

I FORGAVE THE ULTIMATE BETRAYAL

Deborah Maponya was born in the South African village of Ga-Sekgopo near Modjadjiskloof. She was raised in a Christian home, the daughter of a church pastor. Deborah read and believed the Bible, but when it came to verses about forgiving her enemies and those who hurt her, she struggled. And when her family faced the ultimate betrayal, it would take a miracle.

Deborah tells *Challenge News* that she was only five years old when she realised she was a sinner [a person who breaks God's laws].

"I thank God, Who opened my spiritual eyes, and I saw and knew that I was a sinner and lost and that sinners are not going to enter heaven," she shares.

When she understood that Jesus had paid the price for her sins, she

Deborah Maponya

says she opened her heart to Jesus.

"I accepted the Lord Jesus as my personal Saviour and Lord of my life."

As a young child, she read the Bible and tried to obey God's commands.

"But there was one thing bothering me, which was forgiveness. If

somebody did something wrong to me and it was an elderly person (whom I could not approach) it was difficult for me to greet that person. If that person sat in the front of the church, I'd sit at the back. If I saw them on the road, I'd rather change that road or path to another one. But my spirit would not get peace because I knew it was wrong but I was afraid to tell my parents about it. I struggled for a long time without knowing to whom I could share this burden with as a child."

Then when Deborah was nine years old, she was faced with the unforgivable.

"Somebody put poison in my mother's food," she says. "After eating it, she died after a week and we knew who the person was."

When Deborah prayed Jesus' example of prayer in the Bible [the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6] she

stopped when she came to verse 12:

"And forgive us our sins, just as we also have forgiven those who sin against us."

"I could not pray because I knew I was speaking lies before God," she admits.

Then she read other Bible verses like Matthew 5:21-22, where Jesus

says, *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment."*

"So I asked the Lord to help me to forgive the person who killed my mom."

That night, while Deborah was praying God showed her different areas of her life where she was not following Him, including her unforgiveness.

"I repented [asked for forgiveness and turned away from sin] one by one of my sins," she recalls. "After that I was free. The following day when I woke up, everything was new."

As time went on, Deborah felt that God wanted her to work for Him.

“Somebody put poison in my mother's food.”

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A LIFE OF VICTORY
RICARDO IZCSON
DOS SANTOS LEITE



Rhyne Murray

Freedom from drugs and pornography

When life gets difficult, many of us turn to some form of distraction as a means of escape from the harsh reality. Growing up in a broken family filled with abuse, Rhyne Murray turned to anime (Japanese animation), pornography and marijuana as a form of escape. His parents eventually divorced and Rhyne went on to have three stepfathers, which left him confused and struggling with his self-esteem. He began to seek refuge in anime and marijuana.

"I got engulfed in pornography and escaped reality through anime and weed," he tells *Challenge News*.

"I also ignored my heart, acting like a person I'm not and taking the forms of characters I like in the anime."

Rhyne had known about God his entire life as his mother attended church. But it was only in August 2019 that he made the decision to give his life to Jesus at a friend's swimming pool.

"I decided to become a committed Christian because I have nothing on earth that I want more than Him, who saved me from all my sin."

But life was not all smooth for Rhyne even after he accepted Christ.

"Life was hard at first after I gave my life [to Jesus]," he recalls. "I lost friends, bonds, the trust of my parents and my social skills perished. God then showed me it was His purification process and gave me new godly things."

Though the process of refinement was difficult, Rhyne got to experience God's providence and goodness. He found new friendships and his relationship with his parents grew deeper than before. "I have an amazing mother and father. I can have full-on heart-warming talks with my dad about God and he educates me."

Rhyne has also learned to uplift and encourage in his interactions with others rather than to tear down. He has since been freed from his addictions to pornography and anime, choosing to stay grounded in reality.

"I'm more focused on reality instead of fiction."

Even now, Rhyne admits that he still struggles to obey what God says in His Word, especially when life gets difficult.

"The hard part is staying committed to God's Word and remembering Scripture when times get tough."

"[But] the best part about being a Christian is knowing that God will provide for me in times of trials and adversity."

"God can take a broken and empty heart and refill it with His love and show you that His love is within all of us."

Rhyne's favourite Bible verse is Matthew 18:1-5: "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.'"

Ask Y: Peter Meadows answers your questions about God

QUESTION: SO WHAT IF JESUS SAID HE WAS GOD? IT DOESN'T MEAN HE WAS RIGHT.



YOU ARE RIGHT. Just because Jesus spoke of Himself as being God – through His words and actions it doesn't mean He was. Much like the people they used to lock away for believing they were Napoleon.

The fact Jesus declared Himself to be God does create a trilemma – which is one step worse than a dilemma!

Because someone who says with confidence they are God can be only one of three things: 1) A fruitcake. 2) A fake. Or 3) Telling the truth. So, which of the three was Jesus? Could Jesus be a lunatic?

How else could you describe someone who sincerely believes they are God, that they have the ability to forgive sins, and will one day give away seats in Heaven?

If Jesus had so lost touch with reality He can only be pitied. But does that sound like Jesus to you?

Weigh up the quality of His life and relationships, the skill and insights of His arguments, and the sheer wisdom that streamed from His lips. Measure the total richness of all He said and did—and its life-enhancing impact throughout history. That just doesn't sound like someone who went through life completely deluded.

