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# FREED FROM ADDICTION

BY DONOVAN ACKERBERG

I grew up in a blended family in Lansdowne, Cape Town – the youngest and only son with three older sisters. As a child, on rare occasions, I attended church with my mother who was a staunch member, but my father was a Buddhist.

I was a promising sportsman who went on to achieve various accolades, and – up until the age of 17 – I took a strong stance against the use of alcohol and cigarettes.

## Addiction begins

In my final year of school all sports came to an end after a new principal was appointed. Many of the sporty guys, myself included, were left without a ‘social life’ and the excitement that came with sports. Parties now replaced sport, and at one of these parties, I succumbed to peer pressure. A group of guys were using heroin. I decided to take part. The euphoric feeling after winning a march was soon replaced by getting high on drugs. It filled a gap which, at the time I thought was due to the absence of sport, but now I know it was the absence of the Lord’s presence in my life.

## Addiction in the bloodline

Although my father was a functional alcoholic, he was a third Dan (black belt) in karate – which is how he got into Buddhism. His father was also a functioning alcoholic. It was clear that addiction ran



Donovan and Ruby Ackerberg and their family. Inset: Donovan as a young addict.



in our bloodline. Though I managed to complete a diploma degree after school, I became a full-blown addict within a year of experimenting with drugs – I was using heroin daily. By the age of 19 I was a high functioning addict with a full-time job, living with my girlfriend. I was introduced to Crystal Meth (tik) and within no time I was using large amounts of it. Because I grew up in Lansdowne,

I was familiar with the Cape Flats, where I could buy and use drugs. I often got involved in all sorts of illegal activities and escaped death a few times.

## Unemployed and in a downward spiral

By the time I was 24, I had a son, but was still using huge amounts of crystal meth and heroin on a daily basis. I did what it took to get my fix in order to function ‘normally’.

About a year later I was unemployed and in a downward spiral. My relationship with my girlfriend ended (my son was one year old at the time) and I lived in my car. I was at rock bottom, but I was fortunate enough to have my aunt take me in.

Not long thereafter I was caught stealing and given an ultimatum. Go home to my parents, or go to jail for theft. I chose to go home.

By then my parents were living

in Betty’s Bay. The first morning my father forced me to attend a gathering (in my withdrawal state) at a farm with a group from a rehabilitation centre in Moorreesburg (90 km north of Cape Town). They were doing a breakthrough programme that was run locally in the area. All I could think about at the time was getting a fix to get rid of the withdrawal symptoms.

## Healed of addiction

I vividly remember bumping into an old friend who I grew up with. He was a recovering addict, also taking part in the programme. It was a God-ordained moment that led me to leave the farm and go to Moorreesburg with the group, where I met Jesus. The man in charge prayed with me and, in that moment, I was physically and mentally set free from the drug addiction!

I met Jesus and I knew it! During my seven years of drug abuse, I tried various medications to help me come off the drugs. My parents even tried locking me up in the house, but nothing helped. The torment of my body and mind just took over all the time. But this time, I met Jesus! Both my parents got saved because they witnessed what God did in my life.

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# Welcome to 2023, don’t look back

BY JODY BENNETT

“THE past is a foreign country: they do things differently there,” wrote L.P. Hartley in his 1953 novel *The Go-Between*. And so as we take our first steps into the “new country” of 2023 it may feel a bit like emigrating – frightening, yet exciting at the same time.

When my husband and I immigrated to Australia in 2006, we made a conscious decision to burn our bridges and not look back. We left our friends, we left some family; we left a lovely big house and our two dogs and my husband’s stable job. It was risky and scary and thrilling to bring our three children, all still under three years old, to a new country where we had no friends, no job and no idea of what the future held.



And we have been extremely happy. I attribute that in part to the fact that we chose to face forward and not second-guess ourselves. Many fellow-immigrants we have met keep harking back to what might have been or all they left behind and they have not made the transition as well. “Whinging poms” is a well-known criticism, but “whinging Saffas” equally applies!

In the same way, launching into 2023 we need to leave the failures, disappointments, and regrets of 2022 in the past; and look with expectation and determination at what lies ahead. We can’t fix yesterday, no matter how much we fret about it, but we can make the best of tomorrow.

And it is just as unhelpful to nostalgically live longing for things to be the way they once were. We need to leave 2022’s achievements, milestones and joys back there too.

In the Bible is the famous story of Lot’s wife looking back to the city of Sodom as God was destroying it, and being turned into a pillar of salt. There is also the story of the Israelites wandering in the desert and hankering back to the foods they ate in slavery in Egypt, rather than looking forward to the honey of the Promised Land.

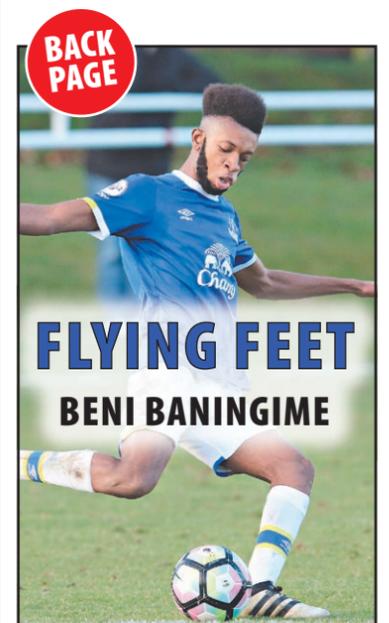
These stories illustrate how a backward focus either freezes us in place, stuck in the past; or it makes us grumble, complain and compare. We are then unable to appreciate the better things ahead.

However, we all know things in our world are not good at the moment. Looking forward into 2023 might even be a bit scary. We might be fearful about the future of the economy, or politics, or the climate, or crime, or the moral decline, or whatever else we worry about. We may be entering the year with health concerns, or relationship strife or financial burdens.

