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Meeting God in the Garden of Prayer

A Tribute by Paul Hattaway

"During the days of Jesus' life on Earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the One Who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission. Son though He was, He learned obedience from what He suffered" (Hebrews 5:7-8).

"For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him" (Philippians 1:29).

George Chen was the very first Chinese Christian I ever met. In the 1980s I was a new believer in Christ, having been saved just a few months, when the direction of my life was radically changed after hearing Chen speak at a church in my home country. I knew next to nothing about China at the time and my life was directionless. I had never had a single thought of going to China.

I was speechless after hearing the testimony of this man who spent 18 years in prison for Jesus. He had endured horrific conditions, and had not only survived the ordeal, but had emerged with an unconquerable faith! George Chen's eyes shone as I spoke with him after the meeting. He encouraged me to unreservedly make myself available to God, and to consider being a "donkey for Jesus" by carrying Bibles across the border from Hong Kong to the spiritually starving Christians in China, who had been without Bibles for three decades.

As recorded in my biography, the Lord miraculously propelled me to China through a series of astonishing events, despite being a teenager with no money to my name. I found myself in China just weeks after that pivotal meeting, where I was exposed to a type of Christianity that was completely foreign to most Westerners. I recalled my meeting with George

Chen in *An Asian Harvest*: "His testimony impacted me deeply in the formative time of my Christian walk. He had spent longer behind bars because of his love for Jesus than I had been alive at that time. This precious man had learned to appreciate the small blessings of life... George taught me that the Kingdom of God cannot be defeated by evil men or governments. Whatever terrible things Satan and the world can throw at Jesus' disciples, His purposes will not be thwarted. A deep revelation of my Heavenly Father's invincibility filled my heart with faith and purpose. There was no reason for me to be afraid. Wherever God would take me, His plans would be fulfilled one way or another. I was now part of an unconquerable army!"

Friends, let me share some secrets to how a child of God can overcome hardship and intense persecution. This lesson has been learned from many brothers and sisters in China, Vietnam, Laos, and other countries over the years. The first step God calls us to is endurance. The Apostle Paul told Timothy, "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3). However, there are additional steps for God's children to gain victory in suffering. If the Lord gives His grace and power, we can overcome whatever wicked men may do to us, even if our bodies should die in the process. The final step, which requires supernatural strength from the Holy Spirit, is when we learn to embrace suffering and persecution, rather than just putting up with it.

If the Lord brings us to that wonderful place where we only fear God and not what men can do to us, it opens the door to glorious and intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Paul knew of that intimacy when he wrote about the fellowship of sharing in Christ's sufferings: "I want to know Him



Pastor George Chen

and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11).

My journey of printing and spreading Chinese Bibles began 33 years ago when I met brother Chen. Through it all, our Heavenly Father has been faithful and totally trustworthy, as always.

GEORGE CHEN - IN THE GARDEN

Churches throughout China suffered continual hammer blows throughout the 1950s and 1960s, as Satan's fury was unleashed on them. One Christian who suffered greatly was George Chen (Chinese name: Chen Minying), who endured inhumane treatment at the hands of his persecutors, only to be preserved by the Hand of God. He was even given an international ministry after his release from prison.

Chen was born in 1932 to a humble family in Zhejiang Province. The chaos engulfing China at the time caused them to move to Shanghai, where George grew up. After hearing the Gospel, he surrendered his life to God, and

the Holy Spirit gave him a gift of evangelism.

Chen founded three rural churches with a total of 300 members, most of whom he had personally led to Christ. The believers had a hunger for the Word of God and desired to spread the Gospel, which soon caught the attention of the Communist authorities. Chen was first arrested in 1960 and imprisoned as a counter-revolutionary.

For the first three plus years, George was one of five inmates crammed into a cell that was so small the men had to lie on their sides, head-to-toe, like sardines in a can. A wooden bucket in the corner of the tiny space served as the toilet for all the men. George was often so hungry that he ate toothpaste to satisfy his cravings.

Chen's wife and son were not allowed to contact him during his incarceration, and for years he was oblivious to the fact that she had died, and his son had been killed by the Communist authorities. In 1964, Chen was moved inland to a prison labour camp in Anhui Province, where he served

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Die Oop Venster

Na 'n onstuimige oggend van konflik wat baie van my geverg het, het ek kom stilword an die voete van Jesus. En vir Hom gevra: "Here, laat die Heilige Gees deur my waai en met my praat." Want Hy het vir my gesê: "Die Here sal jou gedurig-deur lei." En nou, hier aan Sy voete sê Hy vir my: "Maak die venster oop."

Hy het my gedagtes teruggevoer na waar ons vir ongeveer 3½ jaar naby Port Elisabeth in die laat sewentigjare gewoon het. Daar het die wind geweldig gewaai. Elke dag. Hier, by die Kaapse kus, was die wind dag vir dag baie sterk, teenoor ons grootwoordplek, waar ons bekend was met die sterk winde slegs gedurende Augustusmaande, slegs eenmaal per jaar. Waar ons grootgeword het in die "Ou Transvaal" was daar baie windstiltes. Soveel so dat ons ons tot gebed gewend het dat daar bietjie wind kan waai, sodat die windpomp op die plaas vir ons kan water pomp! Maar Port Elisabeth was bekend as die "stad van wind." En hier was die mense baie bly vir die wind, want die wind het die stad skoon-gewaai van al die rookmis en onsuiverhede in die lug. Die lug was heerlik vars en dit was dan ook heerlik om langs die strand te

gaan stap of draf en die vars lug in te asem.

Hier waar ons nou woon in die "Ou Transvaal" naby my geboorteplek, kom dit tot my: ek moet die venster wyd oopmaak sodat die vars lug kan inkom in die vroeë oggend. So moet ek die venster van my innerlike wese, my hart, oopmaak en vir die Here vra:

*Waai deur my
Waai deur my
O Heil'ge Gees
kom waai deur my
Ek gee my oor
Laat my oorloop
Van al U volheid
Kom waai deur my.*

Ek moet my hart se venster oopmaak en vra: "Kom waai deur my." Dan waai deur my gees die skoon en vars wind (lug) van die Heilige Gees. Dit is ook 'n wind van reiniging, gedryf deur die reinigende bloed van Jesus Christus.

In Johannes 3 sê Jesus vir Nikodemus: "Die wind waai waar hy wil, en jy hoor sy geluid, maar jy weet nie vanwaar hy kom en waarheen hy gaan nie. So is elkeen wat uit die Gees gebore is" (Joh. 3:8). Elkeen wat wedergeboorte deur die Gees ontvang



het, deur hom waai die skoon wind van die Heilige Gees.

As jy dan bid: "Waai deur my, O Heilige Gees" is dit dán dat jy die stille influistering van die Heilige Gees in jou hart gewaar, want God werk deur gereinigde en geheiligde kanale. Dit is dán dat jy rigting kry vir die probleem of krisis waarin jy jou bevind, teenoor boosheid wat jou in 'n rigting wil stuur, weg van God af. Die afgrond oor.