In which case... could Jesus simply be a liar... knowing it was not true that He was God but saying He was anyway? Knowingly and willingly

He told one of history's greatest porkies. But think how much store Jesus put on the need for people to tell the truth. He even said, "The truth shall set you free."

Which means He would be more than a liar, He would also be a hypocrite. And is it really possible for such insight, wisdom, compassion and love to come from the life of someone so knowingly deceitful? Could the greatest and wisest moral teacher in history really be so immoral? It would be like discovering Greenpeace owned a nuclear power plant.

More than that, people only lie because it is in their best interest. But Jesus gained nothing from His 'lie' – in fact it was the reason for His death on a cross.

So if not a loony or a liar, what then? It can only be that Jesus was who He claimed to be—God, the Lord of all. And that what He said was true. It's the only conclusion that fits the data. There is no other.

And this is the incredible reality at the heart of the Christian faith. God stepped into first-century dust and dirt to make Himself known – to those then and to people like us for all time. Your dilemma is how you now respond.

Peter Meadows is the co-author with Joseph Steinberg of *The Book of Y* the basis for the eight week Y Course that explores life's biggest questions.

I found a way through loneliness

Losing a father at any age is heart-wrenching. But losing a father when you are very young is perhaps especially so. Growing up without a dad can trigger intense loneliness, grief and anger.

Edith Chiniwu, now in her 50s, knows those feelings all too well.

The Zimbabwean, the fifth in a family of 10 children, lost her father when she was just "a very tender age".

Life was very difficult for Edith and her siblings after their father died. They were placed in the care of an uncle, who she says neglected and over-worked them on his farm.

"My uncle provided very little for me and my brothers and sisters," Edith, now a principal tutor, tells *Challenge News*. "He hardly gave us enough to sustain our lives even though he used us as part of his workforce."

"It was even worse during the planting season; I would get battered because I didn't know how to hold a plough properly. We would have to wake up at 3am, work in the fields, wash dishes and still go to school."

"Most of the time we got to school too late and barefooted."

Her harsh upbringing, not surprisingly, fed Edith's negative emotions. "I was full of anger and unforgiveness and I spent most of my time sobbing. I asked God 'why have You allowed this to happen to me and my siblings?'"

Edith had heard about God from her mother, who was a Christian. But her emotions were at odds with what she had heard in the gospel message that was preached in her mother's church - that Jesus Christ came to Earth to die for humanity's sins and



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that God loved and cared for us.

Ultimately though, it was the example set by her mother and by others in her neighbourhood, living in similarly difficult circumstances, which inspired her to take the plunge and commit her life to God more than 20 years ago.

"I prayed to accept Jesus into my life and I believe I entered into a covenant with Him. I promised to serve Him for the rest of my life."

Edith brought everything to God in prayer - all her anger and resentment, her unforgiveness towards her uncle, everything. She read her Bible regularly and says she listened attentively to sermons.

"When I became a Christian I started to talk to God and tell Him

how I felt about my memories and past," she says. "Before I became a Christian I found it very difficult to share these feelings with anyone."

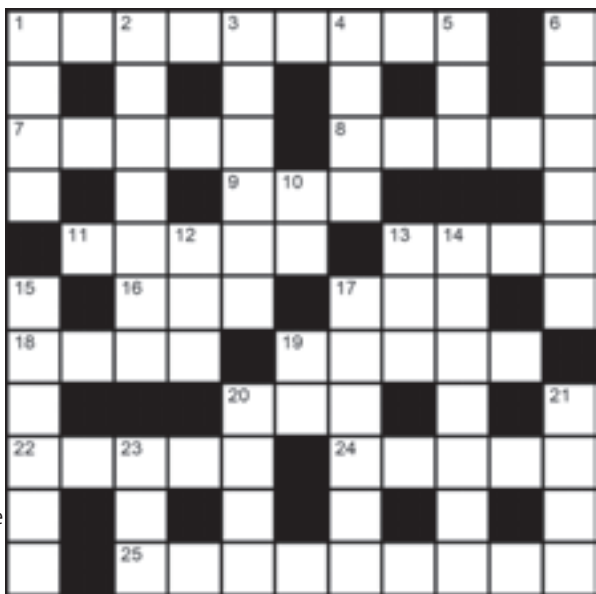
"But when I shared them with God I felt as though He lifted me up. That's how I know time spent with Him is the best time."

Her favourite Bible verse is Isaiah 54:17 - "No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you."

This is especially true in her case, she says, because God spared her life when she came down with Covid-19. "Thanks to God I woke up from my Covid deathbed and now I am very fit. Jesus really does exist and He can lift you from zero to hero," Edith attests.

Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

- ACROSS**
- Reduced sentence
 - Answer that is incorrect
 - Bulky, big
 - Be in the red
 - A380, e.g.
 - Engine lubricants
 - Bird-to-be
 - Aardvark's tidbit
 - "Another thing..."
 - The Pacific is one
 - Painter's piece
 - Speedboat's power part
 - Workers' collective
 - Medical conveyance
- DOWN**
- Coral formation
 - Game played with glass balls
 - Undiluted
 - Doing nothing
 - ___wester

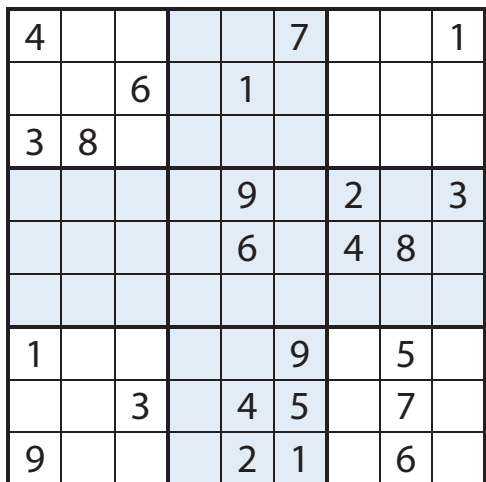


- Macaroni and ___
- I and others
- Long ___ (in years past)
- Half plus half
- From Turin or Milan
- Fish for a grizzly
- For real!
- Hospital hot spot
- The "A" in U.A.E.
- Patella's place
- Oolong, for one

[SOLUTIONS PAGE 7](#)



"If you truly want to do more around the house, now would be a good time to start"



Belief despite living in a broken world

BY KELLY LADD BISHOP

THERE IS A lot of bad news. I often hear people lament; how can you possibly believe in God when bad things happen?

I look at it from the opposite angle. When bad things happen, how can you possibly not believe in God?

The news is just one frustrating story after another, from American politics to world news, it can feel overwhelming. It is overwhelming. Sometimes I think it is more than the human soul can handle. I believe in God for many reasons.

To me, there is enough historical evidence to make a convincing case. To me, there is enough documentary and historical evidence around the Bible and the life of Jesus, that it certainly deserves serious consideration.

To me, that serious consideration leads to solid evidence that the Scripture is true. But faith is more than just being convinced of facts. Faith is a matter of heart. It comes from experiencing repentance, knowing our own brokenness and experiencing forgiveness. We call it salvation. It's real. I believe in God for all of these reasons and more. And I believe in God because the world is a difficult place. Some people say that Christians and people of faith just need to believe in God to make them feel better. The idea of God brings them comfort. It helps them deal with anxiety, and that's fine.

It's like we are taking some kind of supernatural pill to relax our nerves or buying into a fairy tale because it makes us feel good. But to those who believe, it's not just about feeling good.

And walking with God is certainly not always relaxing. But it does bring us hope.



STOCK PHOTO

God brings hope because nothing makes sense without God.

Without God we live in a difficult world that will just continue to be difficult forever, or until we destroy it, or it destroys us. Without God, the problems are insurmountable, and the struggle is meaningless.

But for Christians there is the promise of redemption. The Bible says, "the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children

of God" (Romans 8:21).

God promises us that this is temporary. The world won't be difficult forever. The world will be "liberated from its bondage to decay." That's powerful imagery. And it's a promise. Just as we experience redemption in our souls now through salvation, all of creation will one day be redeemed.

In the meantime, we are to live into that promise. We are to make the world better wherever we can, bringing in glimpses of redemption, working with God, loving God's world and people.

The world is difficult. But God hears our cries. God answers prayers. And God has not forsaken us. God is doing a greater work, and because of God, one day bad things will no longer happen. Thank God.

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Kelly holds an M.Div. and a B.A. in Biology. She spent seven years working in youth ministry, and has most recently worked as an associate pastor. She is passionate about exploring God's word and issues of faith and culture. You can read more from Kelly at www.kellyladd-bishop.com

I was a mess!

Sibusiso Sikhakhane is three years into a 15-year prison sentence. It didn't have to be this way for the 28-year-old South African, who is serving time for damaging essential infrastructure.

He shares with *Challenge News* that although he didn't have both parents, he grew up in a warm family with loving grandmothers who "gave me the best they could".

"But after I finished school I became too independent. Everything went from good to bad. I made the wrong kind of friends, took alcohol and drugs and got arrested for a long time.

"My life was a mess."

However, it was during the trial, and later on in prison, that Sibusiso came into contact with some pastors who visited the prisoners and preached about Jesus Christ.

That was when Sibusiso heard the gospel – the good news that Jesus came to Earth to die for mankind's sins and he became a Christian in 2022.

"By that time I was fed up by the fake and demonic life I was living," he shares.

"I couldn't take it anymore and I surrendered my life to Jesus and received the light of life. I gave my life fully to Him."

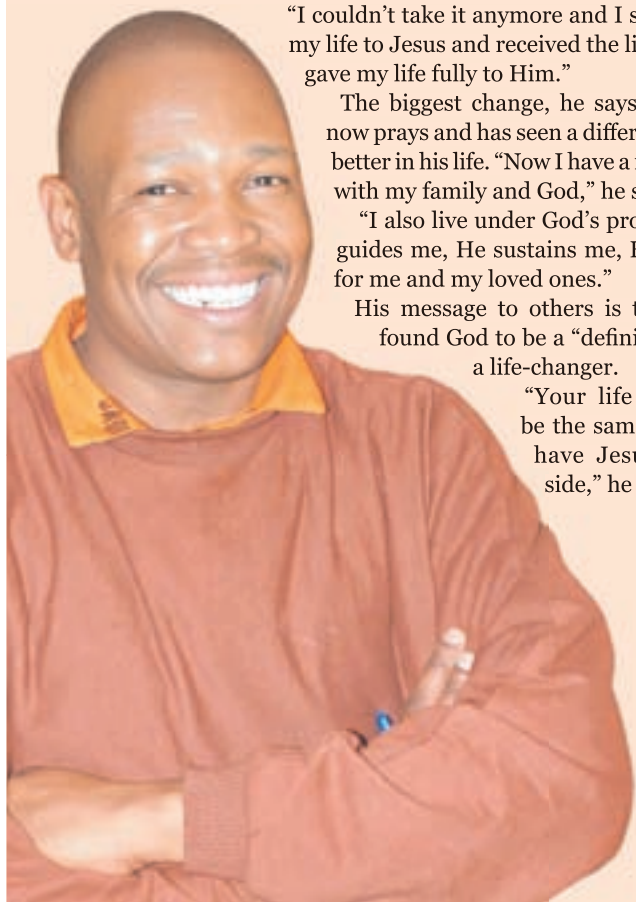
The biggest change, he says, is that he now prays and has seen a difference for the better in his life. "Now I have a relationship with my family and God," he says.