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# Freed from addiction

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A new life

Within a year the Lord brought an amazing woman, Ruby, into my life. We have now been married for ten years with a blended family of our own – we are blessed with five beautiful children between us. Not only did the Lord heal me from addiction, but He has also carried me through the challenges of integrating back into society. He has taught me to be part of family life, being a husband, father and stepfather, as well as how to overcome anxiety and depression. I have learnt how to taste success through the journey of entrepreneurship.

I was a broken man who has been rebuilt in His image. This year, by the grace of God, I celebrate 11 years of being clean from drugs and four years off alcohol and cigarettes. •



Donovan and Ruby Ackerberg

# Finding a dad's love

Trudie Sylvester



When Trudie Sylvester's father abandoned his family, they were plunged into poverty. Despite being able to financially support them, her father chose not to. It was a daily struggle to find food and many times, Trudie and her seven siblings went to bed hungry. Resentment grew within Trudie's mother and she rejected her children and became an alcoholic.

Her childhood challenges made Trudie angry.

"I struggled with bitterness because of my childhood," she tells *Challenge News*. "I tried to commit suicide as a way of trying to escape the circumstances we lived in."

Trudie went on to marry a man who was involved in a church and spoke a lot about God. They had children, and Trudie was determined that they would never face the same struggles she had to as a child.

Her oldest daughter attended church with Trudie's sister and one day, she invited Trudie to come along to a service and she agreed.

"That morning in church the sermon was the first time I heard about the gospel," she recalls. "The preacher's sermon was about the fruit you carry as a parent. I wondered what fruit my children will take from my life if I don't have Jesus in my life? I asked forgiveness for my sins and turned my back on the world and turned to God."

That was 30 years ago and Trudie says now that the biggest change in her life is her mindset.

"Due to the circumstances I grew up in, I always thought that God abandoned us," she explains. "When I committed my life to Christ I realized even though many times we went to bed hungry, God still protected us."

She admits that her biological father's rejection sometimes causes her to struggle to regard God as a loving father but she takes comfort in her favourite verse Psalm 121:5: "The Lord watches over you – the Lord is your shade at your right hand."

Trudie now shares that Jesus loves without conditions.

"He wants to be your friend, He laid down His life so that you may have life and life in abundance," she shares. "If you look at life in general nowadays, people seek for love in sex, drugs, alcohol, etc. God is love and seek that love in God."

"The Bible declares in Jeremiah 29:13: 'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.'"

"Cover the lies of the enemy with the Word of God. The only way you can overcome rejection is through the perfect love of God." •

# The key to deep satisfaction

Heike de Nysschen



Twenty-year-old Heike de Nysschen lived what most would see as a moral life but she was still a lost sinner in need of a Saviour.

"I was taught the Bible, and right from wrong, from a young age. I thought I was a good person because I went to church regularly, read my Bible now and then, and utilised my God-given sport talent. But I was relying on my own goodness to justify myself," she explains in her submission to *Challenge News*, which has been translated from the original Afrikaans.

"At high school, I ended up spending so much time on sport that eventually I had no time for God. Prestige, academic achievement as well as success on the sports field, were high on my priority list. I had this deep emptiness in my heart that I was trying to fill with worldly success, but it just made the hole greater."

Not even the satisfaction of achieving goals and attaining dreams could fill that void. In what became a chasing after the wind, I spent more and more time on academics and sports trying to justify myself.

"During this time, God continued to draw me to Himself with His loving kindness. In 2019 I was chosen to fly to a sporting event in another African country. I happened to find out that the model aircraft we were going to fly on had been involved in two accidents in recent months, in which several dozen people had been killed. For the first time in my life I was confronted with the prospect of dying – what if my flight was to crash too?"

"A restlessness settled on me for several months and it was only later I realised it was an uncertainty about where I would spend eternity. At the time I was also brought to a halt by a sports injury that gave me time to slow down, consider my life and listen to the voice of God."

"On Sunday morning, July 14, 2019 I was, as usual, in church and one of the songs we sang included the words "He comes again on the

clouds". These words struck me deep in my heart and I asked myself if I would be ready if Jesus indeed came on the clouds that day.

"And right there the Holy Spirit [invisible person of God] convicted me about the dividing wall of sin between me and God. That morning I prayed and asked God to give me proof that I was really saved by His grace (undeserved love) and born again."

"I felt the Lord give me 2 Timothy 4:18: And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen! And with that I had a peace that passes all understanding. From that day onwards I have had a certainty in my heart that I am ready for Jesus to return on the clouds!"

Heike says things have been tangibly different.

"The emptiness in my heart was filled with a sense of my eternal worth. My motivation and reasons for doing good changed. I fell in love with God's Word [the Bible] and desired to learn more about the Lord. My dreams and plans changed from being temporary and sport-focussed, to how God wants to use me to further His kingdom. Now I do everything for the glory of His name and not for my own gain."

"Through prayer and His promises in the Bible, God daily renews my strength to help me overcome disappointments and trials, and to encourage me to use my time wisely in order to bring Him praise." •

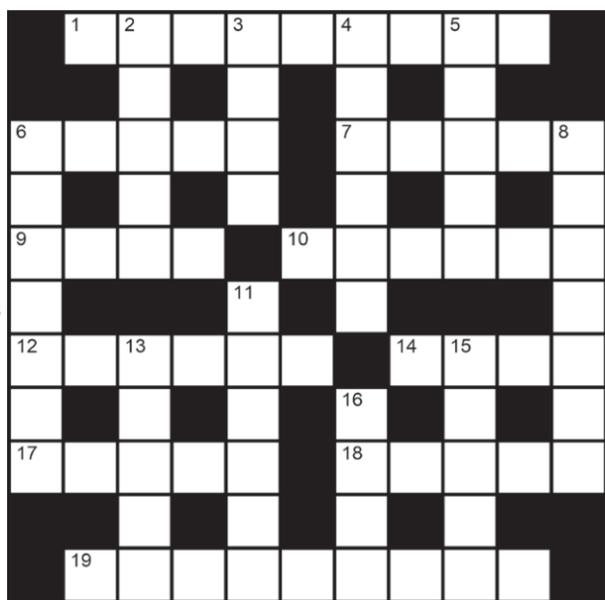
## Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

