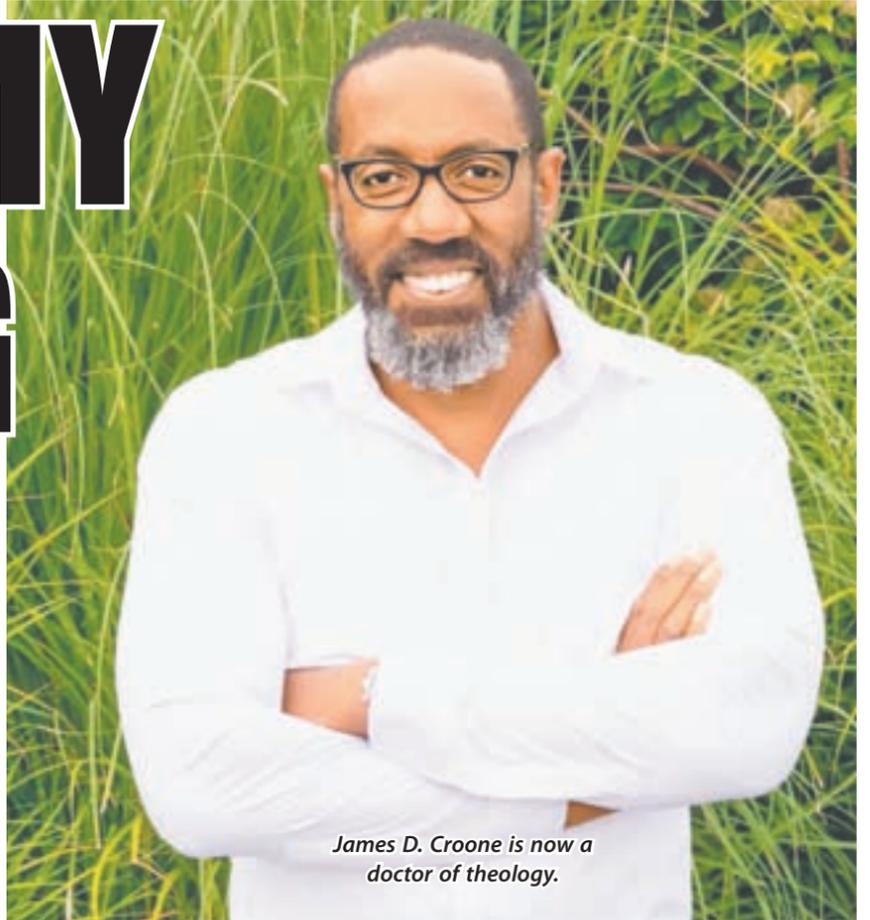


I THOUGHT MY UPBRINGING DOOMED ME



James D. Croone is now a doctor of theology.

James D. Croone felt his future was doomed from the start, growing up as a Black American male in a rough Seattle neighborhood. He faced abandonment, racism and feelings of worthlessness but found acceptance in street gangs. However, violence and criminal activity followed, and he found himself in and out of prison. But far from the doomed future he predicted, James is now Dr Croone and a leader and role-model for young men in the same situation he was in.

In an article for *Christianity Today*, James writes about the journey he has taken to get to where he is now.

He shares that his father leaving his family had a massive impact on him. Although his mother worked hard to provide for him, he says he needed a strong male figure in his life.

“Although [my father] lived 10 blocks away, he was never active in our lives, financially or otherwise,” James explains. In school James noticed the differences in how teachers treated white and black students. Those differences extended beyond the classroom.

“The police hassled us regularly for just hanging out at a bus stop or street corner,” he recalls. “Sometimes three or four squad cars pulled up with officers jumping out, yelling and cursing, to search our pockets for no good reason.”

James was well-behaved and a good student but things changed when he started high school.

“The gang culture, drugs, and partying eventually seduced me,” he admits. “I loved hip-hop music and street dancing. At 16, I joined the Emerald Street Boys Rap group. We performed around the city and made an album.”

James lost interest in school and eventually quit altogether.

“California gangs began migrating to our neighborhood, where they sold cocaine and bred more violence. I went along with the flow, succumbing to occasional hard drugs but mostly alcohol and pot.”

James began selling drugs and enjoyed the respect that flashing wads of cash brought him.

“I was forever seeking recognition and thirsty for something that never satisfied,” he shares. James says he put himself in many dangerous situations, including the time he was driving and his friend in the passenger seat pulled out a gun and started shooting at people on the sidewalk.

“He held the gun parallel to my face as I was trying to steer. Bullets whizzed past me out the driver’s side window, almost collapsing my eardrums.”

Another time he was driving when a rival gang member began tailgating him and shooting at him.

“Bullets penetrated the rear window, one of which grazed my girlfriend’s ear before passing through her cheek, splattering blood on the windshield. Another missed wasting my brain by millimeters.”

Feelings of worthlessness, anger and negativity began to plague James. But he earned his GED, and began working in the roofing trade,

THE GANG CULTURE, DRUGS, AND PARTYING SEDUCED ME



as well as selling drugs. He spent time in prison for misdemeanors and petty assaults. When he was 33, he was arrested after fighting with his live-in girlfriend.

“Someone spotted her getting too friendly with other guys at a party, which whipped me into a jealous rage,” he explains. “A neighbor, hearing the ruckus, called the police, who found my semi-automatic Uzi and a stash of marijuana I had been dealing. All told, I was facing a five-year mandatory prison sentence.”

While out on bail, James’ sister, who was a Christian, invited him to a church service. He went along, albeit reluctantly. “The pastor’s heart-wrenching sermon blew me away,” James remembers. “It was a life-changing moment. I rushed to the altar crying. My decision to accept Christ as Savior and Lord shocked my gang-member friends. Many of them respected my decision, but others smirked, waiting for me to fall back into the old life.”

James was rearrested for communicating with his girlfriend in violation of a non-contact order – something he says turned out to be a blessing. “Locked up for two months, I devoured the Bible and several Christian books while attending chapel services.”

When it came to sentencing, James took a plea-deal and was given a one-year sentence, reduced to eight months because of time already served. At the encouragement of his pastor, he took theology courses while in prison.

After his release from prison, he completed a doctor of theology

degree in religious education. He has helped trained students from the inner-city minority community, worked with homeless ministries and started an inner-city church.

“Despite the failures and heartaches of my past, I am a new creature in Christ,” James attests. “The old ways are gone. Without his mercy, I would probably be dead today, another sad statistic in the litany of inner-city tragedy. Today, I have the privilege of encouraging young Black men who feel worthless to choose the worth they have in Christ. I considered myself worthless once, but now I am serving the living God, and in him, I am the man God destined me to be.” •

YOUR TWO MOST IMPORTANT DAYS

BY JOHN HUTCHINSON

“The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.”