Jesus het gesê: "My skape luister na My Stem, en Ek ken hulle, en hulle volg My. En Ek gee hulle die ewige lewe, en hulle sal nooit verlore gaan tot in ewigheid nie, en niemand sal hulle uit My hand

ruk nie. My Vader wat hulle aan My gegee het, is groter as almal; en niemand kan hulle uit die Hand van My Vader ruk nie. Ek en die Vader is een" (Joh. 10:27-30). Wanneer die wind van die Heilige Gees deur jou waai, sal jy die Stem van Jesus hoor wat vir jou sê: "Kom na My toe, almal wat vermoeid en belas is, en Ek sal julle rus gee" (Matt. 11:28). Dán sal jy in staat wees om vir Hom te sê: "Here, ek lê my aan U voete neer, en ek gee my alles aan U oor. Ek is vermoeid, Here, en ek is belas. Neem alles oor en laat my U rus beleef." Jy sal kan bely voor Hom: "My venster is oop. Laat U wind deur my waai, sodat my lewe U kan verheerlik." Amen.
©Dr JJ Venter

My Verhaal van 'n Klein Begin

Almal het 'n storie. Soms kyk ons na ander se lewens deur 'n sosiale media lens waar alles perfek vertoon, terwyl die waarheid ver verwyderd daarvan is. Vandag wil ek sommer net 'n klein gedeelte van *Gesalfde* se storie deel.

In 2017 het iemand ná aan my deur 'n erge finansiële krisis gegaan. Ek het vir die Here gevra wat ek kon doen om 'n ekstra inkomste te genereer om sodoende ook ander in nood te kon help. Dit is waar die naam *Gesalfde* op 'n doodgewone dag by die werk in my gees by my opgekom het. In die daaropvolgende weke het die res van die boublokkies uit verskeie oorde gekom. Dit het ook in my stiltetye gebeur: uit die Woord het die begrippe "salwing" en "olies" die hele tyd opgeduik. Die finale bevestiging was Hooglied 1:3, "U salf is aangenaam van geur, U Naam is soos salf wat uitgegiëet is." Ek het 'n ongekende opgewondenheid begin ervaar en dadelik weggespring sonder dat ek 'n idee gehad het hoe ek 'n besigheid moet aanpak. Ek het byvoorbeeld niks geweet van ontwerp, verpakking of natuurlike

olies nie. Ek het geleer soos wat ek aangegaan het. My eerste produkte was badsout en lyfskrop wat ek verpak het in Consoleglashouers met 'n eenvoudige etiket wat ek ontwerp het. My woonstelletjie was piepklein (so groot soos 'n dubbele motorhuis), maar niks kon my opgewondenheid demp nie.

Die een produk het tot die volgende een gelei. Ontwerpe, verpakking en produkte het stelselmatig verbeter, maar dit was glad nie winsgewend nie. Inteendeel, daar was dae wat ek werklik gewonder het hoekom ek dit steeds aanhou doen, aangesien dit finansiëel geen sin gemaak het nie. Maar iets in my wou nie stop nie.

In Januarie 2020 het ek 'n besigheidskool bygewoon waar ek 'n paar uur voor die eerste sessie die volgende woord raakgelees het tydens my persoonlike Bybelstudie, uit Sagaria 4:10 - "Moenie die dag van klein dingetjies gering ag nie..." Net om dieselfde woord in die eerste sessie van opleiding te ontvang! Dit het my weer laat moed skep om aan te gaan maak

nie saak hoe klein die treë is wat ek gee nie.

Later daardie jaar het ek deur 'n diep, donker vallei van pyn gegaan. Dit was in daardie tyd waar ek met myself en met die Here geworstel het met die vrae soos: "Sal ek ooit goed genoeg wees?", "Sal ek ooit geliefd wees?" en "Sal ek ooit gekies word?" Vandag kan ek getuig dat die Here regtig ons trane opvang en 'n nuwe lied in ons monde lê. Hy vat die seer en verander dit in vreugde. Hy maak ALLES nuut! Sy Woord is onwankelbaar. "Beauty for Ashes". Ek het toe besluit om daardie 3 woorde, genoeg, geliefd en gekies, te gebruik en om lyfolie te maak en tesame met Skrifgedeeltes te versprei. Juis omdat hierdie drie woorde vir myself en soveel ander rondom my 'n bekende worsteling was, is die idee daaragter: smeer jou met hierdie woorde (die Woord van God oor jou) totdat jy dit glo!

Steeds was daar die gedagte dat my produkte nie goed genoeg was om te kompeteer met produkte op winkelrakke nie.

Maar ek lees toe uit Jeremia 1:7-10, "Toe sê die Here vir my: Jy moenie sê: 'Ek is te jonk' nie. Jy moet gaan na wie toe Ek jou ook al stuur, en alles wat Ek jou beveel om te sê, moet jy sê. Moenie vir hulle bang wees nie, want Ek is by jou, Ek sal jou red. Dit is wat die Here gesê het. Hy het Sy Hand uitgesteek, my mond aangeraak en vir my gesê: 'Ek het nou My woorde in jou mond gelê. Kyk, Ek stel jou vandag aan oor nasies en oor koninkryke om af te breek en uit te roei, om te vernietig en plat te slaan, te bou en te vestig.'"

Ek het dadelik in geloof begin om die Koninkryk van leuens af te breek en om God se beloftes doelbewus oor *Gesalfde* uit te spreek, dit te bou en te vestig. En God is so getrou! Van die volgende maand af het navrae letterlik begin instroom van verskillende winkels af, soveel so dat ek by tye sukkel om voor te bly. Tans verskaf ek produkte aan 18 winkels! Mag jy die droom wat vandag in jou hart is voor Hom gaan lê - Hy is 'n Waarmaker van Sy Woord!

- Oorgeneem

My Dans met God

God wil graag 'n verhouding met elkeen van ons hê en Hy sal alles van Sy kant af doen om dit te laat gebeur. MAAR ons het ook 'n verantwoordelijkheid. Ons moet ons deel doen om hierdie verhouding te laat slaag.

Jakobus 4:8 sê die volgende: *“Nader tot God en Hy sal tot julle nader. Was julle hande, sondaars, en reinig julle harte, huigelaars.”* Ons kan nie net terugsit en dink ons verhouding met God gaan verbeter of selfs begin, as ons nie iets DOEN nie. Dit moet soos enige ander verhouding van altwee kante af kom.

Hierdie verhouding tussen ons en God kan met 'n stadige, intieme dans vergelyk word. Daar is 'n paar belangrike riglyne in dans wat gevolg moet word om 'n dans mooi en intiem te maak. Kom ons kyk hoe hierdie riglyne ons meer kan leer oor hoe om 'n intiemer verhouding met God te bou en te beleef.

JOU DANSMAAT NOOI JOU OM TE DANS

God nooi jou uit om 'n verhouding met Hom te hê. Hy dwing nooit nie, maar nooi altyd.

PLAAS JOU HAND IN JOU DANSMAAT SE HAND

Aanvaar God se uitnodiging en sê vir Hom dat jy ook 'n verhouding met Hom wil hê. Gee jou hart en jou hele lewe aan Hom.

BEWEEG NADER AAN JOU DANSMAAT

Lees jou Bybel gereeld. Bestudeer dit, want dit is hoe jy Hom beter kan leer ken. Gaan kerk toe. Laat gelowige mense toe om in jou lewe in te spreek. Doen alles in jou vermoë om God beter te leer ken.

KYK IN JOU DANSMAAT SE OË

Hou jou oë op God. Moenie op die wêreld en jou omstandighede fokus nie. Ons verstaan nie altyd hoekom dinge gebeur soos dit gebeur nie, maar ons kan op God vertrou. Hy is betroubaar.

HOU JOU DANSMAAT VAS

Moenie afdwaal deur werêldse plesiere na te jaag nie. Lewe 'n skoon en heilige lewe.

KOMMUNIKEER MET JOU DANSMAAT

Bid gereeld. Oor alles! Wanneer jy bid, bly 'n oomblik stil en hoor of God dalk ook iets vir jou wil sê.