### ACROSS

- 1 Spicy sausage
- 6 Property or money
- 7 Police car's wail
- 9 Small coral islands
- 10 Toolbox item
- 12 One with a bill to pay
- 14 To practise boxing
- 17 Espionage persons
- 18 Bikini or Tarawa
- 19 Non-caged hens (4,5)

### DOWN

- 2 Short written work
- 3 Feeling of empathy
- 4 Light sound of leaves
- 5 Medical worker
- 6 Shopping streets
- 8 Nasal cavity

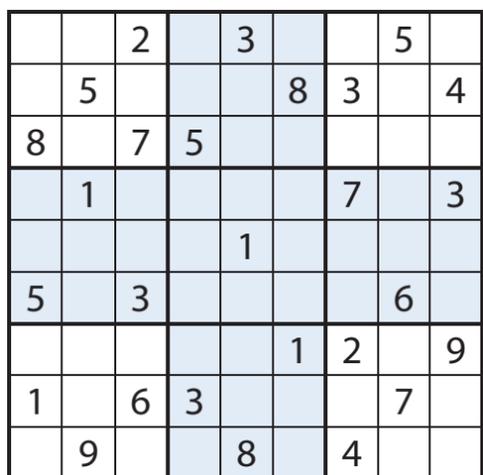


- 11 Foamy hair product
- 13 Wild rosebush
- 15 Fork spike
- 16 Space agency

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The Story of A Lawsuit: Chapter One



• From page 1

Nevertheless, Christianity gives me, and many others, the courage to look forward and face the new year with boldness because we serve a God who knows the end from the beginning. The God of the Bible already knows all about 2023. Neither the past nor the future are a foreign county to Him.

He promises those who trust in Him that He will eventually right all the wrongs in the world, evil will be judged, and pain, sin and death will finally be defeated. For Christians the best still lies ahead, at the end of the

age, in a new heavens and a new earth. As some Christians like to say, if it's not good; it's not over yet.

In a religion like Hinduism, with its concepts of karma and reincarnation, your past determines your future; however, in Christianity your past sins are washed away and separated from you as far as the east is from the west, because Jesus paid for them on the cross.

If you want your future to be



bright, regardless of politics and climate change; nuclear threats or pandemics, then throw your lot in with Jesus; let Him deal with the sins of your past, direct the plans of your present and give you a future beyond your wildest imagination.

"That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him.'" 1 Corinthians 2:9

# 'Tormented and suicidal' witch set free

BY NATASHA NAGEL

I grew up in a messed up, dysfunctional home with totally absent parents. Although we were brought up as 'Christians' we were only Christian because we were nothing else; none of us knew God at all. I grew up with extremely strict parents; my dad was a very short-tempered, angry man. Although he never lifted a finger to any of us, he was verbally abusive.



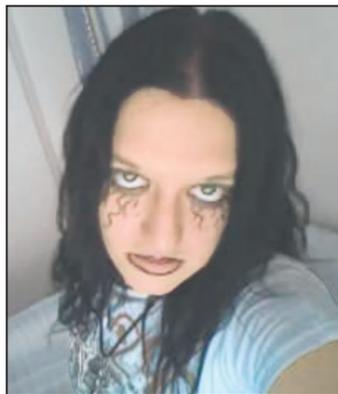
Natasha Nagel is now free from her occult past. INSET: Natasha in her Wiccan days.

He was very controlling, and because of this we did not really have any friends growing up – at home, we were not allowed to talk about anything outside of the home life.

## Getting involved with mysticism

Years ago, when I was 13 or 14, we went through a huge tragedy in our family where two of my cousins died in a big car accident – this was the closest I had come to losing someone close to me.

A friend of mine was into mysticism and suggested that we should play on a ouija board and call my dead cousins up to talk to them and ask questions.



We made a circle with lots of candles and she led the whole thing. Nothing really happened at that moment, BUT since that day my whole life completely changed.

Over time I started getting more and more depressed, experiencing dark and suicidal thoughts. I became obsessed with images of blood, death, graveyards, people being hurt, vampires, demons etc. I studied the occult and became a Wiccan in witchcraft.

## Haunted from the inside

Time went on and my thoughts continued to get darker and darker. I started feeling like I was being tormented from the inside out, literally! I felt like there was something inside my inner most being that was busy killing me – I even saw a 'vision' where I needed to stab my dad with a knife, as if demons were leading me to do this! I was scared and alone and in literal, emotional, and spiritual torment!

## A terrifying encounter

One morning in 2008, I woke up, sat up in bed, and gazed into the mirror in front of me. As I was looking, something within me was looking straight at me through my eyes, but it was not me!

That day something took over me – at times I could not talk or control my actions. My mom was busy doing laundry outside and said that she could hear me talking to deep, terrifying voices, but I was completely alone in the room!

She came into my room and I lost control of my actions, swearing at her and chasing her out with so much hate and anger. I could not speak, only demons were speaking through me.

## In the name of Jesus

There were some people who were in our house at the time, they ran into my room and started praying for me. At the moment when they said, "Satan in the name of Jesus Christ we rebuke you" demons started to manifest inside me! I cannot explain the pain and torment I experienced, it was a huge spiritual battle.

A powerful presence manifested in my room while these people were praying for me – I felt pure love, acceptance, warmth, and compassion.

