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THE GOOD NEWS PAPER

Military Edition

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How I became a soldier

BY TCM, 1917 (ABRIDGED)

AT THE AGE of 15 I had a great desire to become a soldier, but on trying to enlist in the 4th/60th Rifles at Dublin was told that being under age special permission from the Horse Guards was necessary, and that before it could be applied for I must first obtain my parents' consent in writing, produce a good character, and pass the medical.

Having satisfied the regimental authorities on these points the necessary permission was at once applied for; but as it had not arrived within a week's time, and the regiment was under orders to proceed to Fermoy, it was decided at the last moment to smuggle me there in soldier's clothes.

So I borrowed a bugler boy's suit, and in a few minutes was dressed in it, looking "every inch a soldier." But I was not a soldier – wearing soldiers' clothes did not make a soldier of me.

As we marched from Ship Street Barracks to King's Bridge Station that morning, I did my best to look and feel like a soldier. But trying to look and feel like a soldier did not make a soldier of me.

In fact the more I looked like a soldier the more I deceived others, and the more I felt like a soldier the more I deceived myself; and the amount of confidence I had in my looks and feelings can be judged by the fact that at the station I trembled lest the railway officials should count the men and find me out.

> **"Wearing soldiers' clothing did not make a soldier of me."**

However, to my great relief, the train soon moved off, and in a few hours, we reached Fermoy, where the Sergeant-Major at once told me to take off my "borrowed feathers," so that I was no longer able to deceive myself or others.

Several days passed at Fermoy without the arrival of the longed-for permission, and I began to fear that it would not be granted; but at last one morning the Sergeant-Major met me on the barrack square and said, "Well, lad, we have permission to enlist you at last. Are you still willing to enlist?"

On assuring him that I was, he took a shilling out of his pocket, and held it towards me; but I was so bewildered by the suddenness of the event that I stood looking at the shilling for a few moments, but was soon brought to my senses by hearing him shout, "Take it lad; if you want it."

Immediately I stretched forth my hand and took the shilling, and the next moment he said, "Now, lad, you are as much a soldier as I am."

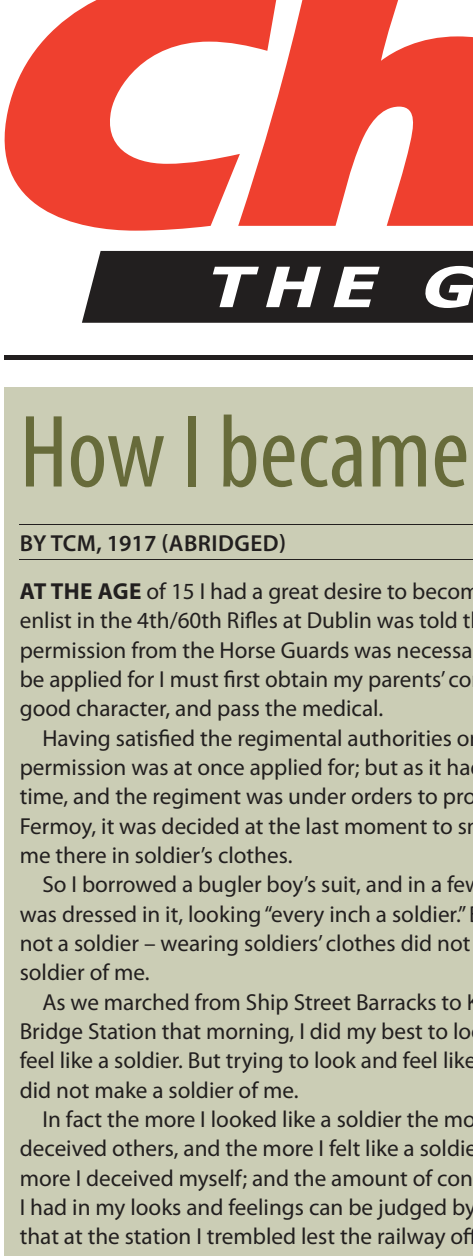
Never shall I forget the joy with which I walked across the barrack square that morning.

I was a soldier and knew it. How did I become a soldier? Not by obtaining my parents' consent, producing a good character, passing the doctor, or even by obtaining special permission, but by "taking the shilling."

That was how I became a soldier. And how did I know that I was a soldier? I had the testimony of the Sergeant-Major (the best authority in the regiment) that I was as much a soldier as he. Taking the shilling made me a soldier. Believing the Sergeant-Major made me know that I was a soldier.

A few years later I had a desire to join another army. I longed to become a soldier of Jesus Christ. This time I was not asked to obtain my parents' consent, or it would have been willingly given.

Nor was I asked to produce a good character, or it could not have been produced (see Romans 3:10). Nor was I required to pass the medical; for if, like the dying thief, I had come to Jesus with the end of a misspent life, I should still have been welcome (see Luke 23:39-43).



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Turn to page 2

A NEW FOCUS

When Chantell Thompson, 36, thinks back to what inspired her to join the Navy it began with her mom.

Raised in a single parent home, Chantell's mother was in the army.

"That partly drove my ambition to serve my country," she told Challenge News. So why did she go into the Navy rather than the Army? One simple reason: the uniforms.

"The camos did not attract me!" she said. "The Navy's variety of beautiful uniforms is what bowled me over.

"I was accepted to join the Navy at 21. I wanted to see the world and explore all the options available to me and to one day be a captain of a ship."

But over the years her focus changed.

"I realised that my heart is in leading people to love. God guided me through the years to become who I am today, and helped me through my studies to complete it so I can live out my calling as a chaplain, and I believe He will be there to guide me as I serve in that capacity as well."

Leading seaman Chantell Thompson joined the SA Navy 15 years ago. LEFT: Chantell with her family.

Now a leading seaman, Chantell's faith is something that has flourished since she joined the SA Navy 15 years ago. She said she and her family went to church most Sundays growing up but she didn't have a relationship with Jesus.

"I knew certain aspects of God. [I thought] He punishes you when you're bad and rewards you when you're good. I saw Him as an authority, but never as Father. We knew very little of spiritual things, as I was never introduced to the Holy Spirit, or it was never preached to us. We had a very dusty Bible."

> **"They spoke about a forgiveness I didn't understand."**

Chantell's faith became real to her about seven years ago after a friend invited her to church. Prior to this she had been suffering with depression and felt she had hit rock bottom.

"I had completely lost my identity," Chantell shared.

"My value in myself was so depleted that weekends drinking with my friends became my highlight. But depression hit me so hard and I found consolation in going out drinking mid-week just to get through and not sit at home alone. I felt nothing for consequences and had no regard for my own wellbeing, filling my glass became more important than my heart."

Then tragedy struck. "I had been assaulted in a moment of weakness and was unable to help myself. I realised that where I was in life was not living. The realisation of having lost my way brought me to a final depression."

It was then she began attending church with her friend.

"At the church service they spoke about a forgiveness I didn't understand. I couldn't comprehend that that forgiveness could also be for me, so I was intrigued and I kept going back to the church to learn.

"Months of crying, learning to hug and trust people and continued praying is what led me to a relationship with God.

Turn to page 3

The battle for faith

In March 1996, Major Emil Constantin was about to become chief of the Laboratory of Psychology when his life took a tragic turn.