- Mark Twain

YOUR first day was one of the greatest miracles in the universe. Now you need to find out why it happened. Why was I born? Do I have a purpose? Am I wandering a meaningless path to nowhere or is there a definite reason for me being here? I remember a troubled teenager desperately needing something to get him going. He



helped on the farm and rarely spoke. One day he said, “Do you know what my problem is? – I’ve got nothing to live for — I’m bored out of my wits, and if there’s a tablet which would kill me — I’d

take it.” That’s truly tragic — a young guy charged with energy and potential — brooding on boredom and who would rather be dead than alive. But, is that how it should be? You get just one go at life and need to get it right. One fellow I knew said, “All I’ve ever wanted is to be happy.” But, happiness eluded him and he took his life. Happiness eludes many who surrender to futility and say, “No” to living. Finding out why we’re alive is urgent.

• Turn to page 2

AFRIKAANS, ZULU, ENGLISH PAGE 6 story

BACK PAGE



GOOD GUY
BUBBA WATSON

YOUR TWO MOST IMPORTANT DAYS

● From page 1

The answer

The reason why we're here was once defined by a stranger who walked into the city of Athens. Some inquisitive philosophers asked him to speak. He did, and in simple words, the Apostle Paul told them why and how we got here.

He said, "God gives us life and breath ... And has made from one all the nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth, and has determined the times for them to live and the boundaries of their existence that they should seek the Lord and happily find Him." Acts 17:26

The simple answer is to "seek the Lord and happily find Him." But, how do we find an invisible God? To the men of Athens the apostle Paul dropped a vital clue when he said, "...God is not far from anyone of us."

God is not far from the despondent teenager – not far from the rejected and dejected, not far from the troubled and lonely – not far from those doing time in prison – not far from those about to leave this life.

And, He's not far from you and me!

YOU WERE CREATED BY GOD FOR GOD.

Lock that firmly into your thinking. Then grasp this awesome fact. You can know God as a friend.

He sent his Son Jesus into the world to save you from your sins so that you can be in fellowship with him.

Jesus suffered and died on a horrible Roman cross for our sins and rose victorious from the dead – and he's alive today!

What you need to do is to pray a prayer like this:

"Dear God, you have created me for yourself but I've sinned and gone my own way. I repent (turn away) of all my sins and accept Jesus into my life as my personal Saviour and Lord. I commit my life to you."

Get to know God. Start reading the Bible – begin at the New Testament.

Talk to God in prayer. Ask Him to guide you and help you make good decisions. Share your new found faith with other Christians and then non-Christians.

Your new life with Christ begins the day you receive him – and even death will not detain you as you anticipate being in God's glorious presence for all eternity.

The Bible says: "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" Isaiah 55:6-7. ●



Ronald Abels was only 16 when he committed his first armed robbery and started selling drugs. He was intent on being the top gangster in his community of Capricorn Park, Cape Town. But when he met some people who surprised him with their love, affection and trust, he started to realise there might be more to life. Now he runs an organization for children from marginalized communities and his life has drastically changed.

In an interview with Thislife Online, Ronald shares that he was raised by his grandparents and as a child he dreamt of becoming a policeman.

"But when my hormones kicked in, I noticed the gangsters attracted the coolest girls and I decided to become the greatest gangster of all," he recalls. "So at the age of 15 I started fighting with the oldest boys in my school."

He made a name for himself as a gangster and took over an existing gang. Although Ronald wasn't taking drugs at the time, he started selling them to make money. After he finished school, he thought he was living the gangster high life.

"Then the first white missionaries came to Capricorn. I'd never seen a white person up close before and suddenly this white English woman walked right up to me and just hugged me. I didn't understand why! Later, when I got to know Julie,

she told me when she noticed me standing there in my fake leather jacket and gangster attitude, she simply saw someone who needed love. That was the first time someone had hugged me. I loved my grandparents. They were good to us and looked after us well, providing everything we needed, but they weren't affectionate people."

Ronald began attending the Christian home group that Julie and her husband Mike ran. One night they invited him for supper but when he arrived, they told him they had to go away for the weekend.

TWICE I ESCAPED PLOTS TO KILL ME



"They handed me their house keys and said I should spend the weekend there. Again, they'd taken me by surprise and I didn't understand how they could trust me. My first thought was that I'd steal everything of value, but I was so completely captivated by their love and trust that I didn't even smoke cigarettes in their yard."

Ronald decided to convert to Christianity and tried to be a "good guy". It was a big change from the gangster life where he was always fighting, living in fear, running from the law and sure he would be murdered.

"Twice I escaped plots to kill me," he remembers. "The first time I was hijacked and held captive over a weekend while I was made to dig my own grave. I persuaded them to let me join them when they were smoking tik [methamphetamine, or

crystal meth] and they started to see me as one of them. The second time, I refused to go somewhere I was supposed to be and someone else was mistaken for me and shot dead."

Ronald's attempt to be a "good guy" didn't last. "Eventually I took up alcohol again and started living a double life. I realise now that I was just subscribing to a set of religious rules at this stage and Jesus had not yet become real to me."

He started smoking tik again and withdrew from his Christian friends.

"I reconnected with my old gang for protection and went back to selling drugs. I made money but smoked all the profit and couldn't buy drugs to sell... I became homeless, hanging around drug houses and sleeping wherever I could."

Hopeless and lonely, Ronald recalls sitting in front of a rubbish pile thinking there must be more to life. "In that moment of utter despair I heard a voice softly say, 'Ronald, it's time to go home'. I believe it was the voice of Jesus." Ronald obeyed the voice and returned to his childhood home.

"I was filthy, had lice, stank and was exhausted. It took about three baths to get me clean... As I recovered, I joined a local church. The first time I'd converted it had been to the idea of Christianity. This time I included Jesus. Now I was in an active relationship with Him. That's when it got real for me..."

"I've never felt lonely since. I realise I was always looking for love. Jesus fills me completely. He's the one I count on. He always has my best interests at heart."

Ronald started attending church, and quickly became an intern. The church helped him attend Bible College and in 2016 he became the church's full-time Missions Developer. He also founded Future Life Ministries, which helps young people from marginalized communities in Cape Town.

Ronald is now married to Sydney, an American missionary. He also spends time with his two daughters from a previous relationship.

"One of the greatest gifts Jesus has given me is a restored relationship with them, and I love being able to offer them a secure home when they're with me," he shares.