I knew that it was Jesus Christ in the room, and I knew in my heart that if I didn't accept Him in that moment, I wouldn't make it!

So I did, I started to turn away from my sin, from all my involvement in the occult and I also started to forgive all the people who had done me wrong.

At that moment, Jesus set me free! Today I am still in His service, going about wherever I can sharing my story to whoever is willing to listen.

# Delivering babies in the bush

BY CHRISTINA STANTON

In July 2017, Dr. Allan Sawyer found himself yet again in central Togo, West Africa. Togo is home to 8 million people, nearly 82% of whom live below the poverty line, and one out of every eight children there won't live to see their fifth birthday.

Exhausted, dirty and jet-lagged, he needed a shower and some solid sleep before he could start work in the delivery room the next morning. This was Allan's fourth journey to Togo from his home in Phoenix, Arizona, to help rural, poverty-stricken women and children as an obstetrician-gynecologist medical missionary.

Togo is a country where there are only five physicians for every 100,000 inhabitants. The average man can only expect to live to age 62, while a woman might make it to 67. It's also an area where female genital mutilation is practiced, and the risk of death for pregnant women is 1 in 67.

In the middle of one dry and hot July night, Allan's guest room phone rang and jolted him awake. "We need you in the operating room right now, doctor," urged a heavily accented voice.

The Hospital of Hope had been constructed a few years earlier and was modern by African standards. Once inside the operating room, Allan felt like he'd stumbled onto the set of a horror film: an unconscious woman lay on a bed, her uterus was ruptured and her bladder had been torn open by her infant's large head. The baby had not survived. The woman was bleeding so heavily that Allan believed she probably also wouldn't make it. Saying a prayer, he began to operate.

Several hours later, after the last stitch, he knew he'd done the best he could do with what he had. He went back to his room to catch a few hours of sleep.

When he returned to the hospital the next day, he was surprised to find her sitting up in a bed eating breakfast. She gave him a smile, and he felt a huge relief. "You look great!" he exclaimed. He saw her every day until she was recovered enough to be discharged.

The woman returned a few weeks later for a follow-up visit. "Your recovery is amazing," he told her, stunned at how quickly she'd healed. "God saved you." She looked at him and responded, "Well, God may have saved my life, but God taught you what to do to save it. Thank you, Dr. Sawyer."

Allan grew up in California and was studying industrial engineering at Stanford University when he attended a Campus Crusade for Christ meeting one night. The pastor asked several serious questions: "If you were to find yourself before the throne of God, how can you be assured of your salvation?" "Do you know what

following Christ really requires?" "Why do you need a Saviour?" "Has Jesus ever been the Lord of your life?"

Allan and his family had attended church regularly, yet he'd never heard any of these questions posed before. As he listened to the pastor explain the path of salvation and studied the Bible tract he'd been given, he tried to make sense of it all.

"This was all so foreign to my understanding," Allan recalled. "This pastor was talking about a personal relationship with Jesus when I didn't even know that was an option."

After spending that evening questioning his beliefs, young Allan decided that he did indeed need a Saviour, and he prayed surrendering his life to Christ.

Others began to notice how Allen's decision had changed how he treated people.

**"I feel God's pleasure."**

He began attending a local church where his relationship with Jesus grew. One Sunday a visiting missionary who served as a physician on overseas mission trips told his story.

"I heard the Lord say, 'Allan, if you change your major, you could do what he is doing!'" Allan said. "I walked out of the church and immediately changed my major the next week to biology, which right away felt like the right decision."

He received his bachelor's and master's degrees at Stanford, and then in 1984 he headed to medical school. Two years in, a fellow student approached Allan on campus and asked, "Excuse me sir, do you have any jumper cables? My car won't start." Sawyer was so smitten with the beautiful young woman that he connected the ends of the cables to the wrong terminals and blew the fuses. It was a unique beginning to a lasting relationship. In 1988, Teresa and Allan were married.

While he was in medical school,



Allan helped a doctor deliver the baby of a couple who had struggled with infertility for years. The joy in the room after the baby was successfully delivered, caused Allen to decide OB/GYN would be his specialty. Eventually he opened his own practice and Teresa acted as its finance manager.

In 2003, a doctor friend who did medical missions through Samaritan's Purse recruited Allan to join him on some medical trips. "He wanted me to go to Papua New Guinea with him for a three-week trip ... We saw hundreds of people with all kinds of ailments. But that was it for me; I knew I had found an organization where I could use my skills for God's glory in a new way."

When asked why he feels especially called to go to Africa, he responded: "There's a sparsity of trained physicians in sub-Saharan Africa. There are many countries where there's one general surgeon for every 2.5 million people and one OB/GYN for every 4.5 million people. Also, most hospitals there want to be paid upfront, so patients will die on the stairs because they can't pay. They oftentimes have to live with their pain."

Allan has now served on medical teams to Papua New Guinea, Kenya, Togo, Zambia, Cameroon and Uganda.

"Being an OB/GYN doctor is so faith-affirming. Giving that hope to people who have lost it, and doing it in Jesus' name, is such a privilege."

"I think God has given me skills and an aptitude for this work, and when I go serve on missions where I care for people and deliver their babies, I feel God's pleasure."

This article appeared in The Christian Post, it has been abridged here.



Dr. Allan Sawyer with some of his patients.

# Uxhunyelelwe kuNkulunkulu

## Zulutranslation

Uku grafter uhlobo olubalulekile lokuhlanganisa ihlahla ezimbili uzenze esisodwa. Inxeba, noma ukusisika, kwenziwa kulesi esimile bese kuhlanganiswa nalezi esinye kulelinxeba ukuze zikhule ndawonye.

Ekuhambeni kwesikhathi ziyadibana zibe isihlahla esisodwa. Ezikhathini eziningi awuboni ukuthi zihlangene kuphi zombili lehlaha.