A routine blood test showed that the Romanian officer had acute and incurable leukaemia. "Major, the diagnosis is beyond doubt," the doctor said in a voice that left no doubt he was delivering a death sentence. "In Romania this disease cannot be cured."

Almost overnight Emil's career prospects, once so bright, changed forever.

Emil was a lifelong military man whose story is told in *The Shield of Faith Christian Biographies*. Graduating from military high school in 1977, he worked his way up the ranks to become company commander of the tank regiment.

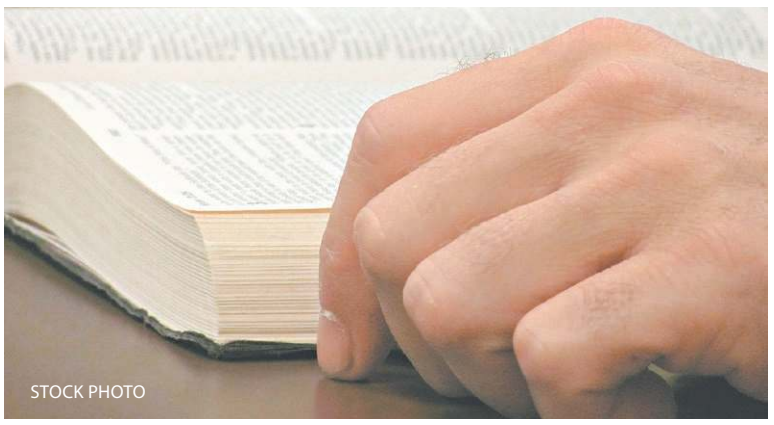
He recalled his childhood as being fairly happy, and that his godly mother and grandmother brought him regularly to the village church.

However, in high school he said he was "inoculated with the poison of unbelief, because of the communist education system and the lack of prayer, reading of the Bible, the church".

That led to him becoming an atheist for the next 20 years – until one Saturday afternoon in 1992, when he read a magazine article titled Insights into the paranormal.

"I was alone in my room, reading this magazine," he wrote in The *Shield of Faith*.

"At one point, suddenly I realized that the world is not only matter but also spirit. At that moment, I recognized and I exclaimed aloud:


STOCK PHOTO

'It means that there is a God!'

"An explosion of light, happiness and joy swept my whole being. Tears ran down my cheeks."

For the first time in 20 years, he fell to his knees and prayed. "O Lord my God, please forgive me. You've always loved me and I turned away. Forgive me.

"I know that Your blood shed on the cross will cleanse me. Thank You. Lord, I do not deserve You. I want to love You until the end of my days and I want to obey Your Word. Amen!"

Excitedly he grabbed a Bible – the Bible his mother had given him when he turned 13. The Bible he used to teach his officers that God did not exist.

"But now I was embracing it as a mother comforts her child. Though as a child I did not continue that special relation that existed between me and God, now I understood that this is the last chance... to restore my connection to God who created and loved me so much that He gave His only begotten Son to die for my sins.

"For 20 years day after day, night after night, my mother's and grandmother's hands joined together and have struggled in prayer for me. After 20 years He... returned me from the night of sin and put me on the bright path of faith."

Following this encounter, Emil surrendered his life to God. "My heart's desire was to be a servant of God," he said.

In 1997, he attended the Baptist Theological Institute in Bucharest and from 1999 to his death in June 2004 served as Romania's first military chaplain.

He told *Shield of Faith* he initially struggled with his illness and wondered why he was going to die so soon when he had plans to serve God for a longer time.

"I said to God, 'What hurts me is that You do not give me the grace to continue to serve You here on earth, where I've scoffed and I denied You."

He worried for his wife and two daughters as well, but ultimately found peace in realising that God could take care of them far better than he could. "You are their strength Lord, not me.

"Anyway, Thy will be done, because only you know what is best for me and my family. I accept your will. Forgive me that I cannot gladly accept it, like all the blessings that I have received from you."

He also saw the change in his career plans through the eyes of faith. "My dear fellows, a man's life cannot be reduced to his profession.

"Even if the profession may be a passion, do not you think that it is worthwhile to have a clear understanding on some more important issues like life and death?

"Eventually, regardless of rank, position or social status, we are leaving this world. The world will go on. Our name will be mentioned increasingly rarely, even in the family.

"The life on the earth is so short.

"Look upon God as you are, now that you have this opportunity! If indeed there is a God, what kind of relationship is there between me and Him? And if you do not enjoy communion with God, it means that your life is in vain."

Article from The Shield of Faith Christian Biographies 2nd edition revised and extended. Editor: Chaplain Gabi Gheorghiaș.

How I became a soldier

● From page 1

Nor yet was special permission necessary, for God "*commands all men everywhere to repent*" (Acts 17:30). And as to keeping a poor anxious sinner waiting, I have learned that God is more eager to save the poor sinner than the sinner is to be saved. God says, "*Come now*" (Isaiah 1:18).

But, like many others, while believing that the sinner was saved by grace, yet I had a lurking thought that the sinner had to supplement that grace by his own works in order to obtain that salvation. Just as I put off my civilian clothes and put on soldier's uniform before I was a soldier, so I divested myself of my worldly attire and invested myself with Christian garments before I was a Christian. I renounced everything I thought to be inconsistent with Christianity, and adopted everything I thought had any semblance of Christianity about it.

And all this time I was not a Christian, I was trying to be one, and at times I really felt and believed that I was one. But all this did not make a Christian of me. At times I felt hopelessly lost, and these feelings of depression became more frequent and more pronounced as time went on.

But the darkest hour is the one before the dawn. God, in His great mercy, was only leading me to value that "great salvation" which He was about to show me, by leading me "*out of darkness into His marvellous light*" (1 Peter 2:9) in a very simple but remarkable way.

In 1885 I was on detachment duty at Chirat, a small hill station in the north of India. One evening a number of Christians met in the church tent for prayer. That day I had been terribly tried, and had almost decided not to go to the meetings anymore; but as I thought of the effect my giving up would probably have on the weaker ones, who looked up to me as a kind of leader, I determined to make one more try for their sakes.

I suddenly burst out into an agony of prayer, in which I pleaded with God to save me, and give me the assurance of salvation, of which I had heard others speak with such joy. Suddenly I found myself repeating those beautiful lines of the hymn *There is Life for a Look at the Crucified One*,

"Then take with rejoicing from Jesus at once,
The life everlasting He gives;
And know with assurance, thou never canst die,
Since Jesus thy righteousness lives."

In a moment I could see where I had been wrong for years; that just as I had stood looking at the shilling in the Sergeant-Major's hand, so I had been looking at and working for the salvation which God was offering me as a free gift, and that in that verse which I had just quoted He was saying just what the Sergeant-Major had said to me, "Take it, lad, if you want it."

Immediately I stretched forth the hand of faith, and said, "Lord Jesus! I take at once as a free gift the life everlasting that You are offering me; and I know with assurance that I shall never die as long as You live." The next moment I rose from my knees, the conscious possessor of God's full, free, and everlasting salvation; and though over 30 years have since elapsed I have never for one moment lost the assurance of it.