"I also live under God's protection. He guides me, He sustains me, He provides for me and my loved ones."

His message to others is that he has found God to be a "definite rock and a life-changer."

"Your life will never be the same when you have Jesus by your side," he declares.

Sibusiso Sikhakhane



NO LONGER ALONE

As a teenager, Mieke Van den Heever's self-image was very low. So low that she developed anorexia, limiting herself to only 500-700 calories a day.

"I lost an unhealthy amount of weight in a short period of time," she remembers. "I had a lot of rejection wounds growing up, which did not help with the bad self-image. The wounds were so bad that I would never speak around people and would isolate myself completely."

Mieke recalls taking a long time to get ready for school in the morning at this time.

"Nothing was good enough and I would just end up hating myself again. That led to me being jealous of other girls, wishing I could be just like them and look like them."

As she entered her teenage years, Mieke's self-image plummeted and it wasn't until a couple of years ago that things changed.

"I started having a committed relationship with God and dedicated my life to Him [asked for forgiveness of my sins and put my trust in Him] when I came to Target Life Gap Year in 2021. God completely

changed my life. All my self-hatred changed because I saw myself how God saw me. I now tell others about Him because I'm steadfast in who I am in Him."

Mieke's understanding about God began early in life as she grew up in a Christian home in Pretoria.

"My parents told me about God and we had Bible study in our house," she recalls. "I heard so many stories of what God had done in people's lives and I could see Jesus in my parents and I wanted what they had."



Mieke Van den Heever

Now 21, Mieke says the best part about being Christian is knowing she doesn't have to go through life alone.

"There were times where I thought, 'How am I going to do this? How am I going to get through this?' Then God just shows up and carries me through it and He always exceeds my expectations because He wants the best for me."

"Everything you're going through, He is there beside you. He cries with you and comforts you." Mieke says many people have a skewed view of God because they don't know Him and His characteristics.

"Many people have gotten hurt by Christians, but that is because they are people not God Him-

self. We as people sin, we are not perfect, but God is. He loves us and wants to spend eternity with us. So while I am on Earth, I will go out and make disciples [followers] of God as He instructs us and I will show people the love He has for them and that He sees all the pain and suffering and wants to help them."

Her favourite Bible verse is John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

I forgave the ultimate betrayal

● From page 1

"The Lord called me many times but people were discouraging me until the Lord gave me a verse – Isaiah 6:8: 'I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me."' So in 1986 I went to Bible College in Pretoria."

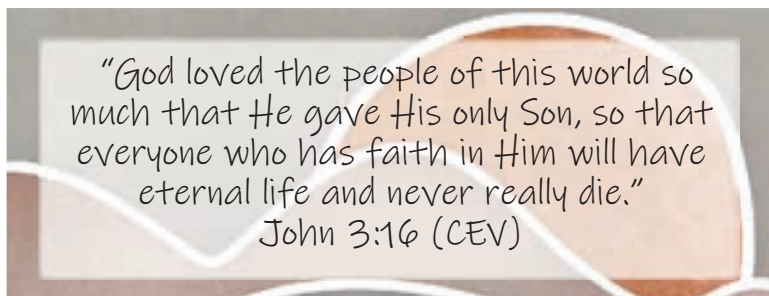
At the time she didn't know how she would meet all her needs. But God led her to read Philippians 4:19: "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."

"Indeed I have never slept hungry," Deborah attests. "He fulfilled his promises. I trained for three years and I worked for God in various places, sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I am now 67 years old so I have been working for the Lord for 37 years."

Deborah no longer travels as much and instead spends her time visiting people in her village and telling them about the hope that can be found in Jesus.

She still faces daily struggles and temptations but Deborah believes prayer is the key to overcoming anything – including the impossible.

Her favourite Bible verses are Jeremiah 1:4-5, "The Word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations'" and John 3:16: "For 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."



"God loved the people of this world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who has faith in Him will have eternal life and never really die."
John 3:16 (CEV)

Witch doctor was full of darkness

Glory was born into a family of witch doctors. When she turned 13, she went to live with her grandmother, the official village witch doctor, for training and service.

Before dying, Glory's grandmother transferred her powers to Glory and gave her the traditional witch doctor garment. This dress symbolized her authority as the new witch doctor in the village.

Glory's life was full of darkness. The villagers feared her supernatural powers, and she became a known thief.

As she fell further into her transgressions, her friends told her there was no hope for her.

They said, "God doesn't love you and will never forgive you." Glory fell into a cycle of sin and ended up going to prison multiple times.

On her third time in prison, Glory was in bed for three days with hypertension. She received no medical treatment.