UValerie Kemmey wase Africa wafundiswa uku grafter, uma enza ifundo zolimo eNairobi. Wathola ukuthi lomgomo uyahambiselana nempilo yakhe kamoya futhi.

UValerie wakhulela ekhaya lenkolo. Esho kubufakazi bakhe ku GBS TV channel ku you tube ukuthi abazali bakhe babengama Catholic hhayi ajulile.

Ekhula ziningi izinto ezazingamthokozisi, kwakuphuzwa la ekhaya, esholo. “Ngangingenakuthula enhlizweni yami”.

“Uma ngithuthukisa ifundo zami eNairobi, nganginesifiso esisodwa-ukuthola ibandla elineqiniso”.

Ngo 2005 wahlangana nowesifazane owambuza- Valerie engabe unesono enhlizweni yakho? Ngathi cha, “Ngangigcwele ukulunga kwami.” Wase engitshela ukuthi angisindiswanga. Ngavala inhliziyoyami, ngaqhela kuye.”

Kwadlula iminyaka emihlanu, wazithola ekulelo bandla, umyeni wakhe wayefuna ukukhonza khona ethi Izwi likaNkulunkulu liyamuhlanza njalo.

Wayelizwa futhi ngomholi ehhovisi lomyeni wakhe ofundisa nohola I bible study, ngangimuzwa njalo e ntambama, efundisa ngezinto eziningi.

“Wayekhuluma ngomthetho kaNkulunkulu, nangokuphenduka (ukushiyisa izono zakho), kwaqala ukuhlangana kwesithombe engqondweni yami, ngaqonda ukuthi yini isono”.

Indaba yombusi wabaRoma uCornelius kwizenzo 10, yamthinta UValerie, “Wayeqotho, ezinikele, enikela kakhulu, ethandaza futhi, ngangicabanga ukuthi ikhona ukuba umKristu lokho.”

“Ngabona ngifana noCornelius, ngizama ukuzenzela ukulunga kwami ngezinga lami, ngizahlulela ngi ubona ngingcwele.”

“Kwakufana nalokhu okushiwo umphostoli u Paul kwabaseRoma 10:2-3 nganginentshisekelo yokukhonza uNkulunkulu, ngiziba ukulunga kwakhe ngingazithobeli kona”.

Isthombe sensindiso yangempela sasenzeka engqondweni esaphelela nxa efunda abaRoma 11:16 — uma izibulo lingwele, nesihlahla singwele, nempande kanjalo namagatsha.

“Kwaba ngathi inkungu isusiwe emehlweni ami” kusho uValerie, efanisa nomphostoli Paul ohambeni lwaseDamaseku. “Ngaqala ukubona izinto ngendlela ehlukelele.”

“Ekugcineni ngabona ukuthi ngingcwele futhi ngilungisiwe ngoba uNkulunkulu unghlanganise no Kristu nomsebenzi wakhe ophelilesiweyo. UYena owafa esphambanweni, owasusa isono sezwe wenza umsebenzi ophelile esphambanweni, mina ngiyinxenye yalowomsebenzi, ngase ngikhumbula engakufunda kwezolimo, impande yondla amagatsha, mina ngiyigatsha. Kwaba ngathi ngifumene umnotho.”

Impilo ka Valerie yokukholwa ayakhiwe kuzenzo zakhe ezinhlle, usephila ngalivesi Kwabase Galathiya 2:20 — “Ngibethelwe Kanye no Kristu, akusikhona mina ophilayo, u Kristu uphila kimi, nempilo engiyiphilayo enyameni, ingeyokukholwa kwiNdodana kaNkulunkulu, eyangithanda, yanikelwa ngenxa yami.”

Valerie Kemmey



## Afrikaans translation

# INGEËNT IN GOD

Eenting is ‘n spesiale tegniek in tuinmaak waar twee plante een word. ‘n Wond of sny word op die hoofplant gemaak en die ander plant, gewoonlik die kleiner uitloper, word in die sny geplaas sodat die plant-weefsel kan saamgroei.

Uiteindelik word die twee plante saam een plant. Baie keer is dit onmoontlik om te sê waar die een plant eindig en die ander begin.

African Valerie Kemmey het alles oor hierdie tegniek van enting geleer toe sy haar landbou studies in Nairobi gedoen het. Dit was heelwat later dat sy besef het dat hierdie beginsel ook in haar geestelike lewe toegepas kan word.

Valerie het in ‘n godsdienstige liberale gesin grootgeword. Sy vertel in haar getuienis op die GBS TV kanaal op YouTube, dat haar familie Katoliek was, maar dit nie geleef het nie.

“Gedurende my kinderdae was ek oor baie dinge ongemaklik, want my familie was groot gebruikers van alkohol,” het sy meegedeel. “Ek het nie vrede in my hart gehad nie.

“Wanneer ek na Nairobi toe gegaan het om my studies te voltooi, was een ding vir my duidelik — ek wou werklik ‘n ware kerk vind.”

In 2005 het sy ‘n vrou ontmoet wat haar gevra het: “Valerie, het jy sonde in jou hart?”

“Ek het nee geantwoord. Ek was baie selfvoldaan. Toe sê sy, ‘dan is jy nie gered nie’. Dadelik het ek my hart toegemaak. Ek het afgesluit en kon nie meer vir haar luister nie. Ek het weggegaan.”

Vyf jaar later het sy haarself in dieselfde kerk bevind, want haar man wou dienste daar bywoon, en sy sê dat die Woord van God het week na week oor haar gespoel.

Sy het ook gehoor van ‘n ouderling wat Bybelstudies in haar man se kantoor gegee het. “Ek het elke aand na hom luister. Hy het oor baie dinge gepraat.”

“Hy het oor die wet van God gepraat en oor bekering (wegdraai van sonde). Terwyl ek geluister het was dit asof ‘n legkaart in my gedagtes gerangskik word, en ek het uiteindelik gesien wat sonde is.”