VOLG JOU DANSMAAT SE LEIDING

As jy oop is daarvoor sal God vir jou die pad wat jy moet stap, aanwys. Volg Sy leiding. Sy Heilige Gees sal tot jou hart spreek, en Hy gebruik ook Sy Woord asook mense.

DANSREËLS MOET GEVOLG WORD

In die Woord is daar baie riglyne wat ons moet volg om op die regte pad te bly. Hou daarby en moenie doen wat reg is in jou eie oë nie, maar wees gehoorsaam.

OEFEN

Hoe meer ons die vorige stappe

beoefen, hoe makliker sal dit word. Dit word 'n lewenstyl.

EEN TREE OP 'N KEER

Fokus net op die huidige tree. God gee vir ons genoeg genade vir die huidige situasie waarin ons ons bevind. Moenie bekommerd wees oor die toekoms nie. Hy is reeds daar. Met die volgende tree sal Hy nog steeds by jou wees. God is 'n Heer en sal jou nie dwing om met Hom te dans nie. Hy sal nooit jou hand los nie, maar Hy sal nie jou hand vasklou as jy Sy hand wil laat gaan nie.

As ons 'n goeie verhouding met God wil hê, moet ons ons deel doen. Volgens Markus 6:5-6 kon Jesus nie daar baie wonderwerke doen nie, omdat die mense nie in Hom geglo het nie. God kan nie in jou lewe werk as jy Hom nie toelaat nie. Aanvaar God se uitnodiging om te dans, doen jou deel, en sien hoe mooi jou dans met God kan word!

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DUMELA KA TLHOGO LE KA PELO, KA PELO LE BOPELO! Believe with Head and Heart, with Heart and Soul!

DITEMANA

“Moruti, taolo e kgolo mo molaong ke efe?” [Jesu] A mo araba a re: ‘Rata Morena, Modimo wa gago, ka pelo yotlhe le ka mowa otlhe le ka tlhaloganyo yotlhe ya gago.’ E ke yona taolo e kgolo le ya ntlha. Mme ya bobedi e tshwana nayo, e a re: ‘Rata mongwe-ka-wena jaaka o ithata’” (Matt. 22:36-39).

Thapelo ya ga Dafita. “Morena, Modimo wa me, ke rata go go baka ka pelo yotlhe le go tlotla leina la gago ka bosenabokhutlo” (Ps. 86:12).

Botlhale jwa ga Solomone. “Ikanye MORENA ka pelo yotlhe, mme o se ikaege ka tlhaloganyo ya gago” (Diane 3:5).

“Gonne ga go na setlhare se se siameng se se a tleng se ungwe leungo le le bosula; le gona, ga go setlhare se se sa siamang se se a tleng se ungwe leungo le le monate. Kana setlhare sengwe le sengwe se itsiwe ka leungo le e leng la sona. Gonne ga go ke go fulwa difeie mo ditlhareng tse di mitlwa, le gona ga go ke go fulwa leungo la moweine mo mosung. Motho yo o molemo o ntsha se se molemo mo lohamong lo lo molemo lwa pelo ya gagwe; mme yo o bosula o ntsha se se bosula mo lohamong lo lo bosula; gonne se se tletseng ka pelo se tshologa ka molomo. Lo mpiletsang ‘Morena, Morena,’ lo sa dire tse ke di

buang?” (Luka 6:43-46).

“Lefoko le gaufi nao, le mo molomong wa gago le mo pelong ya gago.’ Ke lone Lefoko la tumelo le re le rerang. Gonne fa o ipolela ka molomo o re, Jesu ke Morena, o dumela ka pelo gore Modimo o mo tsositse mo baswing, o tla pholosiwa. Gonne go dumela ka pelo go isa motho tshiamong; go ipolela ka molomo go isa pholosong. Gonne Lokwalo lo a re: ‘Mongwe le mongwe yo o dumelang mo go ene ga a nke a tlhajwa ke ditlhong.’ Kana ga go na pharologanyo mo Moju-teng le Mogerika; gonne ene ke Morena wa botlhe, o humetse botlhe ba ba mmitsang; gonne ga twe: ‘Mongwe le mongwe yo o tla bitsang leina la Morena o tla pholosiwa.’ Jaanong ba ka bitsa jang yo ba iseng ba dumele mo go ene? Ba ka dumela jang ba ise ba utlwe ka ga gagwe? Ba ka utlwa jang go se na moreri? Ba ka rera jang ba sa rongwe? Jaaka go kwadilwe ga twe: ‘Kana di dintle jang ne dinao tsa bone ba ba rerang mafoko a a thabisang a a molemo!’ Fela Efangele ga ba a ka ba e utlwisisa botlhe; gonne Jesaya a re: ‘Morena, ke mang yo o dumetseng thero ere e utlwileng?’ Jaanong he, tumelo e tla ka thero, thero yona e tla ka taelo ya ga Keresete” (Baroma 10:8).

DIKAKANYO

Nako e ntsi kwa dikerekeng batho ba kopiwa gore ba tle kwa pele mo

kerekeng mme ba ineele maphelo a bone mo Modimong. Go ne go reriwa mme go opelwa monate mme ba tla kwa pele mme ba amogela Jesu go nna Mopholosi wa bone. Ba dumela mme ba amogela Jesu ka molomo le ka tlhogo. Se se tshwanetseng go diragala ke go amogela Jesu mo pelong le mo tlhogong. Fa o ipolela fela ka molomo mme tumelo e se mo tlhogong le mo pelong ga se tumelo ya nnete. Fa o lebelela motho mme o ela tlhoko gore o phela jang o ka itse gore a tumelo e ne e le ya molomo le tlhogo fela. Fa tumelo e se ya nnete ke go ikakanya fela. Motho yo o jalo o ne a ile fela kwa pele kwa kerekeng go bonwa ke batho mme e se tumelo ya nnete. Batho ba ba jalo ba akanya gore kereke le tumelo ke dilo tsa Sontaga fela. Kwa tirong o ka se o re ke modumedi. Kwa sekolong o ka se o re ke ngwana wa Modimo. Kwa kgweleng ya maoto o ka se o re ke modumedi.

A lerato la Jesu le le mo go wena le a bonagala? A le bonagala mo lenyalong le mo botsalanong jwa gago? Go nna Mokeresete ka Sontaga fela ke go itshenyetsa nako fela. O fora mang fa o phela jalo? Jesu o bona gotlhe se o se dirang. Tumelo jaaka re bona mo ditemaneng tse di fa godimo e tshwanetse go nna ya tlhogo, molomo le ka pelo mme morago e bonwe le ka diatla le ditiro. Mo bukeng ya Bagalata 5:22 go buiwa ka maungo a mowa. Fa e le



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gore wena o modumedi wa nnete mo tlhogong le mo pelong, maungo a mowa a tshwanetse go bonwa mo bophelong jwa gago. “Mme leungo la Mowa lone ke lorato le boitumelo le kagiso le bopelotelele le bopelontle le molemo le boikanyego le bonolo le boitshwaro le bophepa;”

THAPELO

Morena, Ntate wa rona re kopa o re thuse gore tumelo ya rona e se nne ya tlhogo le ya molomo fela. Re thuse gore tumelo ya rona e nne ya pelo. Re thuse re nne le pelo e e ungwang maungo a mowa. Re kopa o thuse le mo malapeng a rona gore tumelo e nne ya nnete le mo Aforikaborwa tumelo e nne ya nnete. Re kopa thuso ya Mowa o o boitshepo gore re nne badumedi ba pelo le tlhogo le molomo le ditiro. AMEN.

