en daar het hy belowe om God te volg; so het hy 'n Christen geword.

“Ek het geweet toe ek die diens daardie Saterdag verlaat het, dat ek 'n kind van die Here is.”

Die volgende dag het hy begin preek!

Twee bybel verse wat John ontvang het na sy lewens verandering was Jesaja 1:18 wat sê: “Kom tog, laat ons die saak met mekaar uitmaak, sê die Here: Al was julle skarlakenrooi van sonde, julle sal wit word soos sneeu. Al was julle purperrooi, julle sal wit word soos wol.”; en 1 Johannes 1:9 “Maar as ons ons sondes bely – Hy is getrou en regverdige, Hy vergewe ons ons sondes en reinig ons van alle ongeregtigheid.”

Na sy verlossing het John ophou steel, maar dit het moeiliker geraak vir sy gesin om genoeg kos te kry om te eet. Hy was ook baie besorgd oor die ewige lot van sy vrou Liena, sy ma en ander familieledere.

“Ek het vir hulle gebed en vir hulle dikwels vertel oor hoe om gered te word. Liena het haar lewe vir die Here gegee 'n jaar na my, en uiteindelik so ook my ma en broers en susters.”

“Nadat ek tot bekering gekom het, het ek die goddelose dinge wat ek voorheen gedoen het gehaat, soos om die voorvaders te aanbid,” het John onthou. “Ek het op die Bybel verlief geraak en het dit orals begin verkondig.”

“Ek het ook gegaan en restitusie aan die boer se vrou betaal vir die hoenders wat ek oor die jare by haar gesteel het. Dit het die boer oortuig dat ek 'n veranderde man is, en hy het vir my betaal om Bybelskool toe te gaan.

Die volgende jaar het John Bybelskool in Hammanskraal bygewoon en vyf jaar daarna het hy sy eerste kerk in Bloemfontein geplant en later ook een in Kroonstad.

In 1986 het John 'n nuwe gemeente in Botshabelo gestig, waar hy steeds is, besig om verskeie gemeentes te plant. Hy het ook saam met ander bedienings gewerk, en hy het oor die jare 53 pastore bevestig.

John en Liena het twee kinders. Hy is nou 77 jaar oud en hy is 'n wewenaar. “Ek 'n moeilike opvoeding gehad, maar God was altyd daar saam met my,” het John getuig, “en Hy is steeds goed, selfs vandag.”

## English

## translation

## From a goat stealer to a trusted shepherd

John Motaung was born and raised in Reitz to a sangoma mother and an absentee father. He was one of eight children and grew up in the 1940s and 50s herding goats, stealing livestock from the farm, drinking home brew and fighting.

“We were very poor and I stole sheep, chickens and goats so that we could eat,” John remembers.

When he was 25, John heard the gospel for the first time from some travelling pastors who visited the farms in the area.

“I never had any peace in my heart over my sins,” he confesses. “I wished I could be like these ministers. One preacher asked me where I would go if I died and I knew I was going to hell. He then told me about Jesus being the way and the truth and invited me to a service at noon.”

John remembers that at 3pm that Saturday, following the service, he prayed a prayer asking God to forgive his sins and committing to follow God, thus becoming a Christian.

“I knew when I left that Saturday service that I was a child of God. Later, when I was milking the cow, a deep joy filled me and that is how I knew I was saved.”

The next day he started preaching!

Two verses that John was given following his life-change were: Isaiah 1:18, which says: “Come now, and let us reason together,” says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool”; and 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

After his salvation, John stopped

stealing, which made it even harder for his family to get enough to eat.

He also became very concerned about the eternal destiny of his wife Liena, his mother and other family members.

“I prayed for them and spoke to them often about being saved. Liena gave her life to Christ a year after I did and eventually so did my mother and siblings.

“After getting saved, I hated things like praying to the ancestors and all the wicked things I had done previously,” John recalls. “I fell in love with the Bible and began proclaiming it everywhere.