Die vertelling van die Romeinse soldaat Cornelius in Handeling hoofstuk 10, het Valerie baie beïnvloed. “Hy was ‘n goeie en vroom man wat baie aalmoese gegee het, en hy het baie gebid. Ek het gedink dat dit verlossing is, en om so te leef, was vir my ‘n stryd.”

“Ek het besef dat ek soos Cornelius was, besig om te probeer om my eie geregtigheid te soek deur goeie dade te doen, en om myself as geregtig te verklaar.”

“Dit was soos die apostel Paulus sê in Romeine 10:2-3. Ek het ‘n ywer vir God, maar ek was onkundig oor Sy geregtigheid, en ek het my nie aan Hom ondergeskik geplaas nie.”

Die beeld van ware verlossing was besig om vorm aan te neem in haar gedagtes en sy het finaal verstaan toe sy Romeine 11:16 lees,

—“As die eerste stuk deeg aan God gewy is, dan is ook die res van die deeg aan Hom gewy. En as die wortel van die boom aan God gewy is, dan is ook die takke aan Hom gewy.”

“Dit was asof ek vir die eerste keer gesien het” sê Valerie, verwysend na die dramatiese bekering van die apostel Paulus op pad na Damaskus. “Ek het skielik alles op ‘n ander manier gesien.”

“Uiteindelik het ek besef dat ek heilig en geregtig is, alleenlik omdat ek in geënt is in Jesus Christus in Sy voltooide werk. Hy is die een wat op die kruis gesterf het, en die sonde van die wêreld weggevat het, en Hy het Sy werk perfek verrig.”

“Ek is die ene wat ‘n deelnemer is van Sy werk. Ek onthou dadelik wat ek in landbou geleer het- dat die wortel is die ene wat die tak voer, en ek is die tak. Dit was asof ‘n skat vir my geopenbaar is.”

Valerie se geloofslewe is nie meer op haar eie goeie dade gebou nie. In plaas daarvan, lewe sy nou volgens die woorde in Galasiërs 2:20 — “Ek leef nie meer nie, maar Christus lewe in my. Die lewe wat ek nou op aarde leef, leef ek deur geloof in die Seun van God, Hy wat Sy liefde vir my bewys het deur in my plek te sterf.”

## English translation

# Grafted into God

Grafting is a special technique in gardening that joins two plants into one. A wound, or cut, is made on the main plant and the other plant, usually a smaller shoot, is inserted into the cut so that each plant’s tissues can grow together.

Eventually the two plants fuse together to become one plant. Many times it is impossible to tell where one plant ends and the other begins.

African Valerie Kemmey learned all about grafting when she did her agricultural studies in Nairobi. It was much later that she realized the principle applied to her spiritual life as well.

Valerie grew up in a religiously liberal family. She says in her testimony on the GBS TV channel on YouTube that her family were Catholics but not devout.

“As I grew up I was very uncomfortable with many things because my family were great users of alcohol,” she shares. “I didn’t have peace in my heart.”

“When I came to Nairobi to further my education one thing was very clear to me - I really wanted to find a true church.”

In 2005 she met a woman at church who asked her: “Valerie, do you have sin in your heart?”

“I told her no. I was very full of my own goodness. This is when she told me ‘then you are not saved’. Immediately I closed my heart. I shut down and could not listen any more to her. I departed.”

Five years later, however, she found herself back in the same church because her husband wanted to attend services there and says the Word of God washed over her week after week.

She also heard from an elder who conducted Bible studies from her husband’s office. “Every evening I could hear him. He spoke about many things.

“He spoke about the law of God, he spoke about repentance (turning away from sin). As I listened it was as if a jigsaw puzzle was being arranged in my mind and I finally saw what sin was.”

The account of the Roman centurion Cornelius in Acts chapter 10, impacted Valerie. “He was a good and devout man who gave a lot of alms and prayed a lot. I used to think that was salvation and I really struggled to live that way.

“I realised I was like Cornelius trying to establish my own righteousness through my own good doings and judging myself to be righteous.

“It was as the apostle Paul says in Romans 10:2-3 — I had a zeal for God but I was ignorant of His righteousness and did not submit to Him.”

The picture of true salvation was taking shape in her mind and the penny finally dropped when she read Romans 11:16 — “If the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.”

“It was like the scales fell out of my eyes,” Valerie says, referring to the apostle Paul’s dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus. “I suddenly saw everything in a different way.

“At last I realized that I am holy and righteous only because I am grafted into Jesus Christ and His complete work. He is the one who died on the cross, who took away the sin of the world and He accomplished His work perfectly.

“I am the one who is a partaker of His work. I remembered immediately what I learned in agriculture — that the root is the one that is feeding the branch, and I am the branch. It was as if a treasure was revealed to me.”

Valerie’s life of faith now is no longer built on her own good deeds. Instead, she lives by the words in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

# BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

## Becoming a piece of world peace

*"A smile is the beginning of love."  
- Mother Teresa*

**A**gnes Gonxha was born in Skopje, the capital of modern-day North Macedonia and at the age of 18 entered the Order of the Sisters of Loreto with the intention of becoming a missionary to India – she arrived there in 1929. Now known as Sister Teresa, she was deeply moved by the overwhelming poverty and destitution of people living on the streets of Calcutta and sensing the call of God, in 1948 began working to alleviate their suffering.

Eventually joined by a group of young women, she founded the Missionaries of Charity with the vision of providing "wholehearted free service to helping the poorest among the poor." They worked with AIDS,

Leprosy and Tuberculosis sufferers, allowing them to die with dignity in the Mission's hospice, provided food, and founded orphanages, schools, and mobile clinics. In time her ministry grew to 4,500 nuns serving in 133 countries.