Die Skoonheid van Nederigheid

Die skildery beslaan 'n geweldige groot deel van die Louvre se museummuur - 'n volle 7 m x 4.5 m! Die grootte is indrukwekkend, maar die inhoud trek ook dadelik die aandag. Ryk, helder kleure, fyn detail, kontraste van lig en donker, vol figure in betekenisvolle posisies, uitgestrekte pilare, en 'n blou horison met hangende tuine. Die fokus van die skildery is Alexander die Grote - 'n triomfantelike figuur geklee in goud, met 'n oorwinnaarstaf in sy hand. Hy ry op 'n wa getrek deur twee olifante en is omring deur oorlogsbuit en oë van bewonderaars wat op hom gerig is, terwyl hierdie geweldige kryger Babilon binnekom, soos uitgebeeld deur Charles Le Brun.

In skrilte kontras met enige wêreldse idee van grootsheid en mag, sien ons Jesus, die Koning van die konings, terwyl Hy Jerusalem binnekom. Nie op 'n spierwit hings of imposante wa of koets nie, maar op die rug van 'n nederige donkie. Hiermee vervul Hy die profesie soos opgeteken in Sagaria 9:9, "Verheug jou grootliks, o dogter van Sion! Juig, o dogter van Jerusalem! Kyk, jou Koning kom na jou; regverdig en 'n oorwinnaar is Hy; nederig en Hy ry op 'n esel - op 'n jong esel, die vul van 'n eselin." Matteus beskryf Jesus se intog in Jerusalem en interpreteer dit as volg: "En dit het alles gebeur, sodat vervul sou word die woord wat deur die profeet gespreek is: Sê vir die dogter van Sion: Kyk, jou Koning kom na jou toe, sagmoedig, en Hy sit op 'n esel, ja, 'n jong esel, die vul van 'n pakkier." (21:4-5 OV).

Wat 'n geweldige, simboliese handeling! Wat 'n aardskuddende openbaring van die skoonheid van God se hart! Die God van Ewigheid kom in menslike vorm na die godsdienstige hoofstad, maar Hy maak geen eise nie. Hy verhoog Homself nie. Hy stel Homself nie aan nie. Hy kom om te dien (Matt. 20:28). As daar Een is wat al die eer waardig is, is dit die Liefingseun van die Vader. Maar Hy verskyn in onderdanigheid op die toneel om die Vader se wil te doen.

WAT IS NEDERIGHEID?

Jesus leer ons in Matteus 11:29, "Neem My juk op julle en leer van My, want Ek is sagmoedig en nederig van hart, en julle sal rus kry vir julle gemoed." (NV). Vermelde teksvers beskryf Jesus se karakter deur gebruik te maak van twee Griekse woorde: **praus** ("meek, submissive, easily controlled, non-resisting") en **tapeinos** ("lowly, abase, humble, submissive"). Paulus skryf ook van die **sagmoedigheid** / **neder-**

righeid en **vriendelikheid** van Jesus (2 Kor. 10:1). In die liefdeshoofstuk lees ons "Die liefde is geduldig, die liefde is vriendelik; dit is nie afgunstig nie, is nie grootpraterig nie, is nie verwaand nie" (1 Kor. 13:4 NV).

Ons sien dus die dienaarsmotief wat Jesus se lewe gekenmerk het: nederigheid is om ander hoër te ag as jouself, om hulle lief te hê, en om ingestel te wees op hulle behoeftes. Dit is die geduldige wegkyk van myself om aan ander te dink. Dit is ook gehoorsaamheid aan God se wil, en om Sy wil bo my eie te kies, sou die twee verskil. Nederigheid sluit dus oorgawe, onderwerping en samewerking in.

DIE VOORBEELD VAN NEDERIGHEID

In Filippense 2 moedig Paulus die gelowiges aan om eensgesind te wees en ander hoër te ag as hulself, op grond van die liefde van Christus en die teenwoordigheid van die Heilige Gees (Fil. 2:2-3). Dan gee hy die grondliggende rede hiervoor: *die navolgingswaardige Voorbeeld van Jesus se nederigheid*. Hierna volg 'n pragtige geestelike lied / gedig wat beskryf hoe Jesus alles stapsgewys neergelê het en hoe God Hom ook stapsgewys verhoog het: "Hoewel Hy in die gestalte van God was, het Hy gelykheid aan God nie beskou as iets om aan vas te klem nie, maar Hy het Homself daarvan leeggemaak, deur die gestalte van 'n slaaf aan te neem en aan mense gelyk te word. En toe Hy in die vorm van 'n mens verskyn het, het Hy Homself verneder, deurdat Hy gehoorsaam geword het tot die dood toe, ja, die dood aan die kruis. Daarom het God Hom ook uitermate verhoog en aan Hom die Naam geskenk wat bo elke naam is, sodat in die Naam van Jesus elke knie sal buig - van diegene in die hemel en op die aarde en onder die aarde - en elke tong sal bely, 'Jesus Christus is die Here!' tot eer van God die Vader" (vv. 6-11 DV).

In Jesus het ons die grootste Voorbeeld van nederigheid wat God se Vaderhart behaag. Hy het alles prysgegee, Homself verneder, en ons gedien met die bediening van versoening en redding (2 Kor. 5:14, 20, 21). Hy het die grootste offer betaal sodat ons deel kan word van God se huisgesin (Ps. 68:7, 1 Joh. 3:1). Hoe wonderlik en kosbaar is hierdie edele offer nie (Heb. 9:12; 10:9-14)! Toe ons nie onself kon help nie, het Hy gekom en die weg vir ons geword (Joh 14:6, Rom. 5:8). Indien Jesus sulke nederigheid ten toon gestel het, moet ons as Sy volgelingen dit sekerlik ook doen!

DIE SKOONHEID VAN NEDERIGHEID

In Jesus se Voorbeeld sien ons die skoonheid van nederigheid. Dit is sigbaar vir die wat geestelike oë het om dit raak te sien. Vir die ongelowiges is dit die swakheid en dwaasheid van God. Paulus skryf oor die Evangelie, "Die Jode vra wondertekens en die Grieke soek wysheid, maar ons verkondig Christus wat gekruisig is. Vir die Jode is dit 'n aanstoot en vir die ander is dit onsin, maar vir dié wat deur God geroep is, Jode sowel as Grieke, is Christus die krag van God en die wysheid van God. Wat vir die wêreld die onsin van God is, is groter wysheid as die wysheid van mense, en wat vir die wêreld die swakheid van God is, is groter krag as die krag van mense" (1 Kor. 1:22-25 NV).

Die Jode (asook ons moderne samelewing) is op soek na 'n magtige kryger of held wat alle vyandsbande sal verbreek en vryheid van verdrukking sal bring (Jesus sal dit uiteindelik doen, maar die koms van Sy Koninkryk lei eerstens tot geestelike vryheid). Die Grieke se gode het diens van mense vereis, en dit was vir hulle sinneloos en afstootlik dat God 'n mens sou word en ander mense tot die dood toe sou dien. Maar God het die menslike ideologieë op hul kop gekeer en ons Sy onuitspreeklike hart van liefde kom betoon in Jesus Christus. Dit is dan ook geen wonder dat God die trotsaard teëstaan maar die nederige begenadig nie (Jak. 4:6). Die skoonheid hiervan spruit uit die feit dat dit God se karakter van liefde aan ons openbaar, en dit is totaal anders as wat 'n mens sou verwag binne die konteks van huidige waardes en sisteme. In plaas van die kompetisie, die venynige selfsug en ambisie om altyd eerste te wees, bo uit te kom, en te presteer, sien ons Jesus se oproep tot diens.

