

Melvin says he now knows what true freedom is.

# WALKING FREE

BY EMILY ANDREWS

In 1983, Melvin approached the doors of a Christian church meeting, looking to ask the “church people” for money. A large church service at a Tulsa, Oklahoma, campground was not the young man’s usual scene. When he wasn’t working odd jobs in welding and construction, he often spent his afternoons at a local bar, swapping stories with a friend over drinks.

“I remember going into the big arena, and I felt this electricity in the air, and it just hit me,” Melvin remembers. “I was just like, ‘Wow.’ I didn’t understand what this was, and I wanted to get away, but I couldn’t get away.”

He lingered to hear the preacher’s message. When the service ended, a friendly couple took him to dinner. They prayed with Melvin and gave him some Gospel tracts and a Bible. As Melvin began to leave, the husband shook his hand and slipped him a \$10 bill.

From there, Melvin headed to the bar. He tossed the Bible and tracts in some bushes along the way. He made it another block and then felt drawn to look back.

He says that staring at the bushes, he heard a voice repeating, “Don’t leave me here.”

Melvin ignored the plea and continued down his original path – both to the bar, and further into his addiction.

Eight months later, he sat in a jail cell facing a felony murder charge.

#### Filling the void

Before moving to Oklahoma with his family, Melvin grew up in a predominantly Hispanic community near Los Angeles.

As a child, he figured he was Hispanic like most of his friends, only to find out later that his family were members of the Muskogee people.

Melvin associated Native Americans with losing wars in the movies. And back then, he

wanted nothing more than to win – to secure a sense of identity, to excel in sports, to earn his parents’ affection.

His family met his practical needs, a roof over their heads and food on the table. But showing emotion wasn’t commonplace at home.

Melvin doesn’t remember receiving hugs or hearing “I love you.”

He sniffed glue for the first time after seeing his older brother try it.

He began smoking cigarettes with his dad and sneaking beers from the fridge, undeterred by the knowledge of his dad’s alcoholism. Later, he tried marijuana.

“I was looking to fill a hole in my life,” he says. “Something was missing not only because of God, but because of the lack of emotional expression in my family. I thought I needed something to fill what they weren’t filling.”

#### A broken spirit

By his early 20s, Melvin had a son and a daughter by two different women. But he showed no signs of settling down. At age 23, while drunk and high at a party, he was arrested for his part in a murder. While he didn’t commit the act that night, he didn’t try to stop the incident and was implicated.

When Melvin arrived at county jail, his mother

gave him a small Bible.

At first, he set it aside, but he tried crying out for Jesus to save him from his crisis.

He was convicted and received a life sentence, and he went to prison convinced Jesus had nothing to offer him.

When volunteers and fellow prisoners tried to tell Melvin the Gospel (the good news that Jesus had died for his sins), he wanted no part of it.

Sometimes, he physically assaulted the prisoners who tried to share their faith.

## Murderer finds mercy

Tumelo Bapela admits the offences he committed that sent him to jail for the rest of his life, were terrible. He shot and killed security guards, intending to steal their firearms and then attempt a cash-in-transit heist.

He was caught and sentenced to life in prison plus 68 years. Now aged 46, he tells Challenge News that he was born and raised in a very poor family in Germiston by a single mother. He says it was almost like his father had died, as he did nothing to care for Tumelo and his siblings.

“I was always in trouble because of anger and unforgiveness,” he recalls. “It was difficult for me to forgive a person who had wronged me.”

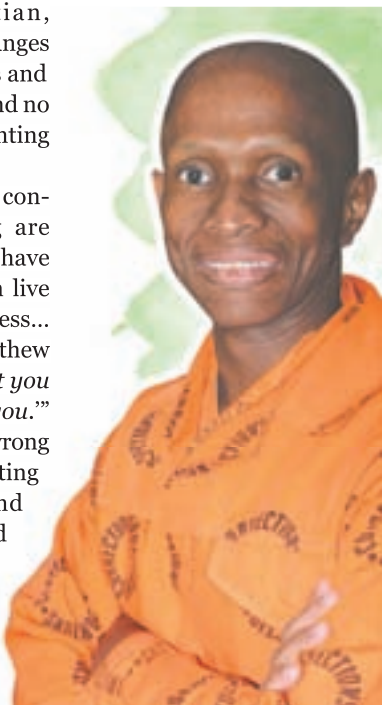
In 2015, while he was imprisoned at Leeuwkop Maximum Correctional Centre, Tumelo heard about Jesus Christ and the good news that He died for his sins. “I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour and gave my life to God,” the convict explains.

In the eight years since becoming a Christian, Tumelo has seen big changes in his life. He now loves and respects other people and no longer thinks about fighting all the time.

“I realised that the consequences of fighting are not good at all and I have to change so that I can live with peace and happiness... The Bible says in Matthew 7:12, ‘Do to others what you want them to do unto you.’” Many people like to do wrong things to others, forgetting that what goes around comes around. God does not want human beings to hurt each other.” Tumelo has served 20 years of his sentence. He says, “If

you are a Christian you will always encounter the temptations but the best part of being a Christian is that you will always be blessed with everything that you need... Jesus is the power that rules everything on earth.”

Tumelo’s favourite Bible verse is Matthew 9:12-13: “Jesus said, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”



**BACK PAGE**

**PARALYMPICS**  
**FANIE VD MERWE**

# True change

**P**aseka Cebisa recently landed in jail for drug possession and spoke to *Challenge News*, while there, about how prison has helped him to truly live out the faith he professed years ago.

“I had a tough childhood. My mother worked and I had no father.

“I disrespected and swore at my mother in front of people,” Paseka remembers with shame.

“My mother went to church. I remember her telling me about church.”

The boy enjoyed hearing good things about God and that him gave him hope, so he decided to follow Jesus.

“I became a Christian because I wanted to be a good person.

“But I got into drugs. When I got angry I went around hurting people,” Paseka confesses.

Then the law caught up with him.

“In prison I chose to really follow Jesus.

“I apologised to people I hurt and asked for their forgiveness.