It has long been recognized that poverty is a major threat to peace in the world, and because of her work to overcome poverty, she received the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize. Now known as Mother Teresa, she was asked at the time, "What can we do to promote world peace?" Her reply was profound in its simplicity:

"Go home and love your family."

In a speech not long after, she expanded on her answer by saying, "I have found the poverty of the West so much more difficult to remove. When I pick up a person from the street, hungry, I give him a plate of rice, a piece of bread, I have satisfied. I have removed that hunger. But a person that is shut out, that feels unwanted, unloved, terrified, the person that has been thrown out from society – that poverty is so hurtful and so much, and I find that very difficult."



Mother Teresa demonstrated that everyone, regardless of race, gender or religion is precious to God. She treated all people with dignity.

We can be the same kind of people.

She was once asked why she cared for suffering people who never became Christians and she responded by saying, "Because everyone needs to know that they are loved when they are dying, even if they do not accept Jesus." She understood that every person is precious to God, known and deeply loved by Him.

This includes you.

I have been encouraging people to be peacemakers by committing to a Peace Declaration I recently wrote:

*We, the people of this community, declare ourselves to be people of peace.*

*We believe peace begins with each one of us and that peace in our world and communities is achieved through multiple acts of love, courage, and kindness.*

*Peace can be expressed through a friendly smile to a stranger, by help-*

*ing a neighbour in need, standing up bravely for truth and justice, and respecting each other, regardless of culture or faith.*

*Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Therefore, we commit ourselves to being peacemakers in our community.*

With God's help, every one of us has the capacity to bring peace to our world.

When we welcome someone into our circle of friendship who is usually ignored, we bring peace.

Helping the poor, smiling at a stranger, or refusing to "blow up" at the shop worker who is only trying to do their job, are all small ways we can encourage peace. And we are most like a peacemaker when we choose forgiveness over hatred.

Jesus came to bring us peace with God and peace in all our relationships by healing and restoring them.

Share God's love today by smiling at someone you don't know and commit to being a peacemaker in 2023 by committing yourself to the Peace Declaration, and asking God to help you live it out.

PEPPERONI	9	4	2	1	3	6	8	5	7
SITUU	6	5	1	9	7	8	3	2	4
ASSET SIREN	8	3	7	5	2	4	6	9	1
RAYTSCO	2	1	9	8	6	5	7	4	3
CAYS PLIERS	7	6	4	2	1	3	9	8	5
A M E T	5	8	3	4	9	7	1	6	2
DEBTOR SPAR	4	7	8	6	5	1	2	3	9
ERUNRI	1	2	6	3	4	9	5	7	8
SPIES ATOLL	3	9	5	7	8	2	4	1	6
A S S N									
FREERANGE									

### 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:** 35 Warwick Road, Chancliff, Krugersdorp

*Out of South Africa enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country*

## Want to explore more?

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

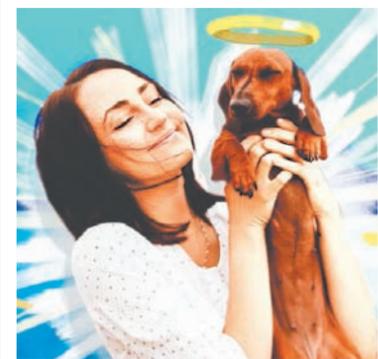
Online Bible - <b>Olive Tree app</b> (we recommend that you start with an easy-to-read version like the ESV)	
Audio Bible - <b>Bible.is app</b> , or <b>Youversion Bible app</b>	
Christian radio station - <b>CBN radio app</b> (different channels for all genres of music)	
Christian podcasts and sermons - <b>Edifi app</b>	
Christian movies/TV shows - <b>Good. app</b>	
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>	

# Lessons from a sausage dog - part 23

BY JODY BENNETT

**FROM** being someone who a few years ago who wasn't very interested in pets, to the doggie lover I am today, has only taken the intervention of one little sausage dog – my shorthaired, tan standard dachshund Carrie.

In the last eight years our house has slowly accumulated several sausage dog touches in the form of ornaments and pictures. I even have sausage dogs on my shower cap and PJs!



And Carrie, herself, has five beds scattered around the house, as well as an outdoor bed, and her own drawer for her paraphernalia!

We have also adjusted our routines to the little dog. We sleep with our bedroom door open so that she can go out at night if she needs to; we only walk one lap of the park oval because she refuses to do another; I have to get up and give her treats when I watch TV, otherwise she pesters me until I do; and she has to be let out of the house to greet new arrivals otherwise she "sings" at the front door.

Today, our pets are assuming a greater part of our lives. Sixty-five percent of dog owners, in one survey, admitted to taking more photos of their pet than their significant other. Forty-seven percent of couples said leaving their pet for a week would be more difficult than their leaving their partner.

All this to say, pets can take over a good deal of our budget, heart, time and lap space but we must remember they are our pets, not our children, and certainly they should never become our objects of worship.

C.S. Lewis told the story of a woman who thought her cat was God. Unfortunately, this kept her from enjoying her cat and knowing God. Our pets can be great sources of happiness, but they can't make us whole.

Our worship should be reserved for that which fills us with awe and wonder. The ancients used to worship the sun or moon or thunder for that very reason. However, in the modern world we tend to worship much humbler things like rock stars or money – or pets.

The true and living God, Yahweh, Jehovah, Creator of all things and the Giver of Life, is in truth the only one worthy of our complete allegiance and undying devotion. Love your dog, but bow to your God.

# FAITH BEFORE FOOTBALL



Beni Baniangime of Everton during the Premier League 2 match between Sunderland and Everton at the Hetton Centre on January 8, 2017 in Sunderland, England. (Photo by Ian Horrocks/Getty Images)

Soccer player Beni Baniangime grew up in Lemba, a town in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where conflict was never far away.