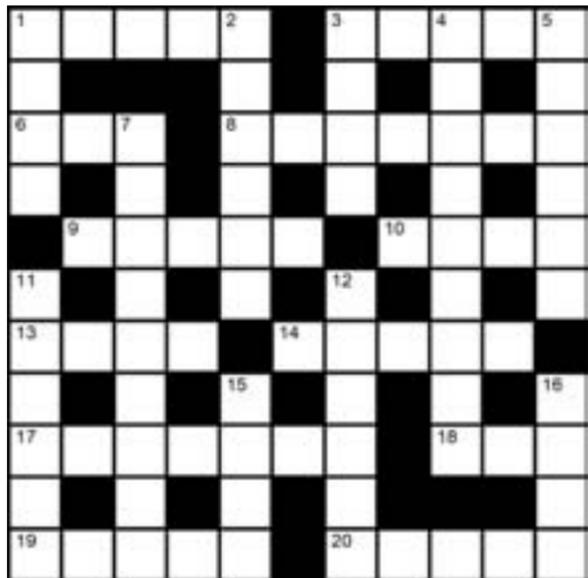
"I read, watch television, go to movies, normal things. I'm never afraid. I've been told that I'm regarded as a symbol of hope in Lavender Hill now. They say that if God could change me, He can change anyone. I agree!" ●

Coffee Break

CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

- 1 Hiker's path
- 3 Extinct ground birds
- 6 Military address
- 8 Bunch or clump
- 9 Sales booth
- 10 A great lake
- 13 Omelette ingredients
- 14 Intelligence crew
- 17 Coup organiser
- 18 Roofing material
- 19 Flip over
- 20 Wood shop tool



DOWN

- 1 Ivory source
- 2 Plague insect
- 3 Instrument; barrel
- 4 Cleaning liquid
- 5 Road
- 7 Precipitation measurer (4,5)
- 11 South Indian language
- 12 Corkscrew shape
- 15 Potatoes
- 16 Midleg

My new life starts now!



Prison Chaplain Reverend Elwood Gray prays for new Christian Aaron Wilkerson before his baptism (submersion in water as an outward sign of dying to his old life) in a suburban Maryland prison. (Photo by Bill O'Leary/ The Washington Post via Getty Images)

SOLUTIONS PAGE 7



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ABUSE NO LONGER DEFINES ME

Tammie Marie Lester was so poor growing up in Texas that she never knew from one day to the next whether there would be food on the table, electricity, gas or water. She didn't know if she would have a home to live in because there was never enough rent money either.

"We often went without one or more of those things," the 47-year-old prisoner tells *Challenge News*.

What she did know for sure though, was that she would either be neglected or, worse, there would be some kind of violence perpetrated against her. It would either be sexual abuse or a belting from her mother or father.

"My childhood was one of neglect and disapproval," she elaborates. "My dad drank, cheated on my mother and beat her."

"My mum didn't want me and tried to give me to her parents, as she did her son from another man she was seeing before my dad."

"I was sexually assaulted and then whipped for telling - I carried belt buckle marks from the waist down. The sexual mess went on till I was grown."

Tammie says this environment made her grow up into an insecure person. She craved acceptance and only wanted to please people.

"Even if it cost me I did whatever my parents and others wanted," she admits. "I was a mental mess; I was controlled through violence, verbal abuse and physical abuse. I

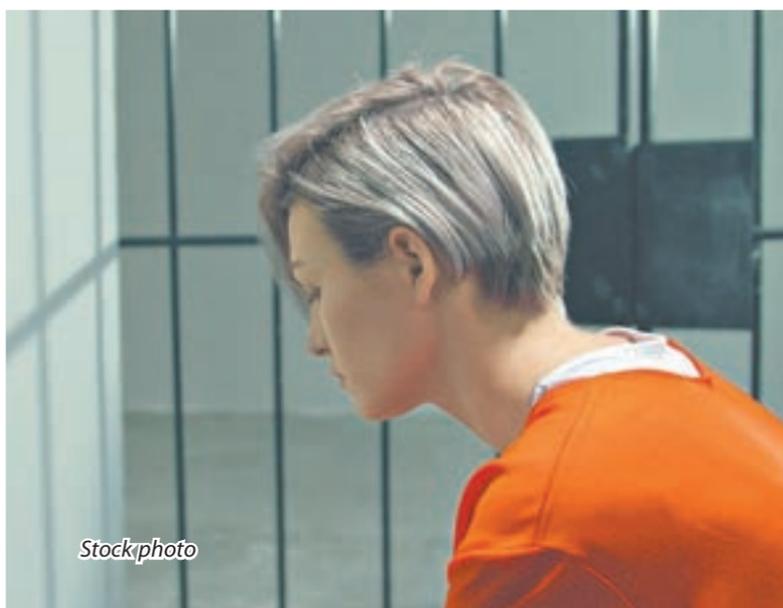
truly believed these people - my parents, partners and siblings - loved me and that's why they punished/corrected me with harsh words, hands and even life-threatening attacks on my body."

Her need for approval led to an addiction to sex - "because sex is what got me love and attention," she says. She was also controlled by fear, she says, and recognizes that was the reason she didn't stop her ex-husband from molesting her son while they were married, for which she was eventually sent to prison.

Sentenced to 30 years for aggravated assault, Tammie has already served 21. However, in prison life has changed vastly for the better for her.

Amidst the violence and lack in her young life, were intermittent visits to church and Sunday School. It was there that Tammie heard the gospel (the good news that Jesus Christ came to earth and died for our sins to give us eternal life). She heard about the peace that He gave, the love and joy that He offered.

Those lessons were buried deep and she even



Stockphoto

and beyond for me.

"I hit my knees and asked Christ into my heart and told Him if He could truly use me and my life to please come into my life and clean it up and do what only He could do. My life hasn't been the same since."

Tammie says the biggest change has been walking away from homosexuality and "all the other sexual activity".

"God has delivered me from the sexual desires that used to control my life. He's helped me overcome the way I thought of myself and others. Before I became a Christian I was all about pleasing people and winning acceptance. I no longer walk around in mental darkness."

tried going to church after she got married.

"I wanted the spiritual stuff others had but it wasn't till I was locked up and got tired that I got the desire to know Christ, not just about Him."

"I thought there had to be more than what I was and more to life than what I was living, more than the abuse, dysfunction and mind control. I wanted the happiness, peace and joy other Christians had; the life promised to me in the Bible that I had heard about in Sunday School. I wanted the love and relationship no man can give me."

"After learning about all that Christ did and went through for a messed up person like me I couldn't help but want to become a believer, to serve the One who loves me and goes above

Her message to others caught in the same brutal struggle is heartfelt: "If you long for true love and honest friendship the only person to go to is Jesus. Till I truly built a relationship with Him, my life was always missing something; I was constantly lacking in so many areas of my life. It's truly amazing and completely unbelievable what He has made of me."

Tammie's favourite verses are Isaiah 54:17 - "no weapon formed against you shall prosper"

Philippians 4:13 - "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"

Hebrews 13:5 - "I will never leave you nor forsake you"

1John 4:4 - "Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world".

Rehab client now the CEO

BY RYAN ZEPEDA



Josh Torbich

As a young person growing up in Brunswick, Georgia, excess weight made Josh Torbich self-conscious. When friends introduced him to alcohol at age 13, the euphoria blanked out his feelings of inadequacy and a poor self-image.

"That inferiority complex seemed to slip away. I started to feel confident," Josh says on a 700 Club video.