Never shall I forget the joy with which I walked across the camp square that night. I was saved and knew it. How did I get saved? "*Not by works of righteousness which I had done*" (Titus 3:5). Not by giving up everything that was bad, and by going in for everything that was good, though all this proved that I was in earnest, but by taking eternal life as a free gift from God. And how did I know that I was saved? By believing the Word of God (the only authority on the subject) that "*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life*" (John 3:36).

Let me ask you, "Have you made any provision for your own future?" Listen to what Jesus has to say on that point: "*If you do not believe that I am He, you will indeed die in your sins*" (John 8:24). If ever you are to join the army of Christ in Heaven you must first join it on Earth. Enlist under the banner of Jesus now, and make sure that you are in His army now, and then you will be in it for time and eternity.

God says, "*Let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.*" (Revelation 22:17).

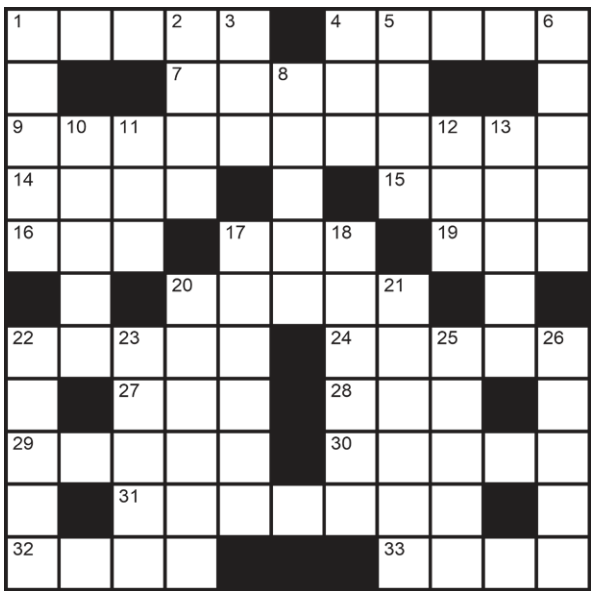
What have you got to do? "Take it, lad, if you want it."

Just say, "*I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord*" (Psalm 116:13). ●

This is an abridged version of an article which appeared in The Gospel Messenger: Volume 32 (1917).

Coffee Break

CROSSWORD & SUDOKU



ACROSS

1 Waldorf salad fruit
4 Once and once again
7 Gung-ho
9 Upkeep, regular repairs
14 Ain't right?
15 Dispense liquid
16 Can for food
17 Volcanic fallout
19 Have a go at
20 Ciabatta or naan
22 A flu symptom
24 Pool contents
27 Get older
28 "____ we there yet?"
29 Desert sight
30 Europe's "boot"
31 Logbook listings
32 Jettison
33 Card game start

DOWN

1 Fess up
2 Gave temporarily
3 Chow down
4 Jack's inferior
5 Tin foil, e.g.
6 Worth ____ penny
8 Honkers
10 Onstage whisper
11 Road trip lodging
12 "Believe it or ___"
13 Bend; arc
17 Nab
18 US islands state
20 Starts out
21 Made sudden moves
22 Stay above water
23 Flower holders
25 Poke fun at
26 Palace dweller

SOLUTIONS PAGE 7

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Smile files...

Green Vine Snake, Costa Rica / gettyimages

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Navy SEAL transformed

BY RUDEE BECERRA

Before Remi Adeleke was a famous actor, he was a Navy SEAL. And before he was a Navy SEAL, he was a drug dealer in the Bronx.

God brought about an incredible transformation in the life of the Transformers star.

Remi's life spiraled downward after his father died in 1987. He had immigrated to New York from Nigeria with his family when he was five. Without a father's love and guidance, he was left to himself. He liked movies, but the message to black men was mostly negative.

"It said you're a young African American male you need to be a hustler, or you need to be a thug or a player," he says on an "I am Second" video.

Accordingly, he fell into stealing, running scams and dealing drugs as a young person in the Bronx.

But if movies hastened his journey into the "valley of the shadow of death," movies also brought him through. When he watched *Bad Boys*, he saw black men who were heroes, not thugs. He began to reimagine his self-image.

Then he watched *The Rock* by Michael Bay about Navy SEALs that lived heroic lives, running, gunning and saving the day.

"I was just blown away at this portrayal of men who were coming out of the water and going into this place to go sacrifice themselves and save others," he says. "It really resonated and I thought if I was to ever turn my life around, that's what I would do."

A drug deal that went bad provided the spark to turn his life around. At age 19, he joined the military with the goal of becoming a Navy SEAL. There was one snag to his freshly forged ambition: he didn't know how to swim.

He worked his bum off through boot camp, learned to swim, and qualified for SEAL training.

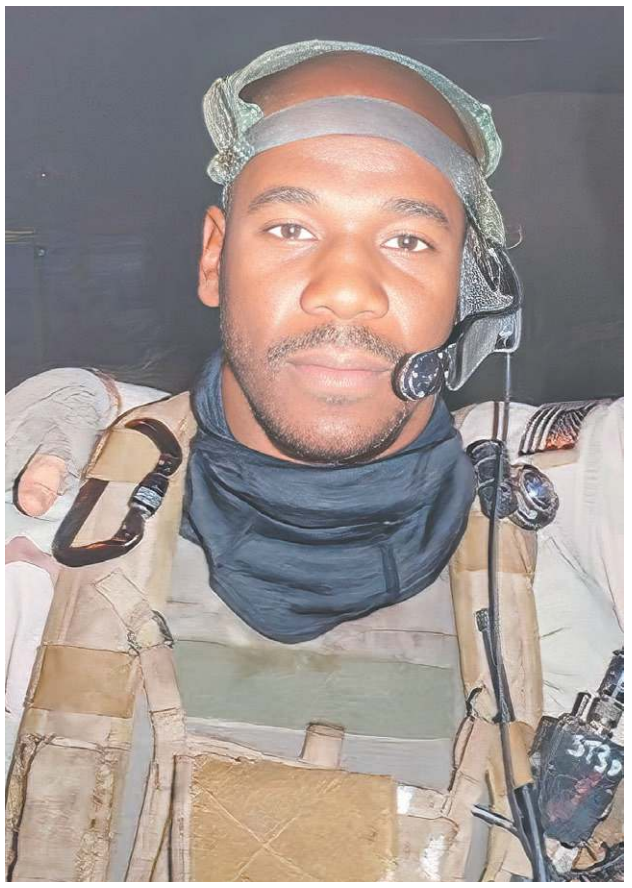
"When I wanted something, I would literally run through walls to get it," he says.

He had reinvented himself, and he loved Remi 2.0.

"There's not many jobs where you can get paid to jump out of planes and go after bad guys and protect those who couldn't protect themselves — essentially be that guy who stood in the face of bullies and said not on my watch."

During cold weather survival training in Alaska in 2008, he found a measure of solitude that caused him to think about his journey.

"While I would walk through this wilderness, I really had time to reflect upon myself in the silence because it was completely silent out there," he says. "I began to think about how I treated my mom, how I treated people I claimed I loved, and I would think about things that I did in the past. I still yearned for that paternal presence. I couldn't really sleep and then I began having suicidal thoughts.