When Jenya, a Christian woman who ministered at the prison arrived, the other prisoners told her about a dying woman who needed urgent prayer.

Jenya saw that Glory was in a critical state and prayed for her healing. Jenya told her, "God loves you and will forgive your sins."

Glory responded, "No, not me."

Jenya told Glory the story of the thief on the cross and that if Jesus forgave that man He could forgive her too.

Jenya asked, "Do you want God to forgive your sins?"

Glory replied, "Yes." They prayed and Glory accepted the Lord.



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The next week when Jenya visited the prison, Glory was beaming with joy and said, "Look at me! I am healed!"

The authorities saw such a radical change in her behaviour that they released her early.

Nevertheless, Glory had no Christian community and had not been disciplined. Upon release, she fell back in her old ways.

While being chased by angry victims of her crimes, Glory broke her leg.

She was caught and went back to prison for the fourth time.

At this time, Jenya's prison ministry was starting to teach the five-part *Walking with Jesus Film*.

As Jenya taught, Glory

began to apply these lessons, and her life continued to radically change.

After the final lesson about witchcraft in the *Walking with Jesus* series, Glory went back to her cell, took the witch doctor outfit gifted to her by her grandmother, and burned it.

She went on to spread the message to others, discipling many in prison.

People who knew Glory before she was saved noticed the massive change in her.

One woman saw Glory in the market and said, "Nice sandals! Where did you steal those?"

Glory replied, "I don't steal anymore. I work for God, and He provides."

Today, Glory is laying down her life to train 120 leaders in discipleship, preaching, showing the *Jesus film* (jesusfilm.org) and mentoring.

This article was first published on Godreports.com and is used with kind permission.

Afrikaans translation

Ek moes 'n keuse maak

Katlego Malepe het in 'n Chirstelike huis grootgeword, waar alles deur gebed hanteer was. Maar om groot te word in 'n Chirstelike huis het nie vir Katlego 'n Christen gemaak nie, en toe hy 10 jaar oud was het hy agtergekom dat dit nodig was om self Jesus te kies.

“Om gebore te wees in 'n familie van gelowiges maak jou nie outomaties 'n kind van die Here nie. Ek het verstaan dat dit nodig was om self my lewe vir Jesus te gee, en om deur die Heilige Gees wedergebore te word sodat my lewe met die krag van gebed gevul kan word, en om in oorgawe te leef vir Christus en Sy koninkryk. Ek het my ouers vertel dat ek graag gered wil wees.

“Hulle het my gelei om die sondaarsgebed te bid. (‘n eenvoudige gebed om jou lewe aan God te gee en om vergifnis vir jou sondes te vra).” Jy kan hierdie gebed op bladsy 7 lees.

Katlego sê sedert daardie jare “het ek die oorweldigende krag van God ervaar wat my deur die lewe se laa-

gtepunte gedra het. Sedert God die kaptein van die skip van my lewe geword het, het my karakter totaal verander.

“Ek het geleer om ander te dien, en my lewe te gee as 'n instrument in God se hande om 'n verskil in ander mense se lewens te maak.

“Jesus is getrou, selfs al is ons nie. Dit is Sy natuur om goed, liefdevol en genadig te wees teenoor hulle wat nederig voor Sy troon is.”

Katlego hou veral van die woorde van Habakuk 3 17-18: “Al sou die vyeboom nie bot nie en daar geen druiwe aan die vingerde wees nie, al sou die olyfoes misluk en die lande geen oes lewer nie, al sou daar geen kleinvee in die kampe meer wees nie en die beeskrale sonder beeste wees, nogtans sal ek in die Here jubel, sal ek juig in God, my Redder.”



Katlego Malepe

English translation

I had to make a choice

Katlego Malepe grew up in a “gospel-grounded home” where everything was done with prayer. But growing up in a Christian home did not make Katlego a Christian and he realised when he was 10 years old that he needed to choose Jesus for himself.

“Being born in a family of believers doesn't make you automatically a child of God. I understood that I needed to give my life to Jesus and be born again of His Spirit, in order for my life to be filled with the power of prayer and be all about Christ and His kingdom. I told my parents that I wanted to be saved.

“They lead me in praying the sinner's prayer (a simple prayer giving your life to God and saying sorry for your sins).” You can read such a prayer on page 7. Katlego says

that in the years since then “I have experienced the overwhelming power of God sustaining me at life's lowest points. Since God became the captain of the ship of my life, my character has changed completely. I have learned to serve and live as a vessel for God to use to impact other people's lives.

“Jesus is faithful, even when we are not. His nature is to be good, loving and merciful to those who humble themselves before his throne.”

Katlego particularly likes these words from Habakkuk 3:17-18: “Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labour of the olive may

fail, and the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls - yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

Zulu translation

KWAKUMELE NGIKHETHE

UKatlego Malepe wakhulela “ekhaya elizinzile evangelini” yonke into yenziwa ngomthandazo.

Kodwa ukukhulela ekhaya elikhohwayo akumenzanga ikholwa lokhu wakuqonda eneminyaka ewu10 ukuthi kufanele azikhethela u Jesu ngokwakhe.

“Ukuzalelwa ekhaya lamakhohwa akuveli kukwenze umtwana kaNkulunkulu. Ngaqonda ukuthi kumele nginikele impilo yami kuJesu ngizalwe kabusha ngoMoya Wakhe, ukuze impilo yami igcwele ngamandla omthandazo iphathelene no Kristu nombuso wakhe.