"I set myself up to see the drink as the solution to fix the way that I felt, because it happened. Man, it was like the most immediate and effective solution that I ever had seen to fix that feeling that I had... My life circled around, 'where's the party at?'. I started to become the go-to guy for alcohol and I felt like that was somebody that everyone was attracted to, that could quickly move in and out of popularity circles."

Because he was big, he could buy alcohol with a fake ID. But he was living a double life. His parents were Christians who took him to church. In his junior year of high school, the liquor wasn't enough. Josh turned to painkillers, and their potency gave him an additional boost of self-confidence.

Of course, the gateway substance led to even more: during his senior year, he had become a full-blown heroin addict.

"The first time that I shot up heroin and the rush came over me, it was like going back to when I was 13 years old," Josh says. "It was new, it was exciting, and it was something that once again made me feel great."

After high school, while his friends went to jobs and college, Josh stayed at home with his parents and abused drugs.

"I felt so miserable. I felt so worthless," he admits. "I remember sitting there looking at my life and what it had become, and that thought and that feeling came over me that said, 'This is the way your life is. This is the way that your life is gonna be.'"

Josh got two DUIs and had one overdose incident.

"I hadn't accomplished anything or done anything with meaning or purpose and had just become okay with being a loser," he

admits. When he turned 23, Josh's parents orchestrated an intervention and got him to enrol in the Brunswick Christian Rehab center.

At first, the rules seemed overbearing. "How am I ever going to have any fun in here?" he asked himself on the first day.

But the required church attendance, coupled with the therapy sessions, did soften his heart, and one Sunday, Josh went up to the altar to receive Jesus as his Saviour and Lord.

"Slowly my perspective started to shift that maybe there is a place out there for me to where I can find something that has purpose and meaning, something that I would be able to wrap my arms around," he recalls. "And maybe Jesus is the way to get to that."

Today, Josh is CEO of the same rehab program, and under his leadership, the program has grown and prospered.

"I believe that He didn't want me to go through all of those things that I went through. But since I did, and I turned my life over to Him, He's perfectly capable of using every single thing that I went through and that happened to me for His purpose," Josh says.

"I don't just get the grace of Jesus Christ in my life, I don't just get the forgiveness. I get the abundant life that He's promised to give to me today. Today you can find purpose, and you can find that purpose through the process of surrendering to Christ." •

World Hope Ministries Mzansi

"Making known Jesus - The Hope of the world"

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The World Hope Ministries Spiritual Care Programme consists of the following courses:

<p>BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP 1</p> <p>The lessons in this course will help the student engage the scriptures. This course consists of 4 books: Relationship with God, Fellowship with God, Responsibility to God and Accountability to God. Upon completion of all 4 books, one is issued with a bible in a language of his/her choice, and a certificate.</p>	<p>THE JESUS FILM</p> <p>This film which is based on the biography of our Lord Jesus Christ, from birth to His ascension, is screened by a World Hope facilitator as part of our course.</p>
<p>BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP 2</p> <p>This course builds on the foundation laid by Discipleship 1 and provides a deeper understanding of the word of God in the Christian walk. This course consists of two books A and B, each 13 lessons. A certificate is awarded upon completion of each of the books.</p>	<p>GODS ANSWER TO AIDS</p> <p>The purpose of this course is to enlighten and educate individuals of how to overcome the scourge of HIV/AIDS, based on what the Word of God says. This course consists of six lessons six weeks, engaging a DVD and a resource workbook. It is taught by a World Hope Ministries facilitator.</p>

ALL OUR COURSES ARE QUALITY ASSURED AND OUTCOMES BASED

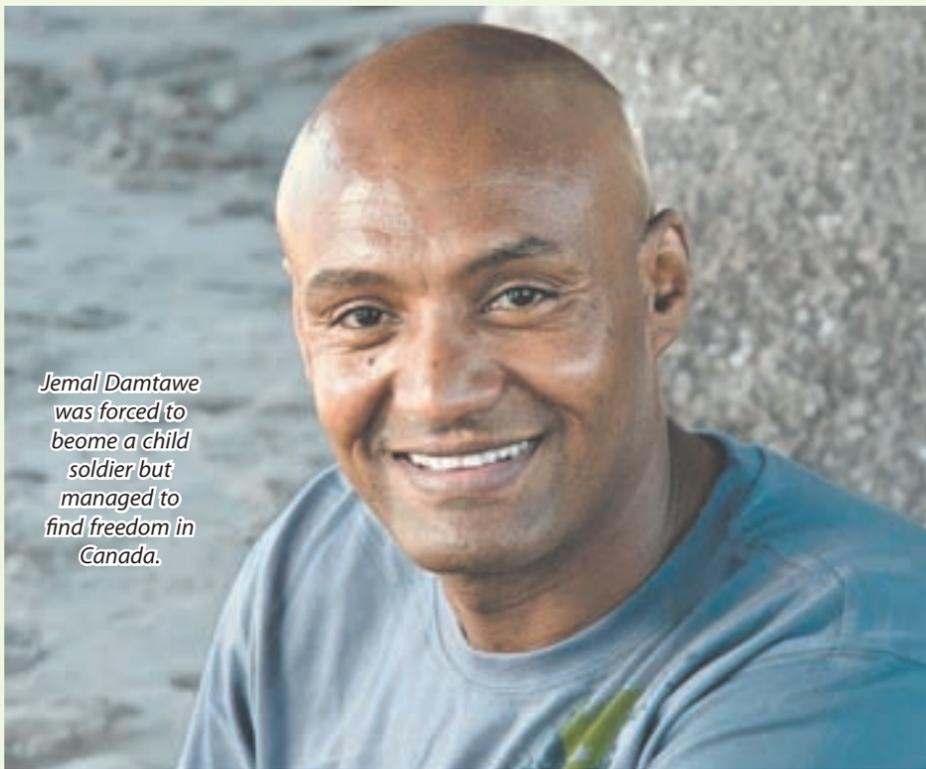
HOPE MAKES ALIVE

I HEREBY APPLY TO ENROL WITH WORLD HOPE MINISTRIES TO COMPLETE THE SPIRITUAL PROGRAMME FOR PRISONS

NAME _____ PRISON NUMBER _____

PRISON _____ SECTION _____ CELL _____

Post to: PO Box 96176, Brixton 2019



Jemal Damtawe was forced to become a child soldier but managed to find freedom in Canada.

Child soldier finds path to freedom

As a child, Jemal Damtawe dreamed of becoming a professional soccer player or a movie star, but when soldiers in a military van kidnapped him as he was walking to school one day, those hopes and dreams vanished.

Instead, he faced a new reality as a 15-year-old child soldier in the Ethiopian Civil War.

“My life changed into something that is hard to imagine, a world where there was no peace or joy. Seeing the violence and death would affect my life for years to come,” Jemal shares on his website, jemald.com.

In an interview with 100 Huntley Street, Jemal says he had three months of training about how to shoot a gun and how to survive. He was then sent to the front of the battle, with a gun pointed at his back reminding him that he either had to kill or be killed.