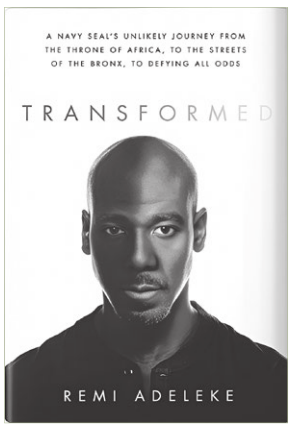
Remi Adeleke in his Navy SEAL days.

"I was at the lowest point I had ever been in my entire life," he says. "I didn't know anything about the Bible. But by a simple act of faith, I literally began to cry out to Jesus; 'Help me, Jesus. Help me.'"

He started hanging out with Christians, ones "who didn't just read the Bible but actually lived the Bible," he says.

Change was happening in his heart. "I started praying. All I wanted to do was be with Him and do for Him and forsake that life I used to live," he says. "I just wanted to live my new life with Him."

Remi surrendered his life to Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and was born again.



Remi's book about his life, Transformed.

After 13 years in the military, he decided God wanted him to move on. So in 2013, he transferred to the Army Reserves, and one year later, he became a full-fledged civilian.

At first, he didn't know how he would pay his bills. He tried public speaking and thought that his background in the Seals would provide bountiful opportunities to make a living. But there weren't any phone calls asking him to speak.

With only six months of savings, "I began to get very nervous," he remembers. His wife was pregnant. "We were just barely scraping through. We were living paycheck to paycheck."

The pressures were mounting and the marriage skills were limited — so much so that they very nearly divorced.

"I got so frustrated," he says. "When things didn't work out, I got mad at God: 'Did I hear you wrong? Was I supposed to get out of the military?' God was silent."

Then out of the blue he received a phone call from a casting agent who had given him a one-day gig years earlier as an extra. She wanted him to work on the *Transformers* filming. She needed him the next day. He so impressed his directors with his work that they upgraded him to a principal role.

The director was Michael Bay, the same one who inspired him years earlier to become a SEAL!

"Looking at my story, going from the Bronx to the military, special operations, out of that, into marriage, being a husband, being a father, and now having a career in acting in the film industry, if there's one word I could sum it up with, it's 'God,'" Remi says. "He's been with me throughout my entire life. He's seen the good, bad and the ugly. And He's used it all to bring me to where I am today."

> **"His plan is better than any plan I could ever have."**

Remi remains happily married and the couple has three sons.

"I don't want to force things anymore, I just want to allow God to do whatever He wants to do in my life. If He wants me to get out of acting and get into ministry, so be it. Because I know that His plan is better than any plan I could ever have.

"Even though it may not make sense to me, I know that in His plan is everything I need." ●

This story first appeared in godreports.com and is used with permission.

NUDGE
WITH KARL FAASE

Blind to our own faults

FOR ANYONE WHO knows anything about Christian faith and belief, you would have heard of the term 'sin'. It refers to the things we do that disappoint God.

Sin is a generalised term for a range of attitudes and actions that break our relationship with our Creator.

Yet sin impacts our lives in other ways as well.

It not only breaks our relationship with God but also our relationships with others and with ourselves.

Sin impacts our ability to clearly see and understand ourselves.

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to see the sins of others and yet be completely unaware of your own sin and failure?

It is like a blindness that impairs our ability for accurate self-reflection. It is so easy to see where others fail, yet what about our own faults?

Why are they so hard to see and accept? We seem to have a different standard for people around us than we do for ourselves. We want understanding from others, but don't give it in return.

It is another reason for us to humbly come before God and ask for personal clarity, understanding and forgiveness. ●

A NEW FOCUS

● From page 1

"I accepted Jesus as the one who came to be like me, died on the cross for me and rose again and defeated death so I could live in freedom with Him. I accepted God as all authority and the Holy Spirit as the one to help me through it all."

Since then, Chantell said God, "gave me purpose to tell people of his great love for all of us, no one excluded.

"He helped me qualify with a degree in theology in the hopes to become a chaplain and help those in the same position as I was. He helped me see good in myself and my intentions. He guided me through some trying times of guilt and unforgiveness, especially to myself. He taught me how to love, preparing me for my relationship with my now husband. He helped me heal my wounds so I can help others find healing in Him."

Chantell finds hope in her favourite Bible verse, John 1:4-5: "*In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.*"

Her encouragement to others is that, "there is a place for you with the God who created heaven and earth, the skies and the seas, animals and you, to not only heal and love, but to live life through an exceptional vantage point of knowing whose you are, and therefore understanding who you are. His love is in the here and now for you and me." ●

Ask Y:
Answers to tough questions about God

QUESTION: DOES THE CLAIM THAT GOD IS 'HOLY' HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH REAL LIFE?

THIS IS A great question. And when it comes to 'real life', to talk about God as being 'holy' has everything to do with it. Real life is about knowing the God who made us and experiencing His help to live the kind of life He has in mind for us.

All of which involves taking into account what God is like – which is where 'holy' comes in. It is easy to imagine that God is much like a puppy dog – safe, agreeable and okay to take on – no matter what. But that's not how Jesus conveyed Him. Not as 'safe' at all. That's not because God is nasty, cruel or vindictive, but because of the very substance of what He is. Let me try to explain.

Day by day you sit within reach of an electric socket and don't give it a second thought. Of course you are careful. You don't stand in a bowl of water, lick your fingers and stick them in the sockets just for the fun of it. You are simply happy to use electricity to run your appliances.

But many miles from you a huge power station is generating raw, naked, electrical power. This electricity is nothing like the few meager watts that help keep your hair curled, your model train chuffing or your toaster toasting. No way. If this kind of electricity went straight into your home there would be a meltdown. Everything would be left as a charred blob on the landscape.We can too easily assume the great God of the universe to be like common domestic electricity. Tame. Safe. Manageable.

But those who heard Jesus' offer to follow Him knew God to be like the raw power that comes from the electricity plant.

The ancients had a technical word for this kind of power – 'holy.' God is holy. Pure, powerful and unspoiled goodness. A searchlight, not a flashlight. A forest fire, not a flickering match. A tsunami, not a wave.

And 'holiness' consumes anything that is not of the same substance – in the same way darkness is consumed by light, forests are consumed by fire and whole swathes of land are consumed by a tsunami.

What turns that raw electricity in to a safe power that makes life work better? A transforming sub-station. A go-between that stands between the ultimate power and us. And that is exactly what Jesus came to be – so we could have real life. By His death on the cross Jesus stood between God and us – and goes on doing so. Through our faith in Him we have a way to relate to an all powerful and 'holy' God. To know Him. And to make it possible for that same God to be our strength and help. This is what makes 'real life' possible. ●

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

NEW MISSION FOR SAILOR

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

The thirst for alcohol, the perverted thoughts, all left him the instant Mitchell Collins prayed: "I don't want to be the man I am anymore. I'm sorry for the things I've done. Jesus if You'll come into my life and change me, I'll live out the rest of my days for You."

"When I gave my life to Jesus, there was a dramatic change," Mitchell told God Reports. "The thoughts that I had towards women changed overnight. Before Jesus I had thoughts all the time about women when they walked by. Afterwards, there was self-control. I no longer wanted to think of women in that manner. I had respect for them."