“I stopped using drugs,” he testifies.

The Bible says that true faith



Paseka Cebisa

produces good fruit, as it indeed did in Paseka’s life.

“The best part of being a Christian is the love of other believers,” he says.

“The hardest part is [being diligent about] reading the Bible and praying.

“Jesus changes lives,” Paseka declares.

As his favourite verse says: “If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) •

# WALKING FREE

## From page 1

He spent many years making himself a leader of the native population in his prison and crusading against the Christian faith.

He told his Muskogee brothers, “You can’t become a Christian. You can’t live with Jesus. Why? Because he’s not for us. He’s from other people. He’s not for us.”

Later, Melvin was transferred to Oklahoma State Penitentiary. He dreaded sitting alone in a cell for 23 hours a day.

One night, he called on his grandfather in prayer, as was customary in his Native religion. Weary and broken, he pleaded for a new way to live.

Then, he received a clear response from a voice he now believes to be Jesus: “If you really believed in me, you’d believe in Jesus, because I am Jesus.”

### Awakened to hope

When the sun rose in the morning, Melvin thought about the night before.

He leaned over and reached for the small Bible that was collecting dust under his bunk.

He opened the book and peered out his cell window, making sure no one could see him.

Then he began to read John 1: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

“I started realizing right then that God was the one that they called



Jesus, that walked this Earth,” says Melvin.

“Right then I made the decision, ‘OK, I asked you to put me on a path you want me on. If it’s Jesus, then I’m going with it.’ And I surrendered right then.”

### New life begins

Melvin spent the next 27 years preaching the Good News to anyone who would listen. He received death threats from opponents of his new faith, but he persevered.

Due to changes in the legal circumstances surrounding his case, Melvin walked free in November 2021, after nearly 40 years in prison.

He found a church community and began to preach on occasion.

In July 2022, Melvin married his high school sweetheart Tammy, with

whom he had had reconnected just before his release.

He also re-established relationships with his grown children and enjoys getting to know his grandchildren.

Melvin continues to minister to others, especially his fellow Muskogee tribe members, however he can. He and Tammy founded Native Wings Like an Eagle, a non-profit ministry serving the Oklahoma City area.

“Sometimes, I just get in the car, fill up the tank, and just drive,” he says. “I’m thinking, ‘This is freedom.’ But really, it’s not freedom – I already had freedom. Freedom is in Christ.” •

The original of this story can be found at [www.prisonfellowship.org](http://www.prisonfellowship.org) and it is used with kind permission.

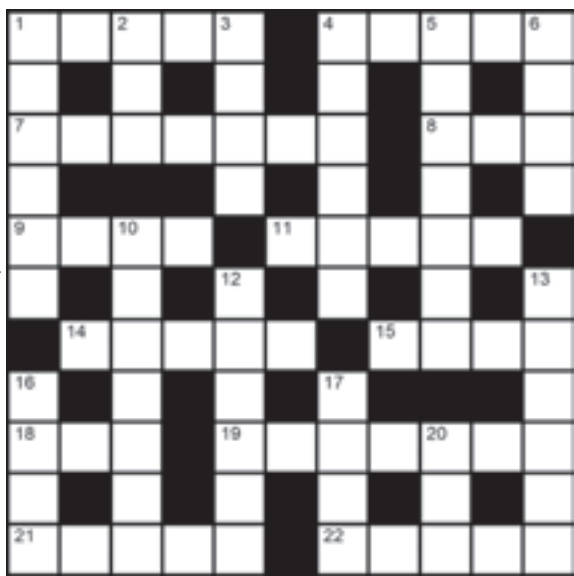
## Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

### ACROSS

- Shoe size factor
- Maintain a subscription
- Sickly pale
- Pole for an angler
- Sax relative
- Tendon
- Sarcastic sort, scoff
- Keyboarder’s goof
- Once around the track
- What’s left
- Large fire
- Hostile force

### DOWN

- Implement of combat
- Paternity identifier
- Cannabis fibre
- Shrink, as from a snake?
- Infant’s room
- The whole \_\_\_ world
- Original Olympics site
- Ferocious, savage
- Tragedy’s opposite
- Spill the beans
- Land at sea
- Food colouring



### SOLUTIONS PAGE 7



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## HEALING THE FATHER WOUND

BY ELIOT KERN

“MY father’s father,” Wayne Alcorn, author of *My Father’s Son*, tells *Eternity* magazine, “was a World War I returned vet. The things men and women see on the battlefield scar them for life. Add to that the fact that my father’s natural mother died soon after he was born. So my grandfather was dealing with that. He went through three marriages, divorce, pain, all the disappointments – layers upon layers – and I don’t even have a clue what his father was like.”

The result was a man who worked hard to put food on the table, but showed no affection to his son. As Alex Alcorn later told Wayne, he felt like an unwanted inconvenience.

Alex’s father died young, leaving behind a 19-year-old son – a chronic alcoholic who regularly spent time in jail, desperate to numb the pain of a deep father wound.

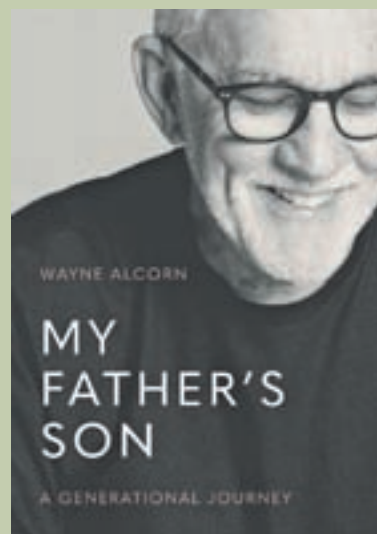
When people long for the love of a father, says Wayne, they’ll try almost anything to fill the gap.

“The number of people I know with addictions of all kinds, simply as an attempt to numb the pain, it’s off the charts.” For some, the father wound becomes a longing for attention, often resulting in juvenile crime. In decades of work with youth discipleship organisation Youth Alive, Alcorn says, “I never went to court with a young man or woman who was in trouble with the law that had a good relationship with their father.”