“I also went and paid restitution to the farmer's wife for the chickens I had stolen over the years. This convinced the farmer that I was a changed man and he paid for me to go to Bible College.”

The following year, John went to Bible College in Haman's Kraal, and five years later planted his first church, in Bloemfontein, followed by one in Kroonstad. In 1986 John established a new congregation in Botshabelo, where he has been ever since, starting several churches.

He has also worked with other ministries, and ordained 53 pastors over the years. He and Liena had two children. He is now 77 years old and a widower.

“I had a very tough upbringing but God was always there with me,” John testifies, “and He is still good, even today.”

## CORRECTION

IN the previous edition (115), a Shona translation was incorrectly attributed as Zulu. Challenge News apologises for this error.

## What's Easter all about?

**EASTER** isn't just another holiday to take a break from work – it's the most important festival in the Christian calendar. It's more important than Christmas – in fact, the whole of Christianity stands or falls on the truth of Easter...

## What Happened?

On the first Easter Sunday, almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus came back to life (was resurrected) after being brutally killed on a cross.

## What Was the Point of It?

The resurrection was the final proof that Jesus was who He claimed to be – God Himself in human flesh, with the power to defeat death.

That's why Easter is a celebration! Death isn't the end.

For those who believe in Jesus, an eternity of life full of joy and free from evil, suffering and pain awaits.

## Why is Good Friday Called 'Good'?

That's a good question! It's the day Jesus was tortured, crucified and died, so it was a horrific day for Him, but it was good for us.

Why? Because Jesus died to get us off the hook for all our bad

thoughts, words and actions – our 'sins'.

There is a punishment in the next life for all we've done wrong in this one, but God doesn't want us to suffer that. So what did He do?

He came to this world as Jesus to take one big punishment for all our sins.

Jesus was innocent, but was our substitute. He died so that we escape our punishment AND get eternal life after we die. We can ensure that is true for us by...

1. **Believing** – simply believing that Jesus is God, that He died for us and that He is alive today.

2. **Accepting** that we have 'sinned' and asking God to forgive us for all our bad stuff.

3. **Inviting** God into our lives to help us live how He wants us to live in the future.

## See For Yourself

You can read about Jesus' death on the cross (crucifixion), His burial and resurrection (rising from the dead) for yourself in the Bible.

See Matthew 27:27 to 28:8; Mark 15:16 to 16:19; Luke 23:26 to 24:35; and John 20:30 to 21:25.

# BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

## ANGER CAN TORCH YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

BY ROB FURLONG

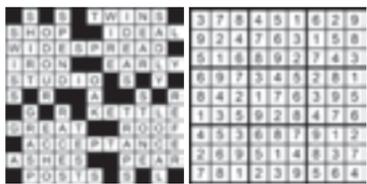
**ANGRY** people can do a lot of damage.

If you haven't discovered this yet, listen to the advice of The Incredible Hulk's alter-ego, Bruce Banner, who politely warns all those who would provoke him, "Don't make me angry – you wouldn't like me when I'm angry!"

His message is clear: "Get me angry and you will unleash the beast, and it won't end well for anyone..."

Unresolved, uncontrolled, and inappropriately expressed anger leaves a destructive wake in relationships, both for those on the receiving end, and the angry person.

Part of growing into an emotionally mature person is recognizing where and how you express anger may be negatively impacting your



life and relationships, and developing new, healthier habits.

One of the first growth steps for me in this journey was to learn how to identify the type of anger I struggled with. Essentially, there are two types of anger:

### Fiery anger

Fiery anger is the kind that flares up quickly and then "vomits" all over people. It doesn't require much to set it off: fiery anger bubbles up inside the offended person, resulting in a tirade against the offender but significantly, as soon as it is expressed, it settles down. Having "gotten things off their chest", the once angry person now feels great ... but everyone else is left to clean up the mess.

You do not have to be a genius to figure out this type of anger produces enormous frustration, hurt and fear in relationships.