As a lead petty officer in the Navy over a group of men, Mitchell had mocked the Christian in his group mercilessly. Now that he had accepted Jesus into his heart, what was he to do? "I didn't tell anyone that I got saved for two weeks."

The leadup to salvation was a long history of sin and soullessness. Born in Merkel, Texas, population 2,500, into a family of alcohol and crime, Mitchell didn't see much future for himself as a cattleman. So he shipped out with the Navy straight out of high school.

He got his porn addiction and promiscuity from his stepfathers and

Mitchell Collins in his Navy days.

his drinking from his grandmother, a back-slidden bartender. He was consumed by dirty thoughts, knew how to get into relationships with women but not how to sustain them.

"I got started into that when I was little," Mitchells says of being exposed to porn at 10. "I didn't have an understanding or respect for the value of what it costs to have a woman."

In the Navy, Mitchell completed one tour in the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf and spent the rest of his time in Norfolk Naval Shipyard, assisting with maintenance on the nuclear-powered USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier.

That's where he met Freddie Valero, who had stopped drinking after accepting Jesus and talked to everybody about salvation. Mitchell, who was in charge of the group, mocked him and incited the others to tell dirty jokes and drink. He also would deny Freddie's request for Sundays off to attend church.

"I was giving Freddie a very hard time as his supervisor," Mitchell admitted. "I was always telling him he was using his religion as an excuse to get out of his work."

But then Grandma died. Mitchell had spent the last weeks with her in the hospital and watched how cancer consumed her.

A short time later, the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers happened.

Both events shook him to the core.

"Everything that I thought was firm and stable I realised was not as certain as I thought it was," Mitchell remembered.

So one day alone in his apartment, he yelled at God: "God, I'm going to go to hell. I can't imagine changing. I can't imagine not drinking. I can't imagine not being with women. But if You would just say one word to me, I promise You I'll live for You."

Silence.

"Nothing happened," he says. "My prayer just bounced off the ceiling."

Mitchell got mad at God. He went to the refrigerator and grabbed a beer.

Today Mitchell is best buddies with Freddie Valero.

Then he mused on what he had just done.

"Man, I just yelled at God," he thought to himself. "That's pretty stupid. He might be mad at me."

So instead of drinking that beer, he tuned in to a Christian television station for the first time in his life. A preacher from the 1950s in black and white taught about accepting Jesus.

Mitchell repeated the prayer of salvation as directed by the TV preacher.

"Immediately the desire for alcohol was gone," he remembered. "The thoughts about women were gone. I was still single. I still had the attractions of a man. But the images in my brain were gone. Instead of looking at a woman, I would turn the other way."

He was born-again (a spiritual transformation through faith in Jesus Christ which marks the start of a new life), but he was terrified to let anyone know.

This was mainly because he had been mocked before when he once wanted to read the Bible. He worried he would be interrogated and ridiculed.

Also, it was awkward for him to break the news to Freddie Valero, whose life he'd done his best to make miserable for being a Christian.

Fortunately, Freddie broke the ice. He showed up at Mitchell's apartment and invited him one more time to church. This time Mitchell said yes.

"He was as shocked as I was that I had finally said yes," Mitchell recalled.

Mitchell began preaching to his men. Three years later, he was ordained as a pastor and pioneered a church that saw drug dealers come clean and demon-possessed men get freed.

Today, Mitchell is still pastoring with his wife Sherrie and three children in Charlotte, North Carolina. ●

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

Pastor Mitchell Collins with his family.

SAMCF - **AT EASE** RADIO PROGRAM

Please be advised of a new Military Radio Program - AT EASE, presented by the South African Military Christian Fellowship (SAMCF) and hosted by the Durban-based Good News Community Radio (GNCR) located in La Merci, KwaZulu Natal.

The 30 min **AT EASE** program is aired every Tuesday evening @ 18:00 / 6pm on the KZN radio frequency 93.6FM.

For those not living in the Durban area who cannot tune in to listen live, the broadcast is live streamed on the GNCR website (www.gncr.org.za). The program can also be listened to or downloaded any time from the GNCR Podcast found on their website under Podcast, Local Program and under **AT EASE**.

Typically the following slots are aired during the 30 min program:

- Weekly Devotional.
- SA Navy Band music.
- Weekly Christian Testimony from the Challenge Newspaper.
- Interviews with SAMCF and AMCF (Association of Military Christian Fellowships) members and other AMCF Support Organisations.
- Presenter: Pastor Chris Meyer.

For further information please contact:

Capt (SAN) N. Howell - 083 701 3104

Capt (SAN Rtd) Peter Louwrens 083 786 3640

E-Mail: samcl3@gmail.com

GNCRAdmin

032 533 3215

www.gncr.org.za

"The Lord gave the word; Great was the company of those who proclaimed it" Psalms 68:11 NKJV

NUDGE

WITH KARL FAASE

Losing friends

JONATHAN HARLEY WAS an ABC news correspondent who spent three years reporting from India and the surrounding countries. He writes of his experiences in the book *Lost in Transmission*.

Jonathan was in Afghanistan when the September 11 tragedy unfolded. He covered the war in Afghanistan as well as the skirmishes between India and Pakistan in Kashmir.

He saw firsthand the desperate poverty of these countries as well as the hopelessness of refugee camps and the aftermath of human misery from natural disasters.

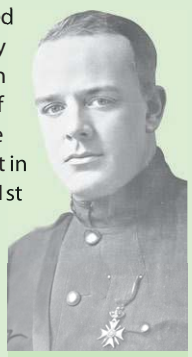
After three years of reporting, Jonathan returned to Australia. He now viewed Australia through the eyes of the Asian subcontinent and saw the safe, prosperous and comfortable life we enjoy. The confronting reality for Jonathan was that at the end of the three years, he had lost more friends in Australia from suicide than colleagues in the war-torn subcontinent.

Life is more than safety and prosperity. It's about having hope and something worthwhile to live for.

I believe that the words of Jesus bring life and hope. Why not look to Jesus today and discover a life of faith? ●

THE SOLDIER'S PSALM

MORE THAN 100 years ago, during World War I, the 91st Infantry Brigade of the US Expeditionary Army was preparing to enter combat in Europe. Because their commander was a devout Christian, he assembled his men and gave each of them a little card on which was printed the 91st Psalm ... the same number as their brigade. They agreed to recite that Psalm daily. After they had begun praying the Psalm, the 91st Brigade was engaged in three of the bloodiest battles of World War I – Chateau Thierry, Belle Wood, and the Argonne. Other American units that fought in the same battles had up to 90 percent casualties, but the 91st Brigade did not suffer a single combat-related casualty. If you are facing fear, Psalm 91 instructs you to not be afraid but to call on God, to move forward and to see what God will do.



American film producer Robert T. Kane (1886 – 1957). He served with the 91st, and this photograph shows his Belgium Croix de guerre military decoration.

PSALM 91

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

If you say, "The Lord is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.

For He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation." ●

BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

The kingdom beyond this world

BY ROB FURLONG

STOCK PHOTO

"ARE YOU A King then?" demanded the governor of the prisoner standing before him.