Others pursue affirmation by climbing the ladder or achieving notoriety.

But all these efforts to numb the pain are band-aids. In fact, far from healing the father wound, they often perpetuate a generational cycle.

“The simple adage is, ‘hurt people hurt people,’” Wayne says, before quoting a line from the book: “We



learn to be a father through being a son.” He continues, “Schools have kids 30-something hours a week; the rest of the week – the 130-something hours – is in the home. Where are most things learned in life? In the family home. Things we see; things that were never said to us, but we caught it. More is caught than taught.”

What Alex Alcorn caught hadn’t set him up well. Chronic alcoholic: tick. Juvenile crime: tick. He seemed destined to repeat what he’d experienced as a child.

“But one day in a little country town,” Wayne marvels, “he heard a preacher preach a simple text: ‘Whom the Son sets free is free indeed’ (John 8:36), and a choir began to sing a simple old song: ‘Come home, all who are weary.’”

Barefoot, shirtless and drunk, Alex had been released from jail earlier that day. As he walked forward, the crowd thought he was going to cause trouble, says Wayne, “but they didn’t know what was happening in his heart.”

“He knelt down, literally in the gutter, in a little street up on the Darling Downs, in a town called Dalby. That’s now 72 or more years ago; he made a decision to become a follower of Jesus. And because his life was changed, the generations that followed have been changed.

“I tell people all the time, if you’re not happy with your family tree, plant a new one in the most fertile soil of all: the love of God. In one decision, our whole family line was changed forever,” Wayne says.

What can break the cycle? What can fill the void? What can heal the father wound?

“I say over and over,” Wayne insists, “nothing and no one can fill that, until you discover the love of a God who says, ‘Call me Dad.’” •

This is an extract from a longer article in *Eternity* magazine.

# The power of a second chance

BY EMILY ANDREWS

**M**ichael Vander Horst still recalls the sound of rain on the roof of his Chevy Cavalier, the night of his crime years ago. The night of the burglary that changed everything. The car was stuck in the mud, and the passenger's seat was empty. Will, his partner in crime, stood across the driveway, pointing a pistol at the young couple who had just returned home. No one was physically hurt that night, but life as Michael knew it was over. After a brief time on the run, Michael spent months in county jail. In a plea deal, he finally told the truth about what he and Will had done, despite the pressure normally felt by those behind bars not to inform on their accomplices.

"I was not prepared for maximum security prison," Michael recalls. "When the metal cell door clanged behind me, I was locked in with a complete stranger, in a room the size of a broom closet, for 21 hours a day. There was no TV or radio to distract me. ... For long hours of the day, I lay stretched out on my bunk, thinking about my life and how I got here."

Lost and alone, Michael hated watching his parents pass through metal detectors on visits, their shoes being searched for contraband.

Tearfully they told their son, "We love you," in a room full of watchful eyes, and his pain only grew. Soon he couldn't stand his own reflection in the mirror.

And every day for a decade, he lived looking over his shoulder for Will, knowing one day they might meet again.

**An unexpected meeting**  
It was a snowy night on the Muskegon prison yard, when, under halogen floodlights, Michael saw Will approaching and braced himself. Because Michael had agreed to the plea deal 10 years before, Will was serving even more prison time.

"I knew that one of us would be leaving in an ambulance that night," Michael shares.

"There was no other way out... But something happened. Will asked me to forgive him. To forgive him? He told me that he had wanted to kill me for years.

"But now, he had accepted Jesus in his heart and wanted to ask forgiveness for ruining my life. Ruining my life?"

"I knew that one of us would be leaving in an ambulance."

"Nearly speechless, I nodded my head and left the yard, not knowing what to believe. I chose to believe Will, to believe forgiveness was real, and to believe I could forgive myself, believe I could

love myself and others. "These choices became the vehicle of my own transformation."

While at Muskegon, Michael enrolled in the Prison Fellowship Academy to continue his transformation journey.

"I found a new identity in Christ, and my faith was real for the first time," Michael attests. "This was not about sacraments or legalistically checking off boxes.

"This faith was a simple call... to love because all people are created in the image of God. This was not just theology—it was real."

Michael left prison with a new set of values and God-given purpose. Having learned the importance of Christ-centered community from the Academy, he got involved in a church on the outside and took a job in full-time ministry.

At church, he met Alisha and married her about a year later.

Reentry had brought many blessings.



Michael Vander Horst

It also brought challenging roadblocks. **Taking steps to serve**

Not long after their honeymoon, Michael and Alisha stopped by a café in Owosso, Michigan. They sat and talked about next steps for Michael's career and God's will for their family. Michael felt prompted to ask the barista, who was steaming milk for drinks, if the café was hiring.

Before long, Michael stood behind the counter wearing an apron and taking orders.

Michael excelled as a barista, not only serving coffee, but also serving customers with the love and joy of Christ.

He worked up to becoming a general manager before taking a role at the café's corporate headquarters. That role led to job in the sales department.

Last year, at a franchise meeting, Michael shared his story for an audience of hundreds—a full room of franchise owners, managers,

baristas. He imagined the questions that arose in their minds as they listened. What does a second chance mean? Do "convicted criminals" deserve a second chance?

But they didn't just see Michael as a "convicted criminal". They embraced the man who stood before them, proof of the power of second chances.

**Living by grace**

To Michael, a second chance is freedom. It's hope. He admits that it hasn't been a smooth ride.

He struggled with things many people don't think twice about, from big cultural shifts to using an iPhone. But he takes it all in stride.

He still remembers that snowy night on a prison yard, the moment he was surprised by grace (undeserved love of God) from someone who had every reason to hate him.

But that's how he tries to live today: by grace, one step at a time.

**The dream materialized**

During the COVID-19 pandemic Michael was laid off. While he found a job managing a gym, his dream job was to work with Prison Fellowship.

"[I had] been stalking the Prison Fellowship employment tab for a good five years. ... I always thought, 'There's a few organizations I would love to work with. Prison Fellowship is one of them.' But it was always the dream."