DIE UNIEKHEID VAN NEDERIGHEID

Buiten die skoonheid, sien ons die unieke, omgekeerde Koninkrykswaarde van nederigheid in aksie in Jesus se lewe. Dit is totaal anders as wat 'n mens sou verwag binne die konteks van huidige waardes en sisteme. In plaas van die kompetisie, die venynige selfsug en ambisie om altyd eerste te wees, bo uit te kom, en te presteer, sien ons Jesus se oproep tot diens.

Laat ons weer kyk na Paulus se aanmoediging wat tot ons spreek: "Daarom, as daar enige aansporing in Christus is, as daar enige troos uit die liefde is, as daar enige gemeenskap van die Gees is, as daar enige innige meelewing en ontferming is, maak dan my blydschap volkome deur eensgesind te wees - een in liefde, een van gees, een in denke; deur nie iets uit selfsug of ydel-

heid te doen nie, maar in nederigheid die een die ander hoër te ag as homself; deur elkeen nie net na sy eie belange om te sien nie, maar ook na dié van ander. Laat dan die gesindheid wat daar in Christus Jesus was, ook in julle wees" (Fil. 2:1-5 DV).

Ons word geroep om anders as die wêreld op te tree, en ook anders as wat ons vlees ons leer. Ons moet in nederigheid en onbaatsugtigheid mekaar dien, hoewel daar 'n balans is om te hou: ons mag ook na ons eie belange omsien, maar nie uitsluitlik nie. Mag die Here ons harte verruim en ons kapasiteit gee om mekaar só te dien in liefde.

DIE EER WAT ONTSLUIT WORD DEUR NEDERIGHEID

Die paradoks is dat egte, Bybelse nederigheid lei, nie tot onderdrukking of waardeloosheid of veragting nie, maar tot verhoging en eer! Nederigheid is kosbaar in God se oë: "Die trotsheid van 'n mens verneder hom, maar die nederige van gees sal eer verkry" (Spr. 29:23 OV). Dit is sekerlik waar die gesegde in die volksmond vandaan kom: Hoogmoed kom tot 'n val. Soos ons in Jak. 4:6 lees, "God weerstaan die hoogmoediges, maar aan die nederiges gee Hy genade." Wanneer ons in die voetspore van ons Leermeester wandel, sal die Vader ons ook eer en op die regte tyd verhoog.

TEN SLOTTE

Die deug van nederigheid is baie kosbaar in ons Vader se oë - dit is Sy hart en Sy natuur. Die Seun het die Vader aan ons kom openbaar (Joh. 1:18), en hierdie aspek is 'n baie kosbare deel daarvan. Laat ons stilstaan en nadink oor hierdie karaktereienskap van God, en die prys wat dit Jesus gekos het om Homself te ontleed om ons te kom dien.

Laat ons die waarde, skoonheid en uniekheid van nederigheid besef, en in Jesus se voetspore volg deur dit ook in ons eie lewe te openbaar. Sy Gees sal ons help as ons bereid is om deur Hom verander te word. So sal ons meer word soos Jesus, en eer aan die Vader bring - en sal Hy ons op die regte tyd verhoog!

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Sometimes when you're in a dark place, you think you've been buried. But, you've actually been planted. - Christine Caine

Meeting God in the Garden of Prayer

Continued from p. 1
his sentence for a further 14 years.

After months of backbreaking work, seven days a week, the prison leaders were infuriated that they had been unable to make the evangelist deny his faith in Jesus. They ordered Chen to perform the worst job in the prison, daily shovelling human excrement to be used as fertiliser. The massive amount of waste produced by 60 000 prisoners flowed into a large cesspool a short distance from the cells. He later recalled the struggle of those long and difficult years, and how he was often troubled by thoughts that God had abandoned him: "I spent my days deep in human waste, turning it with a shovel to make compost. They thought I would be miserable, but actually I was happy. It smelled so bad that no one came near me, so I could pray and sing aloud all day. If I was not a Christian I would have died, because the smell was maddening, and the stench terrible. But I enjoyed being alone in the cesspool, so I could pray to our Lord, recite the Scriptures, and sing hymns loudly."

To counteract the thoughts that he had been forsaken, as he stood deep in human waste every day, George often sung the beautiful words of his favourite hymn, In the Garden:
*"I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses
And the Voice I hear
Falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses.*

*And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His Own
And the joy we share
as we tarry there
None other has ever known."*

Finally, in 1978, the political situation relaxed a little in China,

and Chen was released from prison and placed under house arrest. Eighteen long years had passed.

When he entered prison, the Cultural Revolution was yet to begin, and Mao held complete power. Now, the Cultural Revolution was over, and Mao was in the grave.

George was afraid that nobody would remember who he was. Most of all, he wondered if any of the Christians he had once known were still alive, or if there were any believers left in China at all. With trepidation, he slowly made his way home, not knowing what he would find. For almost two decades, George Chen had been both burdened and blessed by the memory of his church members. Countless times, as he stood in the excrement pit, he prayed aloud for them, asking the Holy Spirit to sustain their faith and help them to overcome. As he got off the bus in his home area, he failed to recognise many of the buildings or faces of the people he passed.

Then, from behind, came a cry of shock from an elderly woman. "Pastor... is it you?" One of his former church members was still alive! In a typically constrained Chinese manner, the two did not hug, but shook hands as tears rolled down their faces. George was relieved. Now he knew that he was not the only Christian left in China. There were at least two!

GOD IS GOOD!

News of the pastor's return spread throughout the neighbourhood like wildfire, and soon the shining faces of many other believers pressed against the windows of a house he was invited to stay in. Many people were beside themselves with both shock and joy. They presumed the pastor had died decades earlier,



Inmates at a prison labour camp in China in the 1970s.

and not a word had been heard to suggest that he was still alive.

The biggest shock was to come. When George asked one of his old friends if any fellowship of believers had survived, he was told, "Yes! God is good! He has sent His Spirit to breathe on us, and now we have many members. We are so glad that you have returned, because we do not have any Bibles and few of us remember many of the words of Jesus. Please teach us, pastor. Please!"

The Lord Jesus Christ, Who promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against His Church, had done a great miracle. During the 18 years Chen had spent in prison, when he had often worried that all Christians had been killed or fallen away from the faith, God had caused the three churches to increase from a total of 300 to 5 000 believers!

George was amazed, and he hardly slept that night as he tried to take in everything he had heard. His rejoicing was soon tempered, however, when he was told that his wife had died years earlier, and his young son had been killed. The prison officials had cruelly withheld this information from him.

Chen remained under house arrest until 1981, when he was "rehabilitated" by the government and his criminal records were erased.

Remarkably, for a man whom other Christians had forgotten about and assumed to be dead, God opened the door for George Chen to obtain a passport, and he shared his testimony in church meetings around the world during the late 1980s and 1990s. At each meeting, he invariably took time to thank the Body of Christ for sending missionaries to China in the past.

Chen remarried and spent much of his latter life travelling between his home and southwest China, where he ministered among ethnic minority groups, especially the Lisu people in the high mountains straddling the border with Myanmar. He was much loved, and he often drove a van hundreds of miles to deliver loads of precious Bibles to spiritually hungry Christians.

Although he officially retired in 2012 at the age of 80, George continued to travel to China, where he advised house church leaders in Henan and Yunnan provinces. After many years spent 'in the garden' with Jesus Christ, his life shone into many dark places, and had become a sweet fragrance that attracted many souls to the Kingdom of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ finally called His servant home on 27 October 2021, when George died peacefully in his sleep while in Hong Kong. He was 89 years old. *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints"* (Psalm 116:15).