The prisoner undoubtedly confused him when he answered, "My Kingdom is not of this world."

The interrogation of Jesus by Pontius Pilate on that first Good Friday 2000 years ago highlighted the sharp contrast between the kingdoms of the world and the Kingdom of God which Jesus came to establish.

Earthly kingdoms are all about power and control, but God's Kingdom is about giving up control and living your life in submission to Him.

People who do this are "Kingdom people" and they're beautifully described by Jesus in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-12.

Kingdom people know they are spiritually bankrupt. To be "poor in spirit" means you know your attitude toward God doesn't measure up and your relationship with Him is broken. As a result, you turn to God and ask Him for His mercy.

Kingdom people grieve over their sin. You "mourn" and are in deep grief over the blackness of your own sin against God, as well as the sins of the world.

Kingdom people are dependent on God. When Jesus describes Kingdom people as being "meek", He is not calling them weak people. Meekness is a quality of strength.

A meek person is someone who knows they're strong, but God is stronger. Instead of living life in their own strength, they choose to live in dependence on God.

A meek person is someone who has the good sense to submit themselves completely to God and His care.

Kingdom people long for a righteousness they don't have. Kingdom people, more than anything, want to be like God. They know they're not righteous in themselves, so they ask God to fill them with His righteousness.

Kingdom people have received mercy from God and give His mercy to others. In other words, Kingdom people forgive. This isn't saying they're perfect because forgiveness is a struggle for all of us, but there is a genuine desire in their heart to forgive those who have wronged them.

They understand they have no right to ask God to forgive them if they refuse to forgive others.

Kingdom people are becoming "pure in heart." Kingdom people don't believe they're perfect. They're aware of their shortcomings and look to God to make them more like Him – they understand that being a follower of Jesus is a growing process.

This means they will approach their relationships with real humility by taking responsibility for their own failings and apologizing.

Kingdom people actively work to bring God's peace to others. This is why Jesus says they're blessed. Because they have experienced God's peace in their lives, they want others to know this same peace and, they promote peace in their local communities and the wider world.

Kingdom people love and pray for their enemies. This is the distinctive characteristic of Jesus' Kingdom and why it "is not of this world."

Jesus taught that those who belong to His Kingdom are to not simply love those who love them – anybody can do that.

No – they're to pray for and love the very ones who despise and hate them for being who they are – Kingdom people, followers of Jesus.

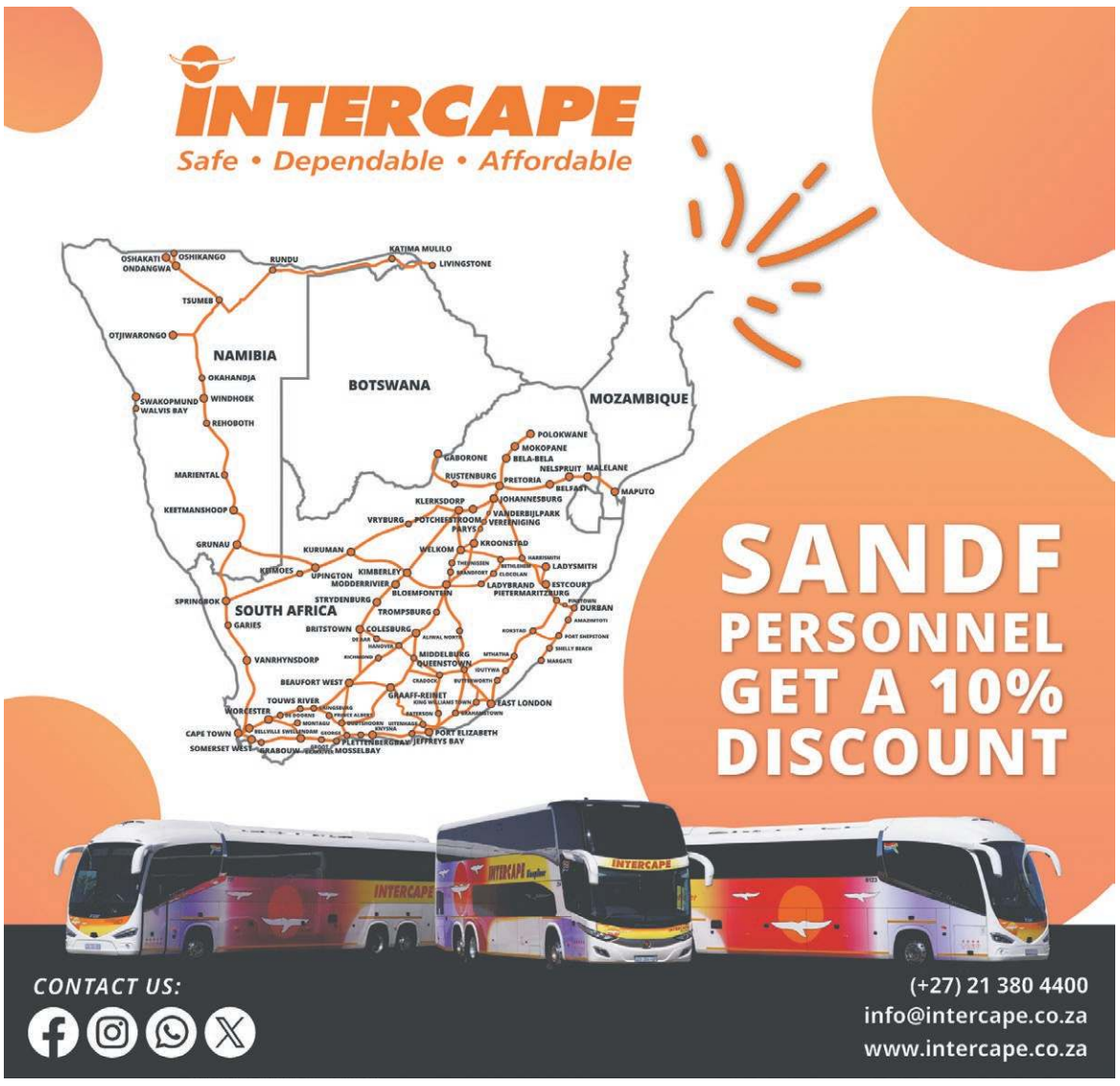
Shortly after His interrogation by Pilate, Jesus was unjustly sentenced to death by crucifixion, the full weight of the might of Roman law being brought down upon His innocent head.

He was led away to a hill, mocked, jeered and spat upon and then hoisted above the ground where he continued to endure hatred and venom being poured out upon Him.

How did He respond?

Precisely as He taught His Kingdom people to respond – "Father, forgive them, because they don't know what they are doing."

And this forgiveness is available to everyone who willingly humbles themselves before God, turns from their sin, and steps into His Kingdom, a Kingdom that is truly not of this world! •



ECHOES OF CREATION

A regular column with Creation Ministries International

Severed slug's slick survival system

BY PHILIP ROBINSON, CREATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

STOCK PHOTO

THE SEA SLUG'S head immediately began moving around on its own after becoming separated from its body, shocking discoverer Sayaka Mitoh, then a doctoral student at Nara Women's University in Japan.