“We were told if you don’t shoot your gun at the enemy we will kill you,” Jemal writes in his book, *Forced Paths, Ordered Steps*.

Jemal and a friend managed to escape after two years. They exchanged their guns for a camel ride to Djibouti. Then they stowed away on a ship but he and four others were discovered and thrown overboard.

“Two of us survived,” Jemal shares.

Jemal stowed away for a second time and eventually arrived in Montreal, Canada, where he married, had a daughter, and opened a restaurant.

Nightmares of his horrific past plagued him and he turned to drugs and alcohol in order to numb the pain and to be able to sleep at night.

But when his daughter was three, Jemal left her and his wife, as well as their restaurant. He left a note explaining that he couldn’t be a good father or husband and he moved to America.

He describes his 10 years in Portland, Oregon as a nightmare. He got involved with gangs and dealing drugs and spent time in and out of jail. He was shot twice and lost friends to drug overdoses.

In an attempt to escape the gang life, Jemal returned to Canada – this time in Vancouver.

“I don’t have anybody, I don’t know anyone... I start sleeping under the bridge for almost a year,” Jemal remembers.

Then Jemal discovered Union Gospel Mission, where he could receive a hot meal and was offered a support program to help him beat his drug and alcohol addictions.

“My body was skinny, my brain depleted, and deep depression gave way to thoughts of suicide. My mind told me I was not going to make it in their program, but it also whis-

pered that I needed to enter it just to rest and take a break from my life on the streets.”

Jemal initially just visited UGM for meals. Before they ate, a pastor would share a message about Jesus and pray over the food.

Jemal, who came from a Muslim family and was the son of an Imam, disregarded the pastor’s words at first.

Then a woman he was partying with died of a drug overdose.

He ran to UGM but this time he would stay and, on Christmas Day, he finally surrendered to Jesus.

“I was crying to God,” he shares. “I said, ‘God, I’ve heard enough – I need Jesus.’”

Jemal participated in the drug and alcohol program and was able to beat his addiction.

“Only when I learned how to read scriptures, pray and seek help ... only then did I begin to understand and have some relief and some peace in my mind,” Jemal says.

“I knew that when I came to Christ, He gave me freedom, a new life, new hope, and a way to let my troubles go. The most important thing was learning how to forgive. Not just say in my mind, ‘I forgive you,’ but make a deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance towards all who harmed me, regardless of whether they deserve my forgiveness.”

After graduating the drug and alcohol program, Jemal moved into his own room. But it was there that an addiction to pornography began.

Again, Jemal prayed to God, “I said, ‘God, I need help. I know I didn’t give you this addiction. You delivered me from drugs and alcohol but I held on [to pornography] because I love it.’”

Jemal then threw his computer away and completely cleaned his house of any pornographic materials. He also told his UGM counsellor and pastor about his addiction.

“We like to hide this addiction,” Jemal explains. He says by opening up to others, they also shared their struggles with him and they were able to support each other.

Jemal now works at UGM as an outreach worker and is a pastor of a church. He has remarried and has a son, Adam, and has reconciled with his daughter in Quebec.

He has written a book called *Forced Paths, Ordered Steps* about his incredible life story.

“I was forced to walk a difficult and painful road,” Jemal says.

“But what I discovered is that God was always beside me calling me to walk the path that God had chosen for me.” ●

I wanted to be a hitman



Brandon Chism had criminal aspirations until he heard a whisper that turned his life around.

Brandon Chism was a teenage gang-banger who carried four pistols on him at once. Becoming a teenage father didn’t even slow him down – he was intent on becoming a hitman or a kingpin and nothing was going to stop him. But then he heard a whisper in the darkness and everything changed.

In an interview with 700Club, Brandon recalls a traumatic childhood full of violence.

“I never felt like my dad loved me,” he shares. “The way he treated me, the way he talked to me made me feel worthless.”

In an aim to find acceptance, Brandon turned to the gang life.

“I started smoking weed and by 12 I was already snorting powder and dropping microdot acid,” he says.

When Brandon met Terra, he fell head over heels in love. But when she got pregnant, their relationship changed.

“My life stopped and his didn’t and that’s where the real conflict started,” Terra explains.

“I kept partying,” Brandon admits. “I was 15 when we had our first daughter and I didn’t slow down a lick.”

Terra hoped Brandon would change and sometimes he gave her hope that it was possible.

“He would get better just long enough to reel us all back in and then he would just go right back off the deep end again,” Terra shares.

Brandon was in and out of jail and had violent aspirations.

“I felt like I was Scarface,” he recalls. “I toted four pistols on my person at a time. I would have guns in the vehicle that I was driving. I wanted to be a hitman or a kingpin. I was selling all this dope with pockets full of money and guns and vehicles and motorcycles and electronics. I really thought this is what I want – this is who I want to be forever.”

Then, while he was facing a serious prison sentence for a gun charge, everything changed.

“[I was] just feeling sorry for myself and wondering, ‘What am I doing with my life?’ I hear this whisper that by no shadow of a doubt is the Lord. I’m feeling Him surround me with this love and this comfort in this moment and He said, ‘Are you going to go left or right? This is time. If you don’t serve me, I’m going to let you go. I’m going to let you do what you want to do.’ And I’m already knowing the end to this so of course I cry out and say, ‘Lord, I’m here! I

will serve you.” Brandon quit using drugs and alcohol and began attending church. He recalls raising his hands and inviting Jesus into his life while Terra and other members of the church prayed for him.

“I was on a different path and have been from there on out. The grace and mercy of God has just blown me away.”

To Brandon’s surprise, his gun charge was thrown out of court and he was given six months unsupervised probation.

Today Brandon and Terra are married and share with others the hope they have found in Jesus. They encourage people to study the Bible and get to know God’s character.

“That is the only way to get to know Him – to study the Word of God,” Brandon explains.

“It’s living, it’s breathing, it has been proven, it has been tested, it has been tried. God is hope, God is love, God is redeeming, God is faithful – above everything He is faithful.

“When you study the Word of God and see what we have been given, what we are heirs to, how much He truly loves us – He manifested Himself in the flesh to come die for us so that we may live.

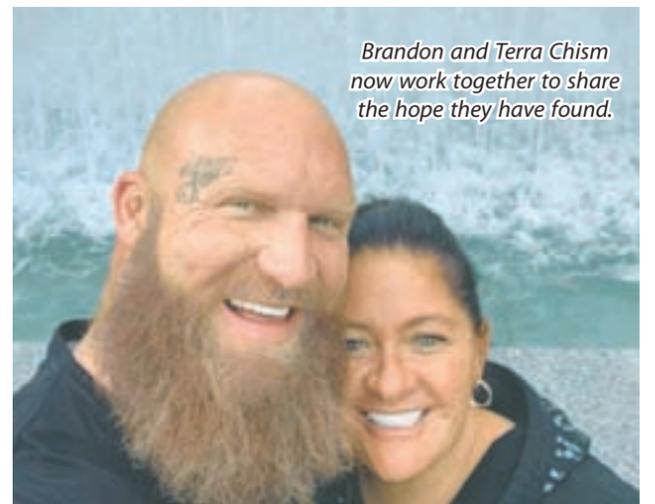
“There is hope for anyone. There is nobody that’s been too nasty and been too wrong or hurt too many people. God will take every bit of that away in an instant.”