When an Academy graduate program manager position came up, Michael went for it – and got it.

"That's not just a dream fulfilled. It's a dream expanded."

The original of this story can be found at [www.prison-fellowship.org](http://www.prison-fellowship.org) and it is used with kind permission.



Abram Kutoane says he now has a different perspective on life.

## Injustice to joy

**A**bram Kutoane was sentenced to 35 years in a maximum security prison for burglary even though the complainants themselves told the court he did not commit the crime.

However, it was in prison that Abram's life actually changed for the better, he says, because it was there, in 2008, that a fellow inmate brought him to a prison service.

At the service he heard the gospel (the good news that Jesus Christ came to Earth to die for mankind's sins) and committed his life to God.

"God changed my life when I was in prison," Abram says. "I saw that without God I am nothing; I am a living testimony that He is Lord of my life."

Abram says Jesus rescued him from his lengthy sentence, which was reduced from the original 35 years to nine.

"My life was not good at all but after I met Jesus my life changed. I became a new person who did things in a different way.

"I started to change my old ways and serve the Lord. I stood in front of many inmates and told them about how Jesus can save them from their sins. It is good to know our Creator because without Him we are nothing in this world."

He says becoming a Christian has given him a different perspective on life and that he wants to share the message that there is abundant life through Jesus Christ.

"Jesus Christ came to save the lost and bring them into His kingdom. When God is on our side all things are possible and through Him we have life in the fullest."

However, Christians are not perfect and still make mistakes. Abram recently had another brush with the law.

He was convicted of common assault for getting into a fight and sentenced to three years.

Yet he sees this outcome as evidence of God's mercy. The man he fought with was later found dead and the authorities originally wanted to charge Abram with his murder.

"I fought with him but I did not kill him." He says that it was "by God's grace" that he won his case and was instead convicted of the lesser charge of common assault.

"When God is on our side all things are possible. Without God on our side we won't make it in this world."

His favourite verse is John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall have eternal life."

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

<p><b>BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP 1</b></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><b>THE JESUS FILM</b></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><b>BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP 2</b></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><b>GODS ANSWER TO AIDS</b></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>

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# ON A WING AND A PRAYER

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

David White was a brainiac in school and dreamed of becoming another Thurgood Marshall, however when his mother was murdered when he was 14, he lost all ambition and belief in goodness.

“That’s when I changed my concept of life and became a totally different person,” David says on a Manifestations Worldwide video. “My dreams and aspirations were totally killed. The idea that there was a God in Heaven was over for me. I declared that night that if there is a God in Heaven, then He’d better stop me because I’m going to hurt all these people.”

David went from a gifted program at school to fending for himself on the streets. Filled with rage, he “pimped” himself out to older women to have a place to sleep and food to eat. To get a little extra money for himself, he became a trigger man robbing people at gunpoint.

“I was a little stick-up kid,” he says. “I was a wicked young kid. I was known to be a shooter.”

A local drug dealer took him under his wing. Knowing that brandishing a gun would get the young man killed, the drug dealer taught David that dealing was a safer way to make a buck.

Because he was so dangerous, the cops wanted David off the streets, so they planted drugs on him, accused him falsely and locked him up, David says. He was labeled “a threat to society.”

“I was innocent of the charges I was in prison for, but I wasn’t innocent,” David acknowledges. “I had done a lot of worse things. They did what they had to do get me off the streets.”

A God-hater, David despised “jailhouse religion.” While Christianity turned him off, he like the white-hating religions of the Black Panther Party, the Nation of Islam, or the Hebrew Israelites.

“I was trying to prove that the Bible was full of falsehoods and contradictions and that Christianity was the white man’s religion,” David says. “But then I found that the things I was taught to battle Christianity with was actually a lie. I found that Christianity was established in Ethiopia since the year 84.

“As I was reading the Bible, I was changing,” he adds. “The Book changed me.”

Then he stumbled on the story of Gideon, who tested God to find out His will and purpose.

It occurred to David to likewise test God

– in a “weird way like a child would.”

“If God is real, send a bird to touch this window pane,” he recalls. “It was raining out. When I called on God to touch a window pane, amazingly a bird touched that square. I was an intellectual and it didn’t make sense. I thought it was coincidental. So I chose numerous other squares for the next hour and a half, and every square I chose telling God to prove Himself to me, (the bird touched.)

“I realized the God I had been hating was a God who is real. He played tic-tac-toe with me to prove He was real to me and that He had a purpose for my life.”

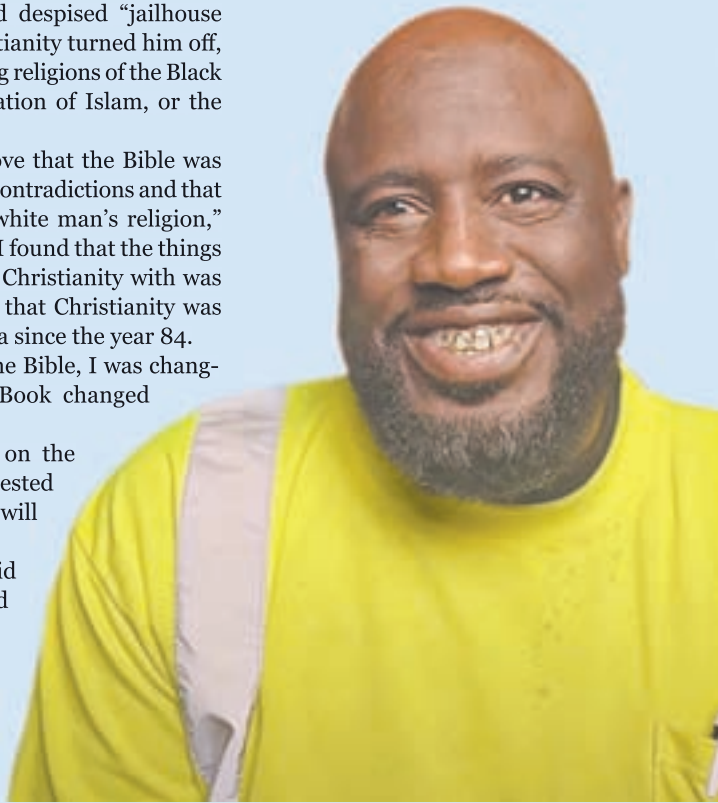
In tears, David pledged to never kill anyone again, but he didn’t fully turn his back on his old life. When he was released, he fell back into hustling to survive. He was in a time of transition in which God was calling him out of the world, he says.