"We thought that it would die soon without a heart and other important organs, but we were surprised again to find that it regenerated the whole body," she said.[1]

After this accidental discovery, Mitoh conducted further research on two species of sea slug, Elysia cf. marginata and Elysia atroviridis.[2]

Voluntary shedding of a body part is called autotomy (Greek 'self-cutting'). It is thought that losing the body is a defensive mechanism in reaction to a build-up of parasites or toxins in the body, which can inhibit reproduction. The sea slugs have a "transverse groove at their neck, which appears to be a predetermined 'breakage plane'" from which the body breaks away.

Mitoh and her colleague, aquatic ecology professor Yoichi Yusa, gently tied a fine nylon string around this groove in six slugs. Five of them autotomised at that groove within a day. The remaining slug took nine days because the string shifted. After autotomy, E. marginata regenerated its entire body in about twenty days. E. atroviridis took only seven.

Both species are sacoglossan or 'solar-powered' sea slugs, thanks to chloroplasts that they integrate into their bodies from algae that they eat. (Chloroplasts are tiny factories that plants use to photosynthesize, i.e. make energy-containing sugars from sunlight, water, and air.) This process is known as kleptoplasty (Greek: 'plast-stealing'). The chloroplasts continue their photosynthesis from light passing through the translucent skin of the slug. The animals can fuel their bodies from the chloroplasts' photosynthesis, because of the way their digestive systems are spread around their bodies.

Sacoglossan sea slugs are the only multicellular animals known to do this. Mitoh and Yusa suggest that this ability enables them to survive long enough to regenerate another body after shedding the previous one.

The researchers conclude that "autotomy in this study is remarkable in that animals with complex body plans can survive even if they lose the main body." Evolutionists must assert that this system evolved by a naturalistic trial-and-error, step-by-step process. Imagine a sea slug that had accumulated accidental DNA changes (mutations) that caused it to cast off its body. Unless it had already evolved all of the machinery and programming required to regenerate its entire cast-off body, it would be dead, and there would be no further offspring, obviously. So those DNA changes would not pass to future generations, and the whole process would have come to an end.

In short, it seems that, like for so many other natural marvels, all the components of the system would need to be present together to be of any benefit. Which means it could not have evolved by any Darwinian process in 'stages'. Such a wonder of nature should rightly be ascribed to the Creator God of Genesis. •

References and note: 1. Massey, S., Sea slugs sever their own heads and regenerate new bodies, study suggests, standard.co.uk, 8 Mar 2021.

2. Mitoh, S. and Yusa, Y., Extreme autotomy and whole-body regeneration in photosynthetic sea slugs, Current Biology 31(5):233–234, 2021.

NUDGE

WITH KARL FAASE

How to pray

MOST PEOPLE FIND prayer challenging. We know we should pray, in times of crisis we feel driven to pray but it's hard to know what to do or how to pray.

Author Pete Greig in his book *How to Pray*, gives a simple outline using the word PRAY as an acronym.

P for Pause. Stop, find a quiet place and focus on your prayer.

R for Read and reflect, read a short passage from the Bible and reflect on what it means to you.

A for Ask, turn your thoughts and reflections into prayer.

And finally,

Y for Yield, enjoy the presence of God in this quiet moment.

Prayer may not always feel easy, but as you Pause, Reflect, Ask, and Yield, you may find your confidence growing and your prayer life deepening. •

WORDS FOR THE HEART
STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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

Mark 1:21-45

INTRODUCTION

OUR last study was the first one based on Mark's Gospel. We looked at Chapter 1, verses 1 to 20. It is a fast-moving report on what Jesus did from the outset of His ministry. John the Baptist spoke about Him, then we read of His baptism and temptation and the calling of the first disciples. We will go on to find that the narrative moves quickly and shows what a great impact Jesus made wherever He went. A fascinating journey is before us!

Verses 21-22 *"They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at His teaching, because He taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law."*

The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week, and the synagogue was the building in which the Jews met for worship. The people could recognise that Jesus was different from their usual teachers. He had an authority which they lacked. The truth had unusual power that could be felt.

Verses 23-26 *"Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!' 'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek."*

The Bible makes clear that there are demons who are active on earth. They are fallen angels involved with Satan. It seems that they increased in their activity when Jesus was on earth. The man had the demon in his life in such a way that he lacked control over his words and actions.

The spirit understood who Jesus was and reacted with surprise and concern. In dismissing him, Jesus showed His divine authority, something not seen before by the people.

Verses 27, 28 *"The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits, and they obey Him.' News*

about Him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee."

This was one of the early signs, or miracles, which Jesus did, making it obvious that He was no ordinary man. He said that He had come from God and signs like this confirmed it. No-one before Him had shown this kind of authority.

Verses 29-31 *"As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So, he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her, and she began to wait on them."*

Another miracle follows straight on after the first. Jesus has power over sickness. It is clear that the healing was not gradual, as it might have been otherwise, but it happened in an instant. The woman was immediately well. We also begin to see that the Lord Jesus was merciful and compassionate, doing good to people.

Verses 32-34 *"That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but He would not let the demons speak because they knew who He was."*

It didn't take long for word to spread about Jesus and His power to heal. We can imagine excited crowds gathering, not only to see what was happening but to bring sick folk with hope in their hearts of a new beginning. How much good cheer this must have created. People all going their way having experienced a miracle. The evil beings were being stirred and losing their grip.

Verses 35-37 *"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for Him, and when they found Him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!'"*

In the four gospels we are told how Jesus kept continual touch with His Father in heaven. He deliberately found privacy where He could speak with God the Father. In this case, He also wanted to have some relief from the crowd who would pursue Him day and night if they had the chance. So, he maintained a balance between being with crowds and being alone with the Father.

Verses 38, 39 *"Jesus replied, 'Let's go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.' So, He travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons."*

We can see that the Lord did not want to get caught up with one group of people who would demand of Him, but He wished to go to other people to share with them. Note that He named preaching as the thing He was first of all wanting the do.

He had a message to spread. It was to do with God's plan and how people needed to shape up to it. God being righteous and people needing to repent (to turn away from) their sins. So began a ministry which kept moving for the next three years. The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) tell us about it.

Verses 40-42 *"A man with leprosy came to Him and begged Him on his knees, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.' Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' He said, 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cured."*

This disease was most unpleasant with skin and flesh being eaten away. It was regarded as contagious though this was hardly true. People rarely got over it, so their case was sad. This man had faith to believe that Jesus could heal him, so he boldly made his move. People kept strictly apart from lepers, but Jesus reached out and touched him. Such a wonderful connection between pure holiness and deep human need. What a miracle this was! It seemed like the impossible happening.

Verses 43-45 *"Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 'See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.' Instead, he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to Him from everywhere."*

We can see the reason why Jesus didn't want the man to advertise his healing as it brings insistent crowds. It is not that Jesus didn't like crowds, what He didn't like was being overwhelmed with people and their needs to the point where He was unable to choose what He wanted to do. In other words, crowds had the ability to trap a person and there is no easy way to escape. So going to lonely places or even to hiding places was a necessity. But even so, there were those individual people who searched and found Him. The reference to Moses and sacrifice concerns a ritual of the Old Testament law regarding leprosy.