THE GOSPEL MARCHES ON IN CHINA

Despite many troubles and challenges, our work continues to progress in China. As long as the Lord continues to hold the door open, we will continue to print as many Bibles as possible and to equip the house church believers while there is still light, for *"night is coming, when no man can work"* (John 9:4). By God's grace and power, we recently passed the all-time milestone of 15 million full Bibles printed and delivered to the Chinese house churches, adding fuel to the revival fires blazing across that great land. Let's continue to press forward while we have the opportunity!

www.asiaharvest.org



Millions of books (including Bibles) were burned during the Cultural Revolution, creating a famine regarding the Word of God in China.

The Face of Mercy

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matthew 5:7)

A 70-year-old woman named Marinella Beretta was found dead in Prestino, near Lake Como in northern Italy. She was seated at her table in a mummified state when police discovered her remains more than two years after she had died.

Marinella’s neighbours, it turns out, had not seen her for at least two-and-a-half years. She was “loneliness personified,” wrote Massimo Gramellini, a journalist covering the story. “People die alone. And we live alone, which is almost worse.”

The closing words of his article are convicting: “The mystery of Marinella’s invisible life behind the closed gate of her cottage

teaches us a terrible lesson. The real sadness is not that the others did not notice her death. It is that they did not realise Marinella Beretta was alive.”

CALLED TO MERCY

After receiving God’s mercy, we must recognise the needs of others. It’s easy to ignore the needs of our family members who live under the same roof, to say nothing of unseen neighbours and friends. But we are called to notice.

NOTICING OTHERS

Jesus calls us to notice others, to compassionately acknowledge their need. *“When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”* (Matthew 9:36). This is the heartbeat of our this Beatitude - what Calvin

understood as “suffering with our neighbour”, or what today we might call empathy.

“Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’” (Matthew 18:21). Manifesting God’s mercy will produce not a small trickle of mercy, but a massive deluge.

ANTICIPATING GOD’S ULTIMATE MERCY

Forgiveness is not an example of mere benevolence; it is an eschatological act of faith and hope. In other words, by extending forgiveness to others, we demonstrate our belief that Christ will return and mercifully set all things right.

Our salvation enables us to face the most grievous forms of evil

with hope. *“Where sin increased,”* says Paul, *“grace abounded all the more”* (Romans 5:20).

Because God alone can fully heal our wounds and revive the dead, we need to acquire His merciful heart if we are to forgive others. In view of this, Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34). Should we say anything less?

Let us pray that the Lord would transform our hard, unforgiving hearts. Every time we extend mercy, forgiveness, and compassion in the Name of Christ - a love that pardons another of his guilt - we reach forward to His coming reign, a Kingdom blessing that we enjoy here on earth as it is in heaven.

- The Upside-Down Kingdom, www.crossway.org

Joy Is Coming Soon!

Self-help manuals might get you through a bad mood or a tough patch. But what about an abusive childhood, or a debilitating accident, or years of chronic pain or public ridicule? Does God have a word for the dark nights of the soul?

He does. The promise begins with this phrase: *“Weeping may last through the night.”* Of course, you knew that much. But you need to also know this: *“...but joy comes with the morning”* (Psalm 30:5 NLT).

Do you ever wonder if a morning will bring this night to an end? Mary Magdalene certainly did. She had been consumed with troubles. But then Jesus stepped into her world and restored life to her life. Wherever Jesus went, Mary Magdalene followed. She heard Him teach. She saw Him perform miracles. She helped pay expenses. She was always near Christ.

On that Friday, Mary watched

Jesus die. On Saturday, she observed a sad Sabbath. When Sunday came, she went to the tomb to finish the work she had begun on Friday. She knew nothing of the empty tomb. She came with no other motive than to wash the remaining clots of blood from His beard and say goodbye. It was a dark morning.

But when she arrived at the tomb, she *“saw that the stone had been taken away”* (John 20:1 NKJV). Assuming grave robbers had taken the body, she hurried to find Peter and John. They took a look and hurried to tell the others. *“But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping”* (verse 11 NKJV). Could her world get any darker or more hopeless?

It was then that two angels met her, but Mary mistook them for men. It was still dark outside... and even darker in the tomb. Her eyes were tear-filled. She had no reason to think angels would be in the tomb. But in the midst of Mary’s darkest moment, the Son

came out! Jesus showed up. She didn’t recognise her Lord. So Jesus called her by name. Maybe it was the way He said it. The inflection. The tone. The Galilean accent. Maybe it was the memory associated with it... the moment she first heard someone say her name unladen with perversion or an agenda.

“Mary.” Her world went from a dead Jesus to a living One. Weeping may last through the night, but joy... I wish I could paint this scene! The white-robed Messiah. The joy-filled Mary. Her hands extended to Him. His eyes upon her. The reflection of the sunrise in the tears of Mary. And a broad smile on the face of Jesus.

Joy comes because Jesus comes. And if you don’t recognise His face, He will call your name. Your name is not buried in some heavenly file. God needs no name tag to jog His memory about you. He has said, *“See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands”* (Isaiah 49:16).

You are everything to God. What does Mary Magdalene’s story tell you about Jesus’ interest in the needs of individual people? What individual attention has Jesus shown you? How does this promise affect your outlook on your current situation? What are some ways you have clung to Jesus when your life seemed full of despair? How has God used others to meet your needs?

“For His anger lasts for only a moment, His favour is for a lifetime. Weeping may stay for the night, but joy comes in the morning” (Ps 30.6 TLV).

“So the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, went in too; and he saw [the wrappings and the face cloth] and believed [without any doubt that Jesus had risen from the dead]” (John 20:8 AMP).

- Max Lucado, *Unshakable Hope, Building our Lives on the Promises of God*



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Who Is God to You?

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever” (Psalms 107:1 NIV).

“God is our Refuge and Strength, an ever-present Help in trouble” (Psalms 46:1 NIV).

“I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my Rock, my Fortress and my Deliverer; my God is my Rock, in Whom I take refuge, my Shield and the Horn of my Salvation, my Stronghold. I called to the Lord, Who is worthy of praise, and I have been saved from my enemies. The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From His temple He heard my voice; my cry came before Him, into His ears. He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place; He rescued me because He delighted in me (Psalm 18:1-6, 16-21 NIV).

Imagine two siblings describing their father. One child might focus on how their dad is funny, consistent, or loving, while the other might focus on his work ethic, reliability, or patience. Both kids describe the same person, but each has unique experiences that

influence how they view him.

Similarly, all of God’s children experience Him a little differently, which is why some people might focus more on God’s holiness and power, and others might dwell more on God’s compassion and mercy. Either way, God is a perfect Father, and His character is consistent with His Word.

But God also reveals Himself personally to each of us. That’s why the way you describe God might not sound exactly the same as how a friend would describe Him, and that’s fine! The main thing is that we always want to make sure our view of God matches His Word’s teaching.

Because of seeing God at work in our lives in different ways, coming together gives us a fuller picture of who He is. Maybe in a season of sickness, you’ve experienced God as Healer, while your friend has an incredible story of God as their Provider. Both experiences strengthen our faith and help us learn more of Who God is.

The Psalms offer a great example of this. We find both songs of lament and songs of praise, each focusing on different aspects of God. We discover a God who is a Comforter and a Refuge in trouble and also a God Who is the source of our joy.

The problem comes when we base our view of God on our circumstances instead of looking for God in the middle of them.

When we view God through our personal feelings of the moment, we’ll find a god who sounds a lot like us. Or we’ll create a god who exists to serve our agenda.

But when we instead choose to consider the true character of God in the middle of our circumstances, that’s where we’ll find hope, peace, comfort, and joy.

So, Who is God to you?