“Ngatshela abazali bami ukuthi ngifuna ukusindiswa. Bangikhulekisa umkhuleko wesoni (umkhuleko omfishane wokuzinikela kuNkulunkulu nokuxolisela izono zakho).”

Ungawufunda lomkhuleko kwikhasi lesi7.

UKatlego uthi kuleminyaka kusukela ngalesosikhathi” ngibone amandla kaNkulunkulu engithwala ezikhathini ezinzima. Selokhu uNkulunkulu aba uKapteni womukhumbi wempilo yami, isimilo sami saguquka ngokuphelele. Ngifunde ukuphila njengesitsha uNkulunkulu asisenzisayo ukuthinta impilo zabanye abantu.”

“UJesu uthembekile noma thina singathembeki. Imvelo yakhe ukuthi alunge, abenothando nomusa kulabo abazithoba phambi kwesihlalo Sakhe.”

UKatlego uthanda nawa amagama asuka kuHabakuki 3:17-18:”Noma isihlahla somkhiwane singasatheli, nezithelo emthini zingakhahleli, nomhlaba ungakhiphi ukudla, Noma kungasenzilwane esibayeni, kodwa ngizothokoza eNkosini, ngizothokoza ngoNkulunkulu wensindiso yami.”

Sesotho translation

Ke ile ka tlameha ho etsa kgetho

Katlego Malepe o holetse “lapeng la Bo-Kreste” moo tsohle di neng di etswa ka thapelo.

Empa ho hōlela lelapeng la Bo-kreste ha wa ka ha etsa hore Katlego e be Mokreste.

O ile a hlokomela ha a le dilemo di le leshome (10) hore o lokela ho ikgethela Morena Jesu.

“Ho tswalwa lelapeng la badumedi ha o etse hore o be ngwana wa Modimo. Ke ile ka utlwisisa hore ke ne ke hloka ho fana ka bophelo ba ka ho Morena Jesu le ho tswalwa hape ka Moya wa hae, e le hore bophelo ba ka bo tlale ka matla a hae le ho latela Morena Jesu ka dintho tsohle. Ke ile ka bolella batswadi ba ka hore ke batla ho bolokeha. Ba ntataisa ho rapela thapelo ya moetsadibe. (Thapelo eo e bonolo e fanang ka bophelo ba hao ho Modimo le ho kōpa tšhwarelo bakeng sa dibe tsa hao).”

O ka bala thapelo e jwalo leqepheng la bosupa (7).

Katlego o re dilemong tse fetileng ho tloha ka nako eo “ke ile ka latswa matla a hlollang a Modimo a ntšhehetsang maemong a thata ka ho fetisisa bophelong. Ho tloha ha Modimo a fetoha motsamaisi oa bophelo ba ka, botho ba ka bo fetohile ka ho feletseng.

“Ke ithutile ho sebeletsa le ho phela jwalo ka sejana seo Modimo a ka se sebedisang ho ama bophelo ba batho ba bang.

“Morena Jesu wa tšhepahala, leha re sa tšhepahale. Semelo sa hae ke ho ba molemo, lerato le mohau ho ba ikokobetsang ka pela sefahleho sa hae.”

Katlego o rata mantswe ana a tswang bukeng ya Habakuke 3:17-18 : “Leha sefate sa feiye se ke ke sa fupa, kapa fate sa morara sa se ke sa beha; leha mohlwaare o ke ke wa beha ditholwana, kapa kotulo ya eba siyo masimong; leha masaka a dikgutswane a ka oma, kapa masaka a dikgomo a mela mohlwa, nna ke tla nne ke ithabelle Morena, ka nyakallele Modimo, Mopholosi wa ka.”

HOW DO WE 'PROVE' LOVE?

LOTS OF PEOPLE say that **God loves you**. What do they mean by that? And is it true? The same people or others may say **I love God**. What do they mean by that? And how can we know whether that is true?

The only religions that claim that God is a God of love are Judaism and Christianity. They also believe in the same God and share a common Scripture (the Old Testament), although Christians believe that the promises in the OT were fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (detailed in the New Testament).

For them the Bible is the standard by which everything is judged. How does the Bible define love? Well, in the original Greek language of the New Testament there are four different words for love. Sexual love (eros), friendship love (philia), family love (storge), and perfect/holy love (agape).

When we talk of God's love that is not a sentimental or sexual love, it is agape – a perfect, unearned, active love, not a feeling-centred sentimentality.

How do we know that God loves us? He demonstrated it by dying (as the God-Man Jesus Christ) on the cross for all our wrongdoings and rebellion, in order to make a way for us to be in relationship with Him. As the much-quoted verse John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Does God love everyone equally? Yes, in the sense that He has made a way for everyone to come to Him through Jesus. Does that mean that God loves what

everyone does, doesn't expect them to change their behaviour or that He will love them forever and punish them for their sin? No. The term “unconditional love” gets bandied about but it is not Biblical. God's love is *unearned* but unless it is responded to, it will someday be superseded by God's hatred and wrath for sin.

And how do we know that we love God? Well the Bible is clear about that too. “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.’” (John 14:23-24) If we love God, we obey Him. Obey Him how?

Jesus said that all the many laws of the OT were summed up in the greatest commandment — to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind, and to love others as yourself.