Eventually, he turned away from his old lifestyle. A convict introduced David to a pastor who was a good example of a man who had overcome a terrible past and became a man of integrity and a good husband. It showed David that he could and should live for God.

Since starting church, David has become a beacon of light and voice of wisdom for a myriad of young people. He has rediscovered his purpose of doing good and helping people. He’s not Thurgood Marshall, but he’s making an impact.

“The greatest influence I can have over people I relate to is the power of a changed life,” he says. “It’s the sustainability that God and the Holy Spirit bring. People ask me questions: How do I remain steadfast? How do I stay out of the street?”

“This attests to the supernatural change that happened in me.”



David White.  
Photo: YouTube/  
Manifestations  
Worldwide

**It is my conviction that we have done ourselves a disservice in our prayers by asking for God to take away suffering from our lives. True enough, the desire is understandable... If we take omnipotence and omniscience seriously, what can we realistically make of the prayer, “Lord, from my shoulders, this burden lift”? Is He all-powerful? Then He certainly can do so. Is He all-knowing? Then He certainly will know when to do so. Does the Father truly love us? Then He has, at minimum, permitted this for our good. It seems to me that our prayers, then, should not be aimed at the release from our sufferings, but at a serious and fervent call for the strengthening of our bodies and souls through suffering. When the time is right, rest assured He will permit it to pass; we don’t need to remind Him.**

– Matthew Beal



Robyn has a heart to see people delivered from drug abuse just as she was.

BY JOANNA BREULT

“I experienced sexual abuse early in life – men were my mom’s thing,” Robyn explains.

The men in Robyn’s mom’s life were often dangerous and cruel. Robyn was raped for the first time when she was nine years old. At 13, she was impregnated by a 26-year-old man who then, with her mother’s support, forced Robyn to marry him so that he would not be prosecuted for rape. He divorced her a year later. Due to Robyn’s age, the man was granted sole custody of their daughter.

Robyn was heartbroken. She says she did not want to return to her mother’s home where she might be further abused, so she went to the street and did “whatever street people do to survive.”

One night, some acquaintances offered Robyn a place to stay and introduced her to intravenous meth. She tried it once and was hooked. She was 15.

#### A spending spree

For the next nine years, Robyn bounced from place to place. Often “home” was a motel.

She had three more children with three different men, all of whom were abusive. And meth was her constant companion.

At age 24, Robyn left the violent man she was living with and took her children to the home of a friend. She noticed her friend’s credit card on a table and slipped it into her pocket. Over the next three days, she spent \$5000 with the stolen card. Robyn was arrested, and the judge sentenced her to 27 years in prison.

#### A clean heart

Eight months into her sentence, Robyn attended a three-day ministry event.

She was overwhelmed by the love and power of God. “I laid on the ground for the whole service and part of the next day, just wailing,” she says. “I spent a day and a half under a chair in the fetal position. God was just delivering me from everything in my life.”

When she finally got up off the floor, Robyn says she felt like a new person. She began working for the chaplain, setting up for services and helping with music. She got sober. And she felt shame melt away.

“My heart was clean, so I was able to see the Lord,” Robyn says. “I was able to forgive and ask for forgiveness.”

#### A new start and a familiar trap

After serving five years, Robyn was released. For three years, Robyn worked hard to get back on her feet. She secured a job in road construction and attended church and Bible study.

And she even regained custody of her children just one year after her release.

# Out of the dungeon of drugs

One day as they worked on the highway, a co-worker casually said, “This would be a lot more fun if we went and got high.”

That suggestion was all it took.

“I left the job site, got a needle, and it was like I had never quit,” she says.

#### A weight lifted

Robyn was back in the grip of addiction. Her children, now teenagers, bore the brunt of her drug use and her return to abusive relationships.

“The kids were a mess,” she says. “They spent a lot of time with friends and living on the street.”

Seven years into her relapse, Robyn was caught driving without a license and was put on probation. Her probation officer noticed her bruised body and could tell she was using drugs. The officer could have easily put Robyn back behind bars. Instead, she showed Robyn compassion by helping Robyn leave her abusive partner and check into a residential treatment center.

“I used drugs all the way up there, did drugs in the parking lot,” Robyn admits. “But as soon as I walked through the door, a weight lifted off of me, and I thought, ‘I’m done.’”

#### The need for recovery-focused community

The relapse rate for meth users is between 40-60%. Robyn sees the roots of her relapse in her lack of a recovery-focused community.

“I had a lot of guilt that I could go back [to using drugs] that quick,” she says. “But if we don’t stay connected to a sober group of people and our mind is not transformed, that’s what can happen.”

Robyn spent three months in rehab and then went to live in a sober home, a transitional post-rehab living environment. She has now been clean for two years. She has a steady job, and her relationships with her children have been restored. Thankfully, her adult daughter is even willing to let Robyn live with her.

“I still don’t have a place of my own because of my past,” Robyn says. “I have been out 12 years, and it still haunts me. But God is so faithful, and restoration is true. It really has been amazing.”

#### Giving back

Robyn attests that there is one thing she absolutely loves: volunteering with the homeless. In particular, she has a heart to see people delivered from drug abuse. Just as she was given a second chance to turn her life around, Robyn is eager for others to experience the same.

“I hope to help pull people out of that dungeon of addiction,” she says.

The original of this story can be found at [www.prison-fellowship.org](http://www.prison-fellowship.org) and it is used with kind permission.

# My hele lewe het verander

## Afrikaans translation

“Ek was ‘n baie slegte mens,” erken Jameson Kamenga.