Finding that answer will likely be a lifelong pursuit, but it’ll be the most important question we

ponder.

Prayer: God, thank You for being both infinite and intimate. I know You as __, and I believe You are __. Help me correct and confront any lies I still believe about You, and give me even more experiences that show me more of Your real character. Help me stop basing my view of You on the circumstances of my life and instead start looking for You in the middle of them. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

- Craig Groeschel, Life.Church

What Humility Looks Like

When you think of humility, what comes to mind? In our world, humility is not something often celebrated. We would rather be seen as powerful, influential, and competent. If humility is weakness, pride is strength. But is it, really?

Pride can feel good, but it can hold us back from who God made us to be. It makes us think that if we try hard enough, we can become good enough. If we’re doing great, pride makes our confidence soar. But if we’re going through a rough season, pride makes us sensitive to our failures. Pride links our worth to our accomplishments, and it prevents us from seeing who we truly are. Humility helps us realise that we are not enough - but God is enough for us. Humility will often ask us to risk something. It might mean laying down our social standing, our reputation, our financial security, our sense of authority, or our expertise. Surrendering our self-sufficiency, surrendering our pride, lets us embrace God’s authority.

When we surrender ourselves to God, we allow Him to be glorified through us. Humility might cost us something - but it leads to abundant life. So today, how can you humble yourself before God? Take a few moments and think what you need to lay down in order to draw closer to God.

- Selected



Karookoepel

**Verhewe glans die sterreprag
In stille lof, eerbiedige wag.
Want soetheid omgewe berg en dal,
laan en heining, klip en wal.
Elke enk'le landskapskontoer -
heuvel, bossie en hemelvloer -
deurstreep met suiwer vredestraal
en onuitspreeklike liefdestaal!
In innige verwond'ring, laat ons bemerk:
die Skepper se onnaspeurlike vingerwerk.**

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RELENTLESS LOVE REGARDLESS

The book of Lamentations is a collection of five poems in which the author, most probably Jeremiah, deeply grieves the destruction of Jerusalem. After Jerusalem's fall to Babylon in 586 B.C., the once bustling city was reduced to a lonely heap of rubble. These funeral songs have a deep, sombre, mournful aura.

The themes of these five poems run the whole gamut of deep woundedness by grief: Aloneness; Judgment; Affliction; Despair; Anguish. If you are familiar with the process of grief you will certainly be able to deeply associate with these intense emotions. To a greater or lesser extent, we have all felt the thrust of that invasive sword. We are all acquainted with the hot tears of

sorrow.

Jeremiah was God's prophet whose warnings about the blatant sins and disobedience of the nation were aggressively disdained and rejected. To their peril. Jerusalem was sacked by the armies of Babylon and its inhabitants taken captive. Yet, amid the realities, "the bitterness and the gall," Jeremiah truly finds a ray of hope. *"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for Him.'"*

"The Lord is good to those whose

hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord"(Lamentations 3:21-26).

In spite of the depths of darkness and grief, God's love remains an ever-present ray of hope. At the end of this painful chapter, healing and restoration will once again beautifully visit your life. The purpose is never your destruction but your salvation, your strengthening, healing and purification.

Beloved, look up! "God's deep love relentlessly breaks through anew each day" says Daily Bread author, Karen Huang. His faithful love never ceases. Cast yourself into His loving hands and receive your restoration!



Helen du Plessis
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Fathers: How To Lead Your Family Spiritually

There exist myriad avenues to become a spiritual leader for your family. I'm going to focus on the 'principle of story'. Hazel Gale, former therapist turned author, has the following to say regarding how your neurology reacts to narrative or story: "Using MRI scans, psychologist Jeff Zacks and his team found that when you read, your brain runs first-person simulations of what happens in the story. This means that on a neural level, you're not just learning about a situation or even simply observing it. Rather, it's as if you are actually having the experience you're reading about. Your brain is processing it as if you are the protagonist, making those choices, taking those actions."

WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

This gives a whole different dimension to the question, "What Would Jesus Do?" He uses a storytelling method, known as parables, to cause us to become more spiritual. He is preceding Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis by almost 2 000 years.

THE BIBLE HELPS YOU LEAD SPIRITUALLY

By reading your Bible and its 'stories', you are becoming more spiritual, because your brain is running first-person simulations. Let's consider a story - that of Hosea. A prophet charged to live out his prophetic calling as a symbol. He was told to marry a prostitute, Gomer, a symbol of Israel, and how they lost their way.

Put yourself in his shoes. As a holy man, or in modern terms, as a Christian, where do you begin looking for a prostitute whom you should marry? Most people would likely be thinking, 'Did I misheard God? He wants me to marry a what?'

THE CALIBRE OF A FATHER

As a father, I want to focus on Hosea. In this prophetic metaphor, he is called to play the role of God. What is the calibre of a man who is called to represent God the Father? Well, if God blessed you with children, then you are of the same calibre.

"You are called to be God with skin on to your family" as said by Arthur Burk, CEO of Saphire Leadership Group. Why did God choose to make Himself known as "the Father"? The day you became a father, you stepped into a sacred office. One the Creator of the Universe chose as the 'model' for all families and one He chose through which to make Himself known. Succinctly, so we can know Him. Thus, we can step into the role of father in our families with confidence.

WHAT DID JESUS DO?

What about the office of husband? Jesus stepped into the office of bridegroom. Through His sacrifice, He saved her (us). The day you married your wife, what was your vow to her? Does it come close to what God declares? *"And I will take you as My wife forever; I will take you as a*



wife for Myself in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will take you as My wife in faithfulness, and you will know Yahweh"(Hosea 2:19-20).

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

What office did the Holy Spirit fill? His role is a great examples for fathers to be. The Holy Spirit is called the paraklétos in Greek, the definition of it being "called to one's aid." As per the Strong's Concordance, this means:

- an Advocate
- an Intercessor
- a Console
- a Comforter
- a Helper.

The Holy Spirit is sent to guide all believers in the Way of Truth. The 'Fruit of the Spirit' (the result of His work) is *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"*(Galatians 5:22-23)

Dad, you are to do the same and

lead your family spiritually in all those roles, ensuring you are cultivating those fruits in your family!

START LEADING YOUR FAMILY SPIRITUALLY

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will"(Romans 12:2).

Renew your mind (as Romans 12 exhorts) by reading the stories of the Bible. Seek the wisdom therein and BE a spiritual leader by stepping into each office that God has called you to as a God-fearing man. Lead by reading about spiritual leadership. Lead by being a spiritual leader!

- Nico Hougaard
<https://manhoodjourney.org/how-to-lead-my-family-spiritually/>

Redemption in the Face of Tribulation

*“For I know that my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;
And after my skin is destroyed, this I know,
That in my flesh I shall see God,
Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!”
(Job 19:25-27)*

Despite the storms that rage against me, Lord God, I will not become embittered against You. Would that I respond to hardship like Job who refused to doubt Your goodness in the face of relentless tragedy and loss.

For I know that my Redeemer lives! You are my Redeemer. You transform the crude sketches in my life into priceless works of art. In Your time, You make all things beautiful (Ecclesiastes 3:11), including my life. Perform Your redemptive work - but give me Your strength to hold on until the end.

My heart’s desire is to be more like You. As gold is refined in the fire, purge me of the dross that tarnishes Your character in me (Romans 5:1-4). I look forward to the day when I will be able to see the changes You have made in my life.

You see the big picture - the forest - while I can see only the trees. Although I may not fully understand the reason why I’m in this situation, one thing I do know: You are good, and Your mercy endures forever (Psalm 106:1). Therefore, I will not give up. I will not allow the hardships I face to dictate to me my emotions and responses. Lord, I rest myself in Your care. I trust You. You are in control, and You know what You’re doing.