Frustration and hurt because those on the receiving end have things said and done to them which leave deep emotional (and sometimes physical) scars, and fear, because they walk on eggshells, doing their best to not set the angry



Marvel Studio's Incredible Hulk

person off again.

### Volcanic anger

Volcanic anger is quite different. Like a seemingly dormant volcano, this person's anger simmers away beneath the surface, rising ever so slowly until it finally erupts.

Just like a volcano, the eruption can go on for a long time, is usually far more destructive than fiery anger and can often lead to the angry person holding deep-seated grudges against others.

Fiery anger may well damage relationships, but volcanic anger will destroy them.

Volcanic anger is not pleasant – I should know, because it is the type of anger I struggle with.

Having come to the point in my life where I needed to face the fact I did not deal with my anger well, it was an amazing revelation to discover the type of angry person I was.

"Fiery anger people" usually do not hold it in – they are angry, and it is there on display for everyone to see.

"Volcanic anger people" appear calm but inside they are all the time quietly pushing their rising anger

down.

We call this "stuffing", and I was a classic "stuffer" when it came to anger. Following a hurt or perceived slight, I would just push it down, telling myself to not get angry. This could go on for days, sometimes weeks, but inevitably there would be the "straw that broke the camel's back" and my anger would erupt!

Learning this was liberating because I became more aware of myself, and how I processed my anger and from there, I was able to develop healthier ways to both process and express it. This was not an overnight process – no positive change is ever easy – but over time, significant and lasting change took place.

Over the next several months I want you to come on a journey with me as we explore this difficult emotion of anger, along with exercises designed to enable us to express our anger healthily – it will change your relationships for the better!

Exercise for March: Read over the section on the two types of anger again and decide which is most like you.

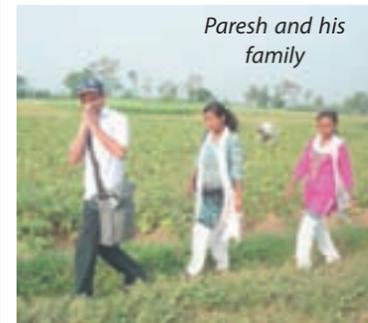
# Changed by a radio program

**P**aresh Chandra Halder was born and brought up in a traditional Bengali Hindu family. As a young man, he lived a miserable life and was looking for peace. Then on 20 July, 1988 he heard about Jesus Christ for the first time through a radio program.

The program quoted the Bible verse in Matthew 11:28, where Jesus says "Come to me all you are weary and burdened and I will give you rest". Paresh's heart was touched, he knew he was that weary person and he responded to the invitation.

"I felt immediate rest when I responded to the call to give my life to Jesus," he says. "I listened to more about Jesus on the radio and began attending a local church in my area."

West Bengal has 95 million people, and less than 1% of them are Christians.



Paresh and his family

Paresh's pastor encouraged him to go on discipleship training in Bihar (to learn how to live the Christian life), which he attended for six months in 2000.

"Through the courses I understood that I am a sinner and need forgiveness, which only Jesus can provide. Based on Acts 4:12, I believed that Jesus, and no one else, has the power to deal with my sin and make me clean and new. I then obeyed Him by being baptised [immersed in water as a symbol of death to my old life] on 11 August 2002," Paresh shares.

He then went on to do a Bachelor of Theology, got married and began a Christian ministry in KolKatta in 2007. The couple started a church and a ministry for children, including their own two boys.

That ministry grew to become Transform East Alliance (TEA) with the vision of bringing harmony, Christian worship and financial security to every Bengali community.

West Bengal has 656 people groups that are considered 'unreached' – i.e. who have never been told about Jesus and the freedom He offers from sin. Only 64 people groups are currently being reached by Christian missionaries. Most evangelism [spreading the good news of Jesus] is focused on non-Bengali speaking people groups, so TEA is currently working among 85 of these groups in 15 different districts, in partnership with other organisations. They have also trained 250 men and women as leaders and disciple-makers.