Asked in a BBC interview what others would see if they knew him then he says: “You’d see joy. There’d be music and dancing and lots of kids playing football.

“These kids – and I was one of them – would be aware of the dangers not far away. Fighting, civil unrest, political stuff. Not the sound of gunshots exactly, but the noise of rioting. We could hear that and it wasn’t nice.

“It was by the grace of God that it didn’t come too close to where we were, but even as youngsters we knew it was out there.”

Faith in God is the foundation of the 28-year-old’s life. Not football.

“I don’t know if you believe in God or if you don’t, but for me, God is bigger than football. He’s bigger than life. He is everything to me,” he says.

Beni’s journey to faith was triggered by a sense of emptiness in his younger days.

“I just didn’t like the way I was living. I was broken as a person until a few years ago really. I didn’t have my identity.

“I’d go to a nightclub and look around and I was like, ‘What am I doing here?’ I’m not judging anybody who enjoys that life, but it wasn’t the life I wanted. I was looking for something more. I found true happiness in God.”

The talented 24-year-old, who plays for the Scottish club Heart of Midlothian, says he often has his nose buried in the Bible.

“I feel God is always with me and guiding me on the right path. I come into training and I pray, before I play a game, I pray.”

It is this deep relationship with Christ that saw him through a particularly tough time in the 20/21 season when he damaged his cruciate ligament and underwent surgery.

“The Bible says ‘You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You.’ The whole time I had peace.

“That’s why you can’t put your joy in football because injuries and rejection can happen. I had to learn it the hard way. I had to learn that God is the only One who is going to stick by you when the whole of football has forgotten who you were.”

While Beni has thankfully not experienced any racism in the game, he says: “The way I would handle it is the way Jesus would have handled it – love the person and hopefully they can change. ‘I’m not your enemy, I

don’t know who has polluted your mind but I am not your enemy.’

“Some black people I know, because they have seen such oppression, they say, ‘I don’t like white people.’ They want me to have that same mentality. I say, ‘No, I try to love everyone.’”

Beni moved to the UK with his parents when he was eight. His raw talent was soon spotted by Everton FC, which enrolled him in their youth programme when he was nine.

He made his debut in a League Cup game in 2017, followed by a Premier League match.

His focus is absolute but balanced. “When I’m on the pitch I’m in a war, I work as hard as I can, but as soon as I’m away, I forget about it. That’s how I live my life.

“Football is not everything to me. If it was everything in my life then it wouldn’t work.”

Even being named Man of the Match doesn’t change Beni’s philosophy. “When I got that I went home, spent time with God and my family. And if I’d had the worst game, I’d have done the exact same.”

He also guards his privacy. “I’m not big on social media. I’m a religious person and that came from my parents.

“At the end of my career, I want to sit down and say to myself, ‘Beni, you put everything into that. You couldn’t have tried any harder.’ I’ll have peace of mind, no matter what happens.”

“I found true happiness in God.”

## Goalie’s most important goal

**COSTA** Rica’s world class goalie Keylor Navas certainly wasn’t shy about proclaiming his faith in Qatar. After his heroics helped clinch a win against Japan, the Paris Saint Germain goalkeeper raised his hands to Jesus to give thanks.

“My faith is the most important thing,” Keylor told *El Mundo*. “I believe that. The moment I had a very personal relationship with God and I really knew what his Word said, it was not about religion. It was about knowing that what the Bible tells us is what He has left us. It changed my life. It filled the void in my heart. That is why I am so grateful.”

Before every game, Keylor makes the sign of the Cross, “because it’s something I did when I was a child. When I enter the field, I ask God to give me health and care for my teammates so that no one gets injured and we can enjoy football.”

The goalkeeper recalled that he “had had faith since I was boy”, but “having a personal relationship, to be able to talk to God, to pray for things and feel that He answers, the things that He has given me ... that has been the most beautiful thing that has ever happened to me.

“God for me comes first. Before every game I kneel, I open my arms and pray ... My favourite passage of the Bible is Galatians 1:10 which says: ‘If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.’”

Keylor and his wife Andrea has been married eight years and have two children.

When asked makes a successful marriage, he said: “I think that, first, to have God in our heart. That is the most important thing for us, which

leads us to have many values that we try to keep, although, as human beings, we make mistakes.

“We always try to respect each other and give ourselves the space we need.”

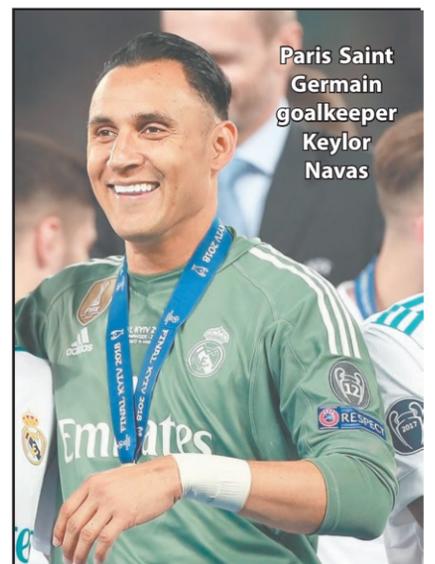
What the former Real Madrid goalkeeper likes most about his wife is “the way she is and that she has God in her heart. She has always given me unconditional support. She has been with me since I had nothing until God has given us many blessings. It’s incredible for me.”

“We have a Bible study group and we go twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays. On Thursdays we listen to talks with a biblical message, about things that can help us to face life,” he told *El Mundo*.

Keylor is also very grateful for his children: “It is a blessing to have our children well. God has

given us that privilege.”

A Spanish-language documentary film, *Hombre de Fe* (Man of Faith), based on the Keylor’s life was released in 2017.



Paris Saint Germain goalkeeper Keylor Navas

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