Terra is blown away by the change in her family.

“Now we’re doing ministry side-by-side and we’re praying for people and we’re going out in the community and we’re serving meals for homeless people at a shelter as a couple instead of beating each other up,” she shares.

“If you would have told me that 23 years ago, I probably would have told you that you were crazy.

“God can do anything – you can’t put Him in a box – there’s nothing that He can’t do, that He can’t fix, that He can’t restore.” ●



Brandon and Terra Chism now work together to share the hope they have found.

Zulutranslation

Ekhathazwa imimoya emibi, wathola inkululeko

U Charles Moosamy uvela ekhaya lamaHindu, wakhula elandela usiko nenqubo yawo.

Abazali bakheen-daweni eyayibizwa nge Cato Manor (Mayville), wayelandela inqubo yabo yezenkolo njengomfana. Kodwa noma ayekwenza konke okwakufanele, wayezwa ukuthi kukhona okushodayo.

Ngaso lesosikhathi, ngangihlukunyezwa imimoya yobumnyama," uCharles etshela i *Challenge News*. "Ngangicabanga ukuthi isigwebo sami sokungahlabei onkulunkulu, ngazama ukwenza okuningi ukubajabulisa, kodwa lutho. Kwajula.

"Ebusuku ngangilali ngizwa,umsindo ngijuluka futhi.(U Nkosikazi wami,wayelala kahle eduze kwami, mangizama ukumkhulumisa, umlomo wale ukuvuleka)"

"Ngase ngimenyelwa esontweni eliseplazini, elibizwa nge ELIM Temple,umshumayeli owayevakashilewabizela phambili ababefuna ukuthandazelwa. Angipholisanga maseko ngaya phambili. Umfundisi wangithandazela, ngakhululeka. Kusuka ngalobobusuku,ngilala njen-gosana angisakwazi ukhulushwa.

Ngaqala ukufunda ibhayibheli ngiya naseklasini le bhayibheli.Nga-lokho kufunda kwami ngazi ukuthi



uJesu unguNkulunkulu ophilayo. Ngaqala ukushumayela ebandleni lakithi, wayesengivulela iminyango yokuya emabandleni amanye ngishumayele izwi lakhe. Kodwa ngase ngidlula ekhathini ezinzima zokulingwa,ngagulelwa abantwana kwezinye izinto,ngaqhubeka nokumethemba u Jesu, enhlizweni yami ngazi ukuthi uzongidlulisa kukho konke, wakwenza.

"Amantombazane ami angamatwins, azalwa isikhathi singakafiki, enye indodakazi yami yahlizwa inhliziyi,kodwa mina nenkosikazi yami sasazi ukuthi u Jesu uzobaphilisa, wakwenza,siyambonga kakhulu."

U Charles unentshisakalo ephuthumayo ngokubaluleka kwevangeli kuwo wonke umuntu. Echaza. "Njengoba umuntu edinga I passport ukuvakashela amanye amazwe,ngayo leyondlela,udinga I passport (UJESU) ukungena ezulwini. U Jesu waphula amandla okufa, nethuna kanye nesono. Ibhayibheli lithi ngokuba uNkulunkulu walithanda izwe kangaka waze wanikela ngeNdodana yakhe ezelwe yodwa ukuba yilowo nalowo okholwa iYona angabhubhi kodwa abe nokuphila okuphakade, (Johane 3:16)

"Mhlobo wami lena akuyona inganekwane, iqiniso. Ngingabuzisa, uma ungafa namhlanje,uzoya ezulwini?Noma ungafanamuhla bese uma phambi kukaNkulunkulu akubuze ukuthi kungani kufanele ngikuvumele ungene ezulwini? Uzothini?ukwenza okuhle akuqiniseki ukungena ezulwini. Ukwamukela uJesu njengeNkosi noMsindisiokuzosingenisa. Mamukele namuhla, kusasa kungahle kube kude. Ingunaphakade isikhathi eside esingapheli. Uyobe ukuphi? •

Englishtranslation

Troubled by evil spirits, he found freedom

Charles Moosamy came from a Hindu background, following its culture and rituals.

Born to parents in what was then Cato Manor (Mayville), he followed the religious rituals as a young boy. But in spite of doing all that was required, he still felt there was something missing.

"During that time, I was severely possessed by the spirits of evil," Charles tells *Challenge News*. "Thinking that this was my punishment for not appeasing the gods, I did more to try to please those gods, but to no avail. It became worse.

"At night, I hardly slept, hearing strange noises and perspiring a lot. (My wife, sleeping next to me, slept well, and when I tried to speak to her, my mouth locked and I could not talk.)

"I then was invited to a remote church on a farm, named Elim Temple, where a visiting pastor called people to come to the platform to be prayed for. I didn't wait another second, I went forward. The pastor prayed for me, and I was delivered and set free. From that night, I slept like a baby and up to now I have never been tormented again.

"I then began to read the Bible and attend Bible classes. Through the Bible I realised that Jesus is the living God. Later I began to preach in my church and God opened doors for me to visit other churches to preach His Word. But

then I went through some testing times, when my children were very ill, among other things. But I continued to trust the Lord Jesus, knowing in my heart that He will see me through, and He did.

"My eldest girls, who are twins, were born prematurely, and my other daughter had a heart surgery, but my wife and I knew Jesus would heal them, and He did, which we are thankful for."

Charles is urgent in his desire to share about the importance of salvation for everyone. He explains: "Just as a person needs a passport to visit other countries, in the same way, one needs a passport (that's Jesus) to enter Heaven. Jesus destroyed the power of death, and the grave and sin. The Bible says *'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son [Jesus] that whoever believes in Him, will not perish but have everlasting life.'* (John 3:16)

"My friends this is not fiction or a fairy tale, but a reality. Can I ask you, if you die today, will you be in Heaven? Or suppose you die tonight, and stand before God, and God asks you, 'Why must I allow you into heaven?' What would you reply to Him? Because doing good does not guarantee you entry into Heaven. Only accepting Jesus as Saviour and Lord of your life does. Do it now, tomorrow may be too late. Eternity is a long time - never ending. Where will you spend it?" •

Afrikaans translation

Gekwel deur bouse geeste, het hy vryheid gevind

Charles Moosamy kom van 'n Hindu agtergrond, en het die kultuur en rituele gevolg.

Gebore in Cato Ridge (Mayville), het hy as 'n jong seun die godsdienstige rituele gevolg. Maar ten spyte daarvan dat hy alles gedoen het wat nodig was, het hy gevoel iets kort.