CONCLUSION

We are beginning to experience the fast pace of Mark's record. But we mustn't allow the speed to make us miss very deep truths. Reading the gospels raises the central question "Who is this man Jesus?"

How do we see Him? Do we believe His words? What are His miracles telling us? And so on. How we answer is of real importance to us as it was to the people of the day. We will continue in chapter two. •

How can I become a Christian?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered though Jesus Christ

We read in God's word: *"God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16)

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

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

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

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

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

AS A NEXT STEP :

If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box ☐ **I have prayed this prayer.**

If you have not prayed the prayer at this stage, tick this box ☐ **I would like to think about this.**

Please send me:
- ☐ Bible portion
- ☐ Some 'starting off' literature
- ☐ Information on a helpful church

Please send me:
- ☐ Bible portion
- ☐ More information as I am inquiring about being a Christian.
- ☐ I have a problem (see attached letter)

**** Please tick and write clearly ****

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Age and occupation (it helps) _____

Mail to: Capt (SAN Rtd) Peter Louwrens, PO Box 1545, Sun Valley, 7985, Cape Town, South Africa

WHATSAPP: 083 786 3640

Want to explore more?

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

Online Bible - **Olive Tree app** (we recommend that you start with an easy-to-read version like the ESV)	
Audio Bible - **Bible.is app**, or **Youversion Bible app**	
Christian radio station - **CBN radio app** (different channels for all genres of music)	
Christian podcasts and sermons - **Edifi app**	
Christian movies/TV shows - **Good. app**	
Daily thoughts and inspiration - **Our Daily Bread app**	
Advice on specific issues, Bible reading plans and studies for new believers - **Youversion Bible app**.	
The Bible explained with visual aides - **the Bible Project on YouTube**.	
Alpha Film Series on Youtube - an online introduction to Christianity.	
For kids - **Superbook Kids Bible, videos and games app**	
Comic book Bible online- **goodandevilbook.com**	
More inspiring faith stories - **back issues of Challenge News at challengenews.online**	

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CASTING CROWNS

Felix Nmecha #23 of Germany casts his crown after scoring his team's first goal during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Group E match between Germany and Curacao in June, 2026. (Photo by Lars Baron/Getty Images)

BY ROD LAMPARD

Few salutes in soccer will hit home the way Felix Nmecha's "crown down" gesture does.

The unashamed Christian footballer's Revelation 4:10-11 celebration went viral after he cast his crown upon scoring the sixth fastest goal so far in FIFA's 2026 World Cup.

Felix's goal-scoring amplification of the gospel is being heralded as the 25-year-old's signature celebration.

Revealed to World Cup fans during the Germany vs. Curaçao game, "crown down" further amplifies the Christ-centred gravity that keeps Felix sane.

Faith, family, and football

What grounds Felix isn't fame. It's faith, family and a love of the game.

Talking casually with Sports World (SW), the German-born, ethnic Nigerian said his upbringing and family play a big role in where he is today.

"Family means a lot," he asserted. They're close and have been close from an early age.

"Especially when you go through a lot of struggles and trials. When you go through them together, it just makes you even closer."

Raised in Manchester, England, Felix recounted the ups and downs, telling SW, "The root and foundation is still [his] faith."

As a professional athlete, "you try and take all the positives that you can from the different things that you learn over."

Felix Nmecha #23 of Germany. (Photo by Jared C. Tilton - FIFA/FIFA via Getty Images)

Discussing faith and how it played a role in his life, Felix said, "I grew up in a Christian household. So, we used to go to church, not every Sunday, but we used to go to church quite often.

"I always thought I was a Christian. And I'd tell people I'm a Christian. I was just following these things that you grow up with.

"But then I reached a point when I was like 14, 15 where I had a true conviction for myself to really put my faith in Jesus and not just follow a religion.

"I realised how much it is about just relationship with our Creator," Felix recalled.

"Since taking that step, it's been year by year, just growing in that relationship with God and getting to know a lot of the truths and even evidence behind the faith.

"Finding it out for myself and doing research on it as well has helped a lot to strengthen the faith; to know that it's not just a blind thing that I'm following and putting my whole life into.

"I'd say obviously my faith is my main source of joy in my relationship with God."

God, joy and sport

Expanding on this, Felix credited the church and sound friendships with stability, stating, "I'm so grateful for a church that I'm able to go to and in so many different places as well.

"It's not always easy to find the right one for you, but when you do, it's such a blessing."

On the sports world's daily grind, Felix affirmed a love for the game that many lose.

"I think it can be easy in football because for some people it becomes just like a job.

"I'm grateful that I still have that joy and I don't just see it as my job. I see it as a blessing that I'm able to do something that I love every day."

He said the money was a gift, not the goal.

Felix said his greater goal was "to really honour and glorify Christ. It's so much more than just being a footballer.

"I think if you're tied to that, and it is everything that you are and who you are, [just being a footballer] can be very dangerous.

"What happens when your career finishes?

"So, I always try and speak on the fact of not having your identity in football."

As great as soccer is, and as great as being able to play professionally is, Felix said, it "shouldn't be your basis for who you are."

Providing a candid take on his faith, Felix recalled the reset in his relationship with Jesus Christ, telling the Football with Vision project that he signed his first contract at the age of 17.

After an injury set him back, Felix fought off the temptation to wallow and brood. He instead chose to "use the time to invest in his relationship with God."

He now considers the injury downtime as a blessing.

Felix said, "I grew spiritually like never before. I also grew mentally.

"I was always trying to stay focused in school," he explained. And "in football, of course sometimes you mess about, but I saw myself as a good person, a good son."

Coming to faith

Felix recalled learning that "I wasn't good and was actually in need of a Saviour."

This "brought me to Jesus, and just through that time I realised that by my own works, in my own strength, it wasn't possible to be saved.

"It's not possible to have eternal life at the end of the day. I realised that my works will not be good enough because God's standard is perfect.

"None of us are perfect," Felix continued.

"I had a good friend. He was also born again. We were always encouraging each other as we were growing and learning.

"A big part was realising that football is a huge blessing, but it would never give you the fulfilment that you think it does."

Felix then testified that he came to realise only Jesus could provide that fulfilment.

Understanding this, he said, has helped him so much because it's made him see that when his joy and his peace are in Christ, then his life can be constant.

"I can promise people that when you get to know Jesus, you will be fulfilled.

"It doesn't mean that when someone comes to Christ all the hardship is going to stop; it means you know God is with you through it."

The rising soccer star proclaimed: "What Jesus did on that cross, He died for us so that we could have this relationship with Him."

This is also so "that we could know actually who He's created us to be. There's so much peace, joy and just truth in Jesus.

"Once you experience this, your life will never be the same. That's how I came to Christ."

As Felix told Football with Vision, "I was lost. I thought I was a Christian. I thought I was good, but I was self-righteous and prideful, and God, Jesus saved me."

Casting his crown

Felix putting his crown down wasn't without controversy.

The gratitude gesture was misconstrued by some commentators who tried to represent Felix's actions as him "crowning himself".

Correcting the misconception, X accounts like Ballers for God, Christhlete, and X's own community notes, explained that "after scoring, Felix was symbolically laying down his crown."

This was "a reminder that every gift, every victory and every moment of glory ultimately belong to Jesus."

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