Loving God and doing what He said are vitally linked together. True love is shown by our actions, not in feelings and words. Love does.

A cheating or abusive husband may say he still loves his wife, but she won't feel loved, and he is not doing to her what he would like her to do to him. That is not love.

A person who claims to love God and yet is selfish, bitter, immoral and rude, is showing by their actions that they don't in fact love God. It doesn't matter what they say or think they feel.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 — “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”

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A personal connection

Stubborn and strong-willed – that’s how Collen Mpande described himself. “My parents tried to correct me, but it was not easy for me to change,” Collen, now 31, tells *Challenge News*. “I was very stubborn and disobedient to them.”

But 13 years ago, to the astonishment of his exasperated parents, he made a complete U-turn. “I became very obedient to my parents. They were very surprised and asked me what happened. I told them Jesus changed me.”

Collen knew all about Jesus – his family were all believers and the children had grown up going to church.

“I grew up in a Christian family and I heard a lot about God, but I was not born again until I met an American missionary who had come to Zambia.

“He helped me to understand what it really meant to be born again as a Christian – I had to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”

The headstrong teenager’s life was totally transformed.

Not only did he leave his headstrong ways behind, he also forged ahead into full-time ministry and is now a pastor in Zambia.

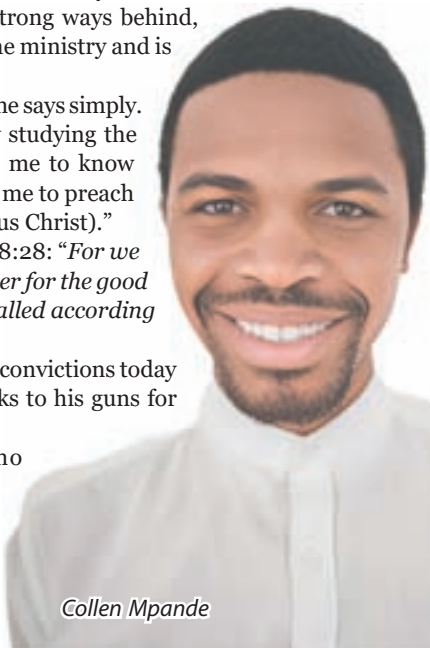
“God’s word transformed me,” he says simply.

“I overcame my challenges by studying the Bible. God by His Spirit helped me to know how to pray and He has inspired me to preach the gospel (the good news of Jesus Christ).”

His favourite verse is Romans 8:28: “For we know that all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose.”

Collen is as adamant about his convictions today as he was as a child. But he sticks to his guns for something different these days.

“Jesus is the only one who can save you. We must always trust and be totally dependent on Him. If you have not yet received Him into your life, it is not too late. That’s all that I can say. It is not too late.”



Collen Mpande

EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED!

The woman Jana van Wyck is today a far cry from the timid and insecure girl she once was. She tells *Challenge News* that despite growing up in a loving home in Pretoria, as she grew older she started to lose confidence in herself.

“I did not like the way I looked,” she shares. “I was scared of what people thought of me. I had no confidence going up to people and talking to them.”

Her parents were Christians and Jana says, “I knew who God was, but I did not have a relationship with Him.”

“I always knew about the gospel [the good news that Jesus came to earth], but it was not part of my life. It was not part of who I am.”

She heard about friends doing a Christian gap year program called Target Life and that it had changed their lives for the better.

“So when I was getting close to finishing school, I knew I had to go to Target Life. There I started to learn about God once again and I saw Him in a completely new way. I actually started to understand what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross for us.”

“I asked one of the leaders at Target Life to pray with me [see the prayer on the box on the left for an example] so that I could start living in God and in the purpose he has for me.”

Jana says since following Jesus, “My life changed completely. The way I viewed myself changed. The way I felt about myself changed. I do not care what people think of me

“**I do not care what people think of me anymore.**”

anymore. I started building confidence in myself.

“The only reason I was able to do that was because I knew God was with me wherever, whatever I was doing and supporting me. My perspective on the world changed as well because I started seeing people differently and started to become more grateful and thankful for the things in life.”

Now 19, Jana says she sometimes finds it hard to give up things that aren’t of God.

“Some might seem fun or even right, but you have to stop them if you want to live in Christ, and have a great relationship in Christ.”

“I was able to overcome the worldly challenges because God was walking alongside me the whole time.”

Jana’s favourite Bible verse is Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to

harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

“Jesus loves you,” she attests. “He died on the cross for our sins because He loves us so much. All we have to do is repent [turn away from wrongdoing against God] and God will forgive your sins. Never forget God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are along this journey on Earth with you until you can live in eternity with Him. God loves you. He is there for you even when you think He is not.”



Jana van Wyck

HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through Jesus Christ

We read in God’s word: “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)

OUR PROBLEM: **Separation from God**
“Everyone has sinned. Nobody is good enough because God’s standards are perfect” (Romans 3:23) **ADMIT**

GOD’S REMEDY / SOLUTION: **Jesus died on the cross**
“God demonstrates His own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8) **BELIEVE**

OUR RESPONSE: **Trust Jesus by receiving Him**
“To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12) **COMMIT**

Here is an example of how you can pray.