*“I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;
The humble shall hear of it and be glad.
Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His Name together.
I sought the LORD, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears”
(Psalm 34:1-4 NKJV).*

This day, O God, I choose to bless Your Name. I bless You because You are great, and Your greatness does not depend upon my circumstances. The problems of this world are mere child’s play in comparison to Your ability to overcome. So, I choose to focus on the Problem Solver rather than any problem. I will boast in You, O God, because nothing is impossible for You (Matthew 19:26). Only You can make the impossible possible.

I proclaim Your Name, O Lord. I ascribe greatness to You, my God, for You are the Rock. Your work is perfect and all Your ways are just (Deuteronomy 32:3-4). For this reason, I place my trust in You with confidence. You are greater than my problems; greater than my sins; greater than my sickness; greater than those who oppose me; greater than the powers of darkness; greater than my own shortcomings; greater than the failings of Your people; greater than the powers of human government; greater than my limited conceptions of how big You really are. My God, You are greater!

My power to overcome any situation comes only from You, because greater is He Who is in me than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). My heart’s desire is that Your great Name will be made known throughout the earth, beginning in my life.

I lift my arms in surrender to the One who reigns above the heavens and the earth. There is no power on Earth greater than Yours. No love stronger. No wisdom deeper. You alone stand above the earth, but You have willingly chosen to also stand beside me.

The fact that You are great, yet You choose to reveal Yourself to me through Your Son, Jesus, through Your Word, and through Your Holy Spirit, drives me to my knees in gratitude. You didn’t have to reveal Yourself to me, but You did. Now may Your greatness be revealed in my life so that others may see Your glory as well (Ezekiel 38:23)!

- Battle Prayers, Michael Klassen & Thomas Freiling

Once Upon a Time

“Once upon a time” is the way all good stories begin. It is also the way Christians deal with the question “Does my life matter?” In a story, every character is essential. Every person has significance. So we say “Once upon a time” and follow with our faith and our doubt, our obedience and our disobedience, our worship and our indifference. All of that and more is part of a story - a story that means something.

Not all stories are about heroes. Not all stories are epic adventures. We do have heroic stories - those of Joseph and Moses and David and Paul. But there are also stories like that of Naomi and Ruth and Boaz. Here the action is very everyday. But all that everyday action - the immigration, the loyalty of Ruth to Naomi, the kindness of Boaz to Ruth, the attentiveness to the Law - all these details are part of a story that is a subplot in God’s great salvation story. The story that means something - and also means everything.

Naomi enters the story we read about in Ruth by complaining. She experienced loss, complained bitterly about it, had her unhappiness taken seriously by the storyteller and formulated into a complaint against God. The verses are worded in such a way that she is presented as a plaintiff before God. This style of complaining put into legal form was also spoken by Jeremiah, who engaged in suit and countersuit between God and the people. He took up the people’s complaints and pressed them into a legal suit against God; the accusation was that God had failed to be just and fair.

Even though it seems impious, even blasphemous, to talk this way to God, the plain fact is that it is thoroughly biblical. By listening to each other’s complaints and formulating them against God, we help one another to become part of the story. We don’t always have to be on God’s side, defending Him. There are times when our biblical position is at the plaintiff’s side. By being taken seriously - not rejected, not toned down, not spiritualised - Naomi’s complaint becomes part of the story. The emptiness of her life is woven into the plot and, in the process, into the occasion for demonstrating God’s Providence. Do you hesitate to voice your complaints against God? How might Naomi’s story guide you in speaking to God with greater candour?

- Every Step an Arrival, Eugene H Peterson

Be a God-worshipper, not a Bible-worshipper

“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life” (John 5:39-40). “True wisdom has two sides” (Job 11:6). Scripture frequently calls us to hold couplets of seemingly opposing truths in tension. For example, plan for tomorrow AND don’t worry about it, enjoy restful “self-care” AND embrace self-sacrifice, desire good things AND be content. We should read our Bibles regularly. Decide on a regular time to do this. Then plan this time. Personally, I love Martin Luther’s method of studying the Bible. It begins by reading a passage of Scripture (perhaps along with a commentary). Then respond to the text by writing out: 1. Instruction (what the passage is commanding you to do) 2. Praise (what the passage leads you to praise God for) 3. Confession (where you have fallen short of the passage’s instruction) 4. Petition (for God’s grace in helping you live out the commands of the passage).

- The Word before Work, Jordan Raynor

Dis Sy krag, nie myne nie
Dis Sy mag, nie myne nie
Hy is sterk
Wanneer ek nie sterk is nie

Hy maak my voete stewig staan
Op al die plekke waar ek gaan
Dis Sy krag
Wat my sterk maak waar ek gaan

Met my God loop ek 'n bende storm
Spring ek oor 'n muur

Met my God is al my vyande
Uitoorlê elke uur
Met my God aan my kant
Is daar hoop vir elke dag
Met my God
Amen



When Loss Becomes Gain

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

SUFFERING IS UNIVERSAL
Philosopher and theologian Nicholas Wolterstorff, grieving the death of a loved one, describes the universal scope of suffering in his book, *Lament for a Son*: "Suffering keeps its face hid from each while making itself known to all... We are one in suffering. Some are wealthy, some are bright; some athletic, some admired. But we all suffer. For we all prize and love; and in this present existence of ours, prizing and loving yield suffering."

The ubiquity of suffering opens the door to God's unimaginable comfort for each of us.

SUFFERING WITH FAITH
When we face loss, we can do so either with bitterness, a detached stoicism, or faith. When we choose to respond in faith, we begin the process of mourning and open ourselves up to God's comfort.

EMBRACING SUFFERING - LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ETERNITY
Over the centuries, Christians have encouraged one another to recognise and embrace suffering as part of life. "Memento mori," they said. Remember death. But such recognition is increasingly rare. "Few of us," noted J.I. Packer, "live daily on the edge of eternity... and we lose out as a result." This acknowledgment of one's mortality sought to endow human experience with meaning and urgency.

Tragically, too often, we seek to deny this reality, secluding ourselves from others so that we will not see their pain and they will not see ours.

But isolation, it turns out, also separates us from faith, hope, and love - to say nothing of joy. Try as we may to deny our emotions and deaden our pain, our hearts remain vulnerable to sorrow as long as we have breath.

There is no getting around it. As long as we traverse the gritty, nail-strewn pathways of this broken world, we will suffer and mourn. But instead of fleeing in despair, let us approach the One Who wept with us, Who identified with us to the point of a wretched death, Who intercedes for us through our darkest nights of the soul. In a way we can only dimly understand, God suffers with us even now. May that thought provide comfort to all who mourn - including us.

CHRIST IS WITH US IN OUR SUFFERING AND HE WILL MAKE EVERYTHING NEW
Often, it is merely the fearful thought of catastrophe that consumes us: the fear of illness, concern for our children, loneliness, financial misfortune, anxiety about old age, or unpleasant memories. In short, we suffer from a persistent current of fear that captivates our attention to the extent that Christ and His eternal purposes fade from our view.

But we don't suffer alone. Christ abides with us. Other helpers fail and comforts flee, but the Lord remains. His divine presence, which now resides in our hearts, will soon fill the universe, a radiance that will vanquish every diabolical shadow forever. On that day, *"the sun of righteousness will arise with healing in its wings"* (see Malachi 4:2), and all will be made new!

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things [will] have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). Yes, *"blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted"* (Matthew 5:4).

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Ford and Edison

In 1896, Thomas Edison, the great inventor of