“Ek was ‘n vegter, dronkaard, roker en vroumens liefhebber. Ek het selfs met ‘n polisie-man baklei, en was elke dag dronk.”

Jameson erken dat hy ook ‘n probleem met woede en bitterheid gehad het.

Die laaste ding wat hy wou hoor is iemand wat oor God preek!

Dit was egter later dat hierdie berugte sondaar na sy tuisdorp, Kasempa in Zambië teruggekeer het as ‘n veranderde man.

Hy was die een wat die goeie nuus oor Jesus gepreek het.

Twee van sy ou maats van sy dronk dae was verstom!

Hulle het gesê, “As hierdie ou, wat ‘n groot sondaar was, ‘n prediker kan word, dan kan ons ook vergewe word! en hulle het hulle lewens vir Jesus gegee daardie dag,” het Jameson meegedeel.

Wat het so ‘n groot verandering gebring in die misdadiger se lewe? Wel snaaks genoeg, het God siekte gebruik.

Jameson het in 1984 siek geword met malaria toe hy 18 jaar oud was, en hy was gehospitaliseer.

Dit was in daardie tyd dat ‘n hospitaal kapelaan die evangelie aan hom verkondig het. Hy het van Jesus Christus, die God-man gehoor, wat aan die kruis gesterf het om mense van hulle sondes te red.

Onmiddellik het Jameson besef dit

is die waarheid, en hy het ‘n gebed gebid en God gevra om hom te vergewe en om sy lewe oor te neem.

“Ek het ‘n nuwe, wedergebore persoon geword, en ek het ook die krag van die Heilige Gees ontvang, en ek het vir die Here begin werk,” sê Jameson.

Daarna het hy kerkdienste en vergaderings ywerig bygewoon.

Sy hele lewensstyl het totaal verander, maar dit was nie maklik nie.

Hy sê in die begin was daar ‘n stryd binne in hom tussen die ou Jameson wat terug wou gaan na wêreldse dinge, en die nuwe Jameson gekontroleer deur die Heilige Gees wat hom vertel om regverdig te lewe.

Hy is egter dankbaar vir God se vergifnis, wat

sy baie sondes heeltemal weggewas het, en nou is hy passiesvol om ander te help om ook van God te leer.

“Mense sterf in hulle sondes en dit is ons plig om hulle te gaan vertel oor Jesus Christus sodat hulle verlos kan word. Ons moet die goeie nuus oor die hele wêreld preek,” vermaan hy.

Twee van sy gunsteling Bybel verse is: Matthéüs 6:33; *Maar soek eers die koninkryk van God en sy geregtigheid, en al hierdie dinge sal vir julle bygevoeg word*, en 2 Kronieke 7:14 waar God sê, *En my volk oor wie my Naam uitgeroep is, toon berou en bid en vra na my wil en draai terug van hulle bose weë af, sal Ek luister uit die hemel en hulle sonde vergewe en hulle land laat herstel.*



Jameson Kamenga is nou ‘n veranderde man.

## Impilo yami yonke yashintsha

### Zulu translation

“Ngangiwumuntu ongalunganga”, ezivumela u Jameson Kamenga.

“Ngangiyisqhwaga, ngiphuza, ngibhema futhi ethanda nabantu besimame. Ngangilwa namaphoyisa ngiphuza njalo.”

Jameson uyavuma ukuthi wayenolaka enonya futhi. Into yokucina ayefuna ukuyizwa kwakuyintshumayelo ngoNkulunkulu!

Kodwake, ekugcineni lesoni sabuyela ekhaya, eKasempa, kwelaseZambia, eshintshile.

Kwakunguyena umshumayeli ngoJesu.

Abahlolo bakhe ababili ababephuza naye basala bemangele!

“Bathi ‘uma lendoda eyayisoni esikhulu ingaba umshumayeli nathi singathethelelwa!’ Bazinikela eNkosini ngalo lelolanga,” esitshela u Jameson.

Yini eyaletha ushintsho kulelidlova? UNkulunkulu wasebenzisa ukugula.

UJameson waphathwa imalaria ngo 1984 eneminyaka ewu18, walaliswa esbhedlela, kwaba ingaleso sikhathi lapho umfundisi wasesbhedhela wamshumayeza khona, wezwa ngoJesu Kristu, uNkulunkulu ongumuntu owafa esphambanweni ngenxa yezono zethu.

Ngawo lowomzuzu, u Jameson wambulelwa ukuthi leli iqiniso, wathandaza ecela uNkulunkulu ukuthi angene empilweni yakhe.

“Ngaba isidalwa esisha, ngazalwa kabusha ngamukeliswa namandla kaMoya oyiNgcwele ngaqala ukusebenzela iNkosi yami,” kusho u Jameson.

Emva kwalokho ngaqala ukukhonzisa njalo.

Impilo yakhe yonke yaguquka kakhulu kodwa kwakungelula, uthi ekuqaleni kwakukhona impi ngaphakathi kuye, uJameson omdala ofuna ukubuyela entweni zezwe, nalo Jameson omusha ophethwe uMoya oyiNgcwele kaNkulunkulu ofuna aphile ekulungeni.

Kodwake, ukuthokozele ukuthethelelwa uNkulunkulu, okwamuhlanza kuzo zonke izono zakhe unentshisakalo yokufundisa abantu ngoNkulunkulu.

“Abantu bafela ezonweni zabo kungumsebenzi wethu ukuthi sibatshele ngoJesu Kristu ukuze basindiswe. Kufanele sishumayele indaba ezinhle umhlaba wonke.” Ekhuthaza.

Mabili amavesi awathanda ukwedlulela: Matewu 6:33 - “Kodwa funani umbuso kaNkulunkulu kuqala nokulunga kwakhe, zonke lezinto niyakunikwa zona”; naleli 2 Kronieke 7:14 la uNkulunkulu ethi: “Uma abantu bami ababizwa ngegama Lami bezithoba, bethandaza bafune ubuso Bami, baphenduke endleleni zabo ezimbi, Ngizozwa ngisezulwini, Ngiphilise izwe labo.”