Dear Father in Heaven. I come to you now because I want to be saved. Please, forgive me of my sins. I believe that you sent your Son Jesus Christ to die for me and that you have raised him from the dead. I now ask Jesus Christ to come into my life as my Saviour and Lord. Take control of my life. Please make me the person You created me to be. In Jesus Christ’s name. Amen

The Lord Jesus says: “I tell you the truth. Everyone who believes in me has eternal life.” (John 6:47).
He gives life of a wonderful quality that continues forever.

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. Reach out to the ministry that distributed this paper (see back page) and/or find a Bible-teaching church to attend.

AS A NEXT STEP : Please send me: Bible Some ‘starting off’ literature Information on a helpful church

I have prayed the prayer [ABOVE]

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email address _____

Email to:
christabritz@challnews.onmicrosoft.com
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Out of South Africa enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

Want to explore more?

Here are some free, helpful, Christian online resources

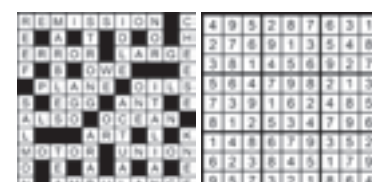
Online Bible - Olive Tree app (we recommend that you start with an easy-to-read version like the ESV)	Audio Bible - Bible.is app , or Youversion Bible app
Christian radio stations - CBN radio app and Trans World Radio	Christian podcasts and sermons - Edifi app
Christian movies, serials and kids’ shows - Good. app	Daily thoughts and inspiration - Our Daily Bread app
Advice on specific issues, Bible reading plans and studies for new believers - Youversion Bible app .	The Bible explained with visual aides - Bible Project on YouTube .
Alpha Film Series on Youtube - an online introduction to Christianity	For kids - Superbook Kids Bible, videos and games app
Comic book Bible online- goodandevilbook.com	Manga Messiah app Christian comic with free games app, illustrated in Japanese-style art
YMI (meant to be read as “Why am I?”) Christian news outlet for young adults with various content, devotionals and resources. ymi.today	More inspiring faith stories - back issues of Challenge News at challengenews.online

Learning to trust



“**I decided to go to a crusade in Springs and that is where I accepted Jesus as the Lord and Saviour of my life. He is everything I need in my life. He is good and faithful. I have learned to trust him and wait upon Him.**”

– Zondwa E Motau





Ricardo Izecson dos Santos Leite of AC Milan Legends in action during a match between Sao Paulo and AC Milan at Morumbi Stadium in December 2023 in Sao Paulo, Brazil. (Photo by Giuseppe Cottini/AC Milan via Getty Images)

A LIFE OF VICTORY

Brazilian soccer player Ricardo Izecson dos Santos Leite shares his story with mojpribeh.sk.

When I was eight, I moved to Sao Paulo, Brazil where I began to play soccer.

I played on the junior team for Sao Paulo in 2000. We were in the middle of the Paulista Junior Championships when I received a yellow card.

I was suspended for the following game, so I took advantage of the free weekend to visit my grandparents, who lived in Caldas Novas at the time.

My brother, my parents, my grandparents and I went to a water park. As I was coming down one of the slides into the pool, I hit my head on the bottom of the pool and my neck snapped.

I fractured the sixth vertebra in my neck.

At the time, I had no idea what happened. I almost became paralysed and lost my ability to walk and even play football.

I returned to Sao Paulo to train on Monday. On Tuesday, I called the coach and told him that I could not bear the pain any longer. He sent me to see a doctor at the hospital. It was in that x-ray that the fracture was shown.

The doctors told me I was very lucky that nothing more

serious happened. I believe it was not luck. I believe God was protecting me during that time from anything.

Many people think that I became a Christian after the accident, but that is not true.

My parents are Christians and they raised me with biblical values. The accident happened in October of 2000.

Throughout November and December, I could not play.

I began to play again in Janu-



Ricardo Izecson dos Santos Leite in September 2024 in Milan, Italy. (Photo by Marco Luzzani/Getty Images)

ary of 2001 and after about 2 weeks, I was called to play for the Sao Paulo professional team. Because of this, I believe God had a purpose in that accident.

It is something that happened just before I had the great blessing of starting as a professional in Sao Paulo and initiating my career as a professional soccer player.

As I said before my parents always taught me the Bible and its values, and also about Jesus Christ and faith.

Little by little, I stopped simply hearing people talk about the Jesus my parents taught me about and there came a time when I wanted to live my own experiences with God.

I need Jesus every day of my life. Jesus tells me in the Bible that without Him I can't do anything.

I have the gift and capacity today to play soccer because God gave it to me. The day He wants me to do something else, I will do it and this is why I need Jesus in my life every day. I am successful in my financial and my professional life, but all this has come from God and is a gift of grace from Him for my life.

All that I have, I thank Him for. The difference Jesus makes in my

life is that I know I will always have victory, I will always have joy, and I

“ I lost my ability to walk and even play football. ”

will always have success. This is independent of the situations I face or will face. This brings me great peace.

I usually tell the people who ask, that the Bible is like the user's manual to life. It has everything we need in it. It makes me happy to read the Bible every day, to study it and to be in fellowship with God and learn more

and more about Jesus.

I will win many matches and I will lose many matches, but I know that in all of them, God has a plan.

This is why I try to understand the plan of God for me in each moment so that I can have peace during times of pressure.

Everyone wants to be a winner, but for me, the true meaning of winning is having Jesus in my life.

It is a life of prayer, a life of intimacy and a lifelong friendship, knowing that God is our Father.

I can say that I'm victorious because Jesus lives in me.

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