"Gedurende daardie tyd was ek deur bouse geeste ernstig besete," het Charles vir *Challenge Nuus* vertel. "Ek het gedink dit was my straf want ek het nie die gode gepaai nie, en ek het meer gedoen om daardie gode te behaag, maar tevergeefs. Dit het al hoe erger geraak."

"Snags het ek skaars geslaap want ek het vreemde geluide gehoor en ek het baie gesweet. (My vrou wat langs my geslaap het, het goed geslaap, en wanneer ek met haar probeer gesels het, het my mond toegeslaan en ek kon nie praat nie.)"

"Ek was toe genooi na 'n afgeleë kerk op 'n plaas met die naam van 'Elim Temple', waar 'n besoekende pastoor mense genooi het om na die

verhoog te kom om vir hulle te bid. Ek het nie 'n sekonde gewag nie, en het na vore gegaan. Die pastoor het vir my gebid en ek was bevry en losgelaat. Van daardie nag af het ek soos 'n baba geslaap, en tot nou toe was ek nooit weer geteister nie."

"Ek het toe die Bybel begin lees en Bybel klasse begin bywoon. Deur die Bybel het ek agtergekom dat Jesus die lewende God is. Later het ek in my kerk begin preek en God het deure vir my oopgemaak om ook ander kerke te besoek om Sy Woord te verkondig. Gedurende hierdie tyd het ek deur moeilike tye gegaan, want tussen ander dinge, het my kinders baie siek geword. Maar ek het aangehou om die Here te vertrou, wetende dat Hy my sal deursien, en Hy het."

"My oudste twee dogters is 'n tweeling, en hulle was vroeg-gebore. My ander dogter het 'n hart operasie ondergaan, maar my vrou en ek het geweet dat Jesus hulle sal genees, en Hy het, en ons is dankbaar."

Charles is ywerig in sy begeerte om te deel oor die belangrikheid van

verlossing vir almal. Hy verduidelik: "Net soos iemand 'n paspoort benodig om 'n ander land te besoek, so het almal 'n paspoort nodig (dis Jesus) om die Hemel binne te gaan. Jesus het die mag van die dood oorwin en ook die graf en sonde. Die Bybel sê *'God het die wêreld so liefgehad dat Hy sy enigste Seun gegee het, sodat dié wat in Hom glo, nie verlore sal gaan nie maar die ewige lewe sal hê.* (Johannes 3:16)"

"My vriende hierdie is nie fiksie of 'n feeverhaal nie, maar 'n werklikheid. Kan ek jou vra, as jy vandag sal doodgaan, sal jy in die Hemel wees? Of veronderstel jy gaan vanaand dood, en jy staan voor God en God vra "Hoekom moet Ek jou tot die Hemel toelaat?" Wat sal jy antwoord? Want om goeie dade te doen sal nie waarborg dat jy toegelaat gaan word nie. Net as jy Jesus as Saligmaker en Heer van jou lewe aanvaar. Doen dit nou, môre sal dalk te laat wees. Die ewigheid is 'n lang tyd – oneindig. Waar sal jy dit deurbbring?" •

Saved from a life of conflict

• From page 1

Danelia is proud that her children are "kind and supportive" and have committed themselves to breaking the cycle of abuse by becoming mental health advocates.

"Yes I had a difficult life, but looking back I can see God's hand in everything. His plans are always better than my own," she smiles.

"I learned that Heaven is a free gift that you can't earn or work for, that only God can save you by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

"I don't feel I have to struggle every day to please God and other people or ask God for forgiveness all the time.

"His rules are like safety rails for our life; they protect us. I have had to let go whatever was driven by selfish ambition, pride and greed, including good deeds and religious activities."

Today the eggshells are gone. In their place, Danelia says, is a peace that is "beyond understanding.

"I now know what and who I am is because of Jesus and I don't need other people's approval." •

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." - C.S. Lewis

It doesn't matter what you've said or done; what you've thought about saying or doing; where you've been or who you've been there with – there is more grace in God than sin in you.

WORDS FOR THE HEART

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Welcome to this Bible Study. Read slowly what I have written. If you have a Bible, look up the reference verses given, and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to your soul through them. – ALAN BAILEY

John 14:16 - 15:2

INTRODUCTION

WE have been reading the words which Jesus spoke to his disciples in what was called "the upper room," a little time before his crucifixion. He is giving assurance to them as they realize that He is going to leave them. He wants them to trust in Him and carry on with God's work. The Holy Spirit, who is the third person of the Holy Trinity, is soon to be their teacher and guide; in a sense, taking the place of the Lord Jesus as their guardian. This teaching is of great benefit to us also.

Verses 16, 17 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, to be

with you forever. The world cannot accept this Counselor because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him for He lives with you and will be in you."

God's work on earth is done by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that it was the Spirit's power that was at work in the miracles that occurred. But up until this point of time, the Holy Spirit had not made His home in the hearts of God's people. Jesus explains that the Spirit is going to indwell them. Later, in the book of Acts we read about the coming of the Spirit in a new way. The world of unbelievers knows nothing of the Spirit of God.

Verses 18, 19 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live."

Naturally, the disciples would miss the presence of Jesus, but the Spirit will make them feel His presence.

Unbelievers will not see Jesus again, because He is leaving this earth. But the disciples will see Him after He rises from the dead. And, because He is going to rise, they will share in His new resurrection life.

Verses 20, 21 "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

After the resurrection, the disciples would experience a new, close relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a close relationship because of the Spirit's indwelling and because of the mutual love and fellowship which they will enjoy. These truths are real to this present day for all who believe in Christ.

Verses 22-24 Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord. Why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."

This Judas, the one asking the question, is not the one who betrayed Jesus. Jesus answers by showing that there is a great difference between believers and unbelievers. Believers are obedient and experience divine indwelling. Unbelievers have no part in this.

Verses 25-27 "All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 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."

The disciples had been with Jesus for around three years. Their lives had been powerfully impacted by what they saw and heard. Jesus was a patient and effective teacher. But in His absence, the disciples could easily forget and begin to wander. But the Lord was guarding against this. The Holy Spirit would be their teacher, stirring their memories, leading them in the truths they needed to know and follow. In due



time, they saw things clearer than ever, wonderful revelations being given to them and power to become teachers themselves. In the light of all this, these men had nothing to fear but could enjoy the peace of God. It remains a fact today, that true peace is only found in Jesus.

Verses 28, 29 "You heard me say 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe."

It seems plain to us from Jesus' words that He is going back to heaven to be with the Father and that He will come back eventually to earth. But the disciples were apparently a bit slow to take this in. Simply, they didn't want Him to go. They loved His presence. But Jesus wants them to hold these facts and recognize them when they happen. In saying the Father is greater than Himself, Jesus is speaking of the way He was subject to the Father's will in His whole earthly mission.

Verses 30, 31 "I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no effect on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me."