## MY WHOLE LIFE CHANGED

### English translation

“I was a very bad person,” confesses Jameson Kamenga.

“I was a fighter, drunkard, smoker and a womaniser. I even fought with a police officer and got drunk every day.”

Jameson admits he also had a problem with anger and bitterness.

The last thing he wanted to hear was someone preaching about God!

However, later this notorious sinner returned to his home town, Kasempa, in Zambia, as a changed man.

HE was the one preaching the good news

about Jesus. Two of his old mates from his drinking days were astonished!

“They said ‘If this guy who was a great sinner can become a preacher, then we can be forgiven too!’ and they gave their lives to the Lord that day,” Jameson relates.

What brought about such a great change in the delinquent young man? Well, strangely, God used illness.

Jameson fell sick with malaria in 1984 when he was 18, and had to be hospitalised, and it was during that time that a hospital chaplain preached the gospel to him.

He heard about Jesus Christ, the God-man, dying on the cross to save people from their sins.

Right away, Jameson knew this was the truth and prayed a prayer asking God to forgive him and take over his life. “I became a new, born again person and I also received the power of the Holy Spirit and I started working for my Lord,” Jameson says.

After that he attended church services and meetings diligently.

His whole lifestyle changed completely but it wasn’t easy.

He says that at first there was a battle going on inside of him between the old Jameson who wanted to go back to worldly things, and the new Jameson controlled by the Holy Spirit of God telling him to live righteously.

However, now he is so grateful for God’s forgiveness, which has completely washed away his many sins, and so passionate about helping others learn about God too.

“People are dying in their sins and it is our duty to go and tell them about Jesus Christ so that they can get saved. We have to preach the good news all over the world,” he exhorts.

Two of Jameson’s favourite Scripture verses are: Matthew 6:33 – “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”; and 2 Chronicles 7:14, where God says: “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

## LESSONS FROM NOAH’S ARK

- Don’t miss the boat.
- Remember that we are all in the same boat.
- Plan ahead. It wasn’t raining when Noah built the ark.
- Stay fit. When you’re 60 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big!
- Don’t listen to critics; just get on with the job.
- Build your future on high ground.



- For safety’s sake, travel in pairs.
- Speed isn’t always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
- When you’re in deep waters, float awhile.
- Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.
- Noah sent out birds three times — if at first you don’t meet with success, keep trying.
- No matter the storm, when you are with God, there’s always a rainbow waiting.

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# 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 21:7-25

#### INTRODUCTION

WE have reached the point where Jesus shows Himself to His disciples, making sure that they know He has truly risen from death.

In our last study, we read how that some disciples had gone fishing on the Sea of Galilee, and in the early morning, after catching nothing, the Lord appeared on the shore and told them to throw a net over the right side of the boat.

The result was amazing, the net being full, so full they could hardly haul it in.

So, we take up the story from there.

**Ch 21: Verses 7-9** "Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is

the Lord!' As soon as Simon Peter heard him say 'It is the Lord' he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread."

At first, they were not sure who the person was, calling to them from the shore. But when they saw the large catch of fish, they realized it was Jesus. It could be no-one else.

Peter was normally quite impulsive and here he was again, leaping into the water to help pull the net ashore. It is interesting to note that Jesus already had some fish on the fire.

**Verses 10-14** "Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said

to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples dared ask Him, 'Who are You?' They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to His disciples after He was raised from the dead."

Perhaps we could wonder why the disciples were hesitant about identifying Jesus when they knew Him so well.

It seems that in the resurrected body, His appearance may have been a little different.

He had previously shown Thomas the wounds in His hands and side, so He still wore the marks of the severe treatment He had received at the hands of the Roman soldiers.

**Verse 15** "When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you truly love Me more than these?' 'Yes Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'"

There was a purpose in this encounter at Galilee. You will remember that Peter denied even knowing the Lord when challenged after the arrest of Jesus.

Now the Lord is giving him the opportunity to declare his love and confirm it.

The meaning of the words "more than these" is uncertain.

He must have meant either the fish or the other disciples because they were the only other things there.

The order to feed His lambs, means to lead and instruct children.

**Verses 16, 17** "Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love Me?' He answered, 'Yes Lord, You know that I love You.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.' The third time He said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' He said, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said, 'Feed My sheep.'"

Peter had denied the Lord three times in front of unbelievers and now he has the chance to confirm his love and loyalty three times.

Peter was to be a leader in the growth of the church which was about to be formed and it was important for him to be prepared.

The words "feed my sheep" are meant to urge Peter to be a carer of souls, the many who were soon to believe in Jesus. He is re-instated to be the Lord's servant.

**Verses 18, 19** "I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.' Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then He said to him, 'Follow Me!'"

This is a warning to Peter that his service would be costly to him personally. It is an indication of death and the manner of it that lies ahead.

The martyrdom of God's people is to the glory of God.

Tradition has it that Peter was eventually crucified, some saying upside down.

This is not at all certain.

**Verses 20-22** "Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at



Stock photo

the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is going to betray You?') When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?' Jesus answered, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow Me.'"

This other disciple is John, the author of the book we are reading. Peter is curious to know whether John will have a similar future, but the Lord is saying that it is not a matter for Peter's concern.

**Verses 23, 24** "Because of this, the rumour spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; He only said, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?' This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true."

It is now plain that John has been referring to himself. He wants to make sure that the words of Jesus are not misquoted.

We know that John was the only disciple of the 12 who didn't meet an early death. He was exiled on the Isle of Patmos as an old man. Here he wrote the Book of Revelation.

**Verse 25** "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were

written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that could be written."

These are John's final words for his book. Having spent three eventful years with Jesus he has many memories of the things that happened.

He has told us of some, but he is mindful of just so much more which he hasn't been able to report.

The claim about insufficient room for all the books is what is called 'hyperbole'.

It means exaggeration but it is used to emphasise a point.

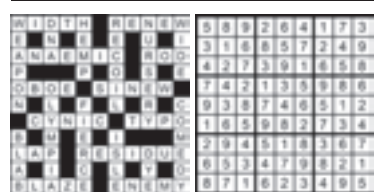
It occurs elsewhere in the Bible and other literature.