The TEA Facebook page explains: Discipleship means learning to obey what Jesus commanded. Life in Christ is a gift of grace, bringing with it the power of the Holy Spirit to be transformed from the inside out so that we become like Him [Jesus].

## 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 <a href="http://challengenews.online">challengenews.online</a></b>	



**Janine Beekie of Manchester City Women battles for possession against Esmee de Graaf of Leicester City Women during the FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup match between Leicester City and Manchester City at Pirelli Stadium on January 12, 2022 in Burton-upon-Trent, England. (Photo by Naomi Baker/Getty Images)**

# COMPETITIVE BUT KIND

**T**wenty seconds - that's all it took for soccer player Janine Beekie to cement her place in Olympic history at just 22 years old.

In that time, probably less than what it took for most spectators to find a parking space, Janine scored the first goal for Canada against Australia at the 2016 Rio Olympics. It still stands today as the fastest goal in women's Olympic history.

Janine now lives in Manchester, because in 2018 the talented forward was signed by English women's Super League club Manchester City.

But it hasn't been all plain sailing and medals. In 2015 Janine was acutely disappointed to be excluded from Canada's World Cup team.

It is at times like that that she draws strength from the words tattooed on the inside of her left wrist - *"They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."*

Those words are from the Bible verse Isaiah 40:31. Janine, who is a committed Christian, says her faith has moulded her life and her career ever since her childhood in Colorado.

"It's a really, really important part of my life," says the 27-year-old, who was part of the Canadian team that won the Olympic gold in Japan in 2020. "I was raised as a Christian and it's about how I operate, how I treat other people and even how I feel about myself. It's something

incredibly important to me and influences everything I do, how I react to things. I'm learning from it, all the time."

Indeed, it isn't just through the bad times that Janine leans on her faith. It is equally important to her in the good times as well.

Her overriding goal is simple - to be like Jesus.

"I was raised by parents who taught me and my siblings to be humble athletes,"

she wrote for SportGoMag.com. "I believe a big role of every Christ-follower is to [behave] as much like Jesus as we can."

Janine says it was her Catholic upbringing "that instilled a foundation of faith in me, and it was while I was at a Christian high school that I started to learn more about Jesus and make my faith my own".

Janine accepted Jesus into her life when she was about 15 and said she felt "that was the moment my life completely changed, but I didn't realise at the time that there would be so many highs and lows".

But as she wrestled with disappointments, she came to realise that her anchor in life should be Christ, not her career.

On her eponymous YouTube channel, she says that football is a passion for her but that when it comes to life "what motivates me is knowing that there's something bigger...something more than just myself and for me, that's my faith.

"It drives what I'm doing every day; how I treat my friends, the attitude that I go into training with, because when you strip it all away I have my faith there and that's the constant for me.

"When people click on my profile the first thing that they should see is that I'm a Jesus follower."

Being so open about her faith has led to getting what Janine calls "banter" from her friends and teammates. "I'm still working out

the best way to deal with that, but I've had cool experiences where people have asked me big questions about God.

"I also have a teammate who has come to church with me a few times and when certain things have happened I've been able to tell her, "You know that's God, right?" It makes all those hard moments so worth it."

Looking forward, Janine says her professional dream is to win the World Cup and be the best player in the world at some point.

"But I also want to take my platform and use it to grow God's kingdom and I have a lot of ideas about how to go about that...I want to start a non-profit that helps families who have been affected

by cancer to get their kids involved in sport.

"There's a lot that I'm still learning about bringing faith into the locker room. Some people are curious, some people really don't care, some people really don't want to hear it.

"So it's understanding that, and realizing that I don't really have to say anything to share my faith. It's all about how I act and how I treat them. I want others to remember me as being kind, compassionate and a great teammate, while also being hard-working and relentless on the field," she said.

"I used to think those two things couldn't coexist but I know that God gave me a competitive spirit for a reason."



Janine Beekie's advert for her podcast.

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