Jesus infers that the time of His suffering is almost upon Him. The 'prince of this world' is a reference to Satan. He is also referred to as 'the prince of the power of the air' (Ephesians 2). No doubt Satan was moving in people to bring about the arrest of Jesus and the suffering which was to follow. Jesus says the Devil has no claim on Him. Rather, the world will see that Jesus is divine

and the conqueror of death.

Chapter 15 Verses 1, 2 "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He trims clean so that it will be even more fruitful."

Jesus continues to teach His men by using a common figure, a grape vine. He likens Himself to one, and those who belong to him are branches which draw their life from Him. As all vines require pruning, God is at work tending the branches disciplining and training them so that their lives will be more godly and productive.

The kind of fruit is mentioned clearly in Galatians 5: 22. There it says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

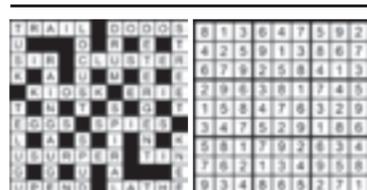
These great values don't occur naturally in us, only as the Spirit of God generates them.

Jesus has much more to say to them in this chapter that will affect their lives dramatically.

CONCLUSION

It is a privilege for us to be able to tune in and hear the words of the Lord Jesus. But they are words for us to heed as they show us truths that apply today in God's kingdom. If we trust in Christ as our Savior, we have acceptance with the Father and blessings beyond our immediate grasp. Believers have passed into a different relationship with God, which can't be broken. And the teaching Jesus gives His disciples about daily living are for us as well.

It may be a good thing to go over the words again and ask God to make them plain.



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 fellow prisoner who is a Christian, or your Prison Chaplain.
2. Ask a friend or family member to bring you a Bible. Ask the Prison Chaplain to sign you up to a correspondence discipleship program.
3. Keep praying. Talk to God anywhere, about anything. He is always listening, and you don't need a formula.
4. Find out if your prison has church services and attend them regularly.

AS A NEXT STEP:

I have prayed this prayer.

Please send me:

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

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

Send to: **World Hope Ministries, PO Box 96176, Brixton, 2019**

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

NEVER, NEVER, EVER GIVE UP

BY NICO BOUGAS

FAILURE is a fact of life. It is not something we like to talk about, in fact we would rather forget it. But consider that some of the most prominent and successful people that we may know of had their share of failure.

Winston Churchill repeated a grade during elementary school and, when he entered Harrow, was placed in the lowest division of the lowest class. Later, he twice failed the entrance exam to the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. He was defeated in his first effort to serve in Parliament. He became Prime Minister at the age of 62. He later wrote, "Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never – in nothing, great or small, large or petty – never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never, Never, Never, Never give up."

There are many highly gifted people that made shipwreck of their lives because they encountered some obstacle and simply quit. In the book of Exodus in the Bible, 10 of the 12 spies that were sent into the Promised Land saw the walled cities, they saw the size of the enemy and they started quaking in their boots.

They focused on the problem instead of the Provider. They magnified the obstacles and minimized the promises and provision of God. Sure there were challenges and dangers to face. But God was on their side. There was nothing too hard for the Lord.

The people who are most likely to be successful in life are not necessarily the best educated or the most talented. They are those that know how to persevere, that don't give up and don't give in to discouragement. Remember, "Winners never quit and quitters never win."



Below: Hubert Davis speaks at a press conference introducing him as the new men's head basketball coach at the University of North Carolina at Dean E. Smith Center on April 6, 2021 in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. (Photo by Jeffrey Camarati/Getty Images)

Head coach Hubert Davis of the North Carolina Tar Heels reacts to a play against the Kansas Jayhawks during the second half of the 2022 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament National Championship game at Caesars Superdome on April 04, 2022 in New Orleans, Louisiana. (Photo by Jamie Schwaberow/NCAA Photos via Getty Images)

BEST SEAT ON THE BUS

Hubert Davis was installed as head coach of the North Carolina University men's basketball team in April 2021.

He remembers the first time he realised just how big a deal it was to be in that position. It was when he sat in the front seat of the team bus - the spot reserved for the head coach.

UNC is no ordinary basketball college. Its most famous player is the legendary Michael Jordan. It has won five NCAA Championships and is number three on the Division I all-time wins list.

Speaking to ESPN about his moment of truth, Hubert said: "I was like 'Wow, this is different."

"Out of all the stuff — the practices, the press conferences, the media — all that hadn't affected me. I hadn't had a moment of thinking that I'm the head coach for the University of North Carolina, except when I sat at the front of the bus."

So where does Hubert get his strength to carry the weight of expectations? During a Sports Spectrum podcast he revealed his source — Jesus Christ.

"This is where I felt like Christ wanted me and my family to go,"

Hubert said. "Wherever He wants us to go, I'm following Him. I'm not going any other direction. ... This is not a job, it feels like a mission field, a ministry opportunity."

"I'm here to serve, and shed light on, and be an example for Christ."

At the press conference announcing him as head coach last April, he said: "The most important thing to me is my faith. My foundation is firmly in my relationship with Jesus."

It wasn't always this way with the former New York Knicks player. In fact, it was just the opposite.

Hubert ignored God growing up even though his mother, a fervent Christian, begged him to go to church.

"I wasn't interested," he admits. "My mom used to say Jesus had a plan for me, plans for a hope and a future, plans not to harm you, plans to prosper you (Jeremiah 29:11)."

"But I didn't understand."

Two days before he began his junior year of high school his mother died. Hubert was 16. "I developed tremendous hate towards God. I didn't understand

why He would take away my mom.

"She didn't get to see me play here, she didn't get to see me drafted, she didn't get to see me play in the NBA, she didn't meet my wife, she wasn't at our wedding, and she hasn't been with my kids."

Hubert did, however, attend church while at high school - because his basketball coach insisted.

"He encouraged me to go to church and slowly I started to understand what my mom was talking about.

"I started to understand the sacrifice that Jesus has made for me and how much He loves me; two days before my junior year of college I became a Christian — and then instead of being upset that Jesus took away the most beautiful person in my life - my mom - I'm thankful

every day that He gave me the best mom that I could ever have."

Today even after all the success he has enjoyed as a player and now being appointed head coach of one of the most successful college basketball teams, Hubert remains firmly grounded in Christ and not his own prestige.

He brings his faith to training sessions as well, recently sharing a Bible verse — Proverbs 4:25, "Look straight ahead, ignore all sideshow distractions" — with his players during practice.

The passage goes on to say: Watch your step, and the road will stretch out smooth before you. Look neither right nor left; leave evil in the dust.

Very good advice indeed for anyone in the game of life.



Head coach Hubert Davis of the North Carolina Tar Heels celebrates with the regional final trophy after defeating the St. Peter's Peacocks, 69-49, in the Elite Eight round game of the 2022 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament at Wells Fargo Center on March 27, 2022 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (Photo by Tim Nwachukwu/Getty Images)

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