#### CONCLUSION

At the end of chapter 20, John tells us why he wrote the book: "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."

John has given us great and wonderful reasons for believing that Jesus is the Son of God and now the question remains; Has the reader put his/her faith in Him, the only Savior and Lord?

We must answer the question. ●



## 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)

<b>OUR PROBLEM:</b>	<b>Separation from God</b> "Everyone has sinned. Nobody is good enough because God's standards are perfect" (Romans 3:23)	<b>ADMIT</b>
<b>GOD'S REMEDY / SOLUTION:</b>	<b>Jesus died on the cross</b> "God demonstrates His own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)	<b>BELIEVE</b>
<b>OUR RESPONSE:</b>	<b>Trust Jesus by receiving Him</b> "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12)	<b>COMMIT</b>

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 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 the prayer [ABOVE]  Please send me:  Bible  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**

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## Being good enough

**THE** great English preacher, Dr Martin Lloyd Jones, would regularly ask people if they were ready to call themselves Christians.

If they responded with the words "I do not feel I am good enough" he knew there was an issue.

Here is how he responded to those words - "At once I know that...they are still thinking in terms of themselves; their idea is still that they have to make themselves good enough to be a Christian...It sounds very modest but...it is a denial of the faith...you will never be good enough; nobody has ever been good enough. The essence of Christian salvation is to say that He is good enough and that I am in Him."

So do you feel you are ready to call yourself a Christian? Remember, not feeling like you are good enough is to miss the point. ●



Fanie van der Merwe of South Africa (centre) crosses the line to win gold ahead of silver medalist Charl du Toit of South Africa (left) in the Men's T37 100 metres final at Hampden Park during day five of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. (Photo by Cameron Spencer/Getty Images)

Fanie with the gold medal for the 100m T37 Mens event. (Photo by Julian Finney/Getty Images)

# DESPITE DISABILITY

Very few people get to compete in one Olympics but South African Fanie van der Merwe has been to three. He won double gold at his debut at the Beijing Summer Paralympics in 2008, in the 100m and 200m sprint. And went on to win gold again at London in 2012 for the 100m and bronze at the 2016 Rio Games. He also won gold at the All-Africa Games in 2011 and 2015, and at the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Growing up, Fanie had tried all sorts of sports and had big expectations but found it difficult and disappointing with his cerebral palsy, so he realised that he probably would never excel. However, he decided he would compete because he loved it and not care too much if he didn't get anywhere.

"That was so crazy for me. When I had that attitude, God came and He turned what I thought of as my disability and something that is holding me back, God turned it around into a blessing," Fanie told Christians in Sport.

Of his cerebral palsy, Fanie says "I knew as a child that there was something wrong with me but I never saw it as a disability." He had always competed with able-bodied children up until grade 11 (aged 17), when he finally made the school's abled-bodied athletic team. Then his coach suggested that he compete in para athletics.

Fanie saw this new opportunity as a beautiful gift from God and from there a lot of doors opened

for him. He began competing in disabled sports in 2003, in 2004 he competed in his first national championships. Being considered for the 2004 Athens games inspired him to try harder. In 2006, he began studying at Stellenbosch University, where he began training in earnest to compete in Beijing in 2008.

There he won his first two gold medals. "I almost got anxiety just thinking about the race and then when I went out onto the track I had peace. God pushed the anxiety away and I could really relax," he says.

As a young boy, Fanie wanted to be a child of God but didn't know how to do that. He thought maybe if he could just live a good life God would accept him, but he kept failing in his own strength. He also had spiritual pride, he confesses, in that he would look at others and think "well at least I'm not that bad" or "at least I'm not doing that".

"Even when I had opportunities to give my life to the Lord, I was never sure [it had worked], until I was about 16-17, I remember, telling someone that I don't know why but I always feel like I need to commit my life to the Lord at every opportunity. He told me it is not about your works, it is about what Christ has done for you on the cross, and it is His blood that sets you free

and gives you salvation. And I knew then I don't have to ever [try to] earn my salvation again, it is what God has done for me.

"That was the first step of the salvation process but although I didn't doubt anymore, no one really showed me how to walk with Christ. Then when I went to university I got disciplined, where someone took the responsibility to mentor me and explain to me that God's love disciplines us.

"That changed a lot of my understanding about Christianity and God as a father," Fanie says. He said when people corrected him, he could not see it as loving behaviour. Now he realised that God's correcting discipline was an act of love,

wanting the best for him.

From the Bible passage in Hebrews 12:6 (... *the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as His son*) Fanie realised in fact that the discipline he was feeling was proof that he was in fact God's son, not evidence that he was far from God.

"After that I experienced God as very near to me. He would walk with me through the highs and the lows. He was never distancing Himself when times got tough, He was right there in the thick of it with me. I could really run to Him in those

times when I felt a lot of despair," Fanie relates.

Even right from the start at the 2008 Beijing Games, he remembers God intervening for him when, during the 200m, his legs started going into spasm, and God gave him the strength to carry on and get over the line first.

At the London Games in 2012, Fanie went into the 200m race very confident with a lot of expectation resting on him as the world record holder at the time. Up until the last 50 metres he was in front but then five people passed him before the finish line and it felt as if his whole world had imploded. "I went back to my room that night and I felt God say to me, 'Fanie, I love you because you are my son, and not because you can win medals. And I'm proud of you.' All my years I had tried to

perform to get acceptance and to be someone, and now I didn't have anything to give to give God except my worship. And I spent the next three days just worshipping Him and God really restored me through that."

On the final day, when Fanie ran the 100m, he successfully defended his title, knowing that his identity and God's love for him did not rest on the race's outcome.

"My first identity is as a son of God," he declares, "then is my identity as a sportsman. I start everything with Jesus."

Fanie and his brother Chris now run a Christian non-profit called Inspired 2 Become, focusing on alternative action sports and athletes with disabilities, and Fanie also coaches visually and intellectually impaired children. •

“ I experienced God as very near to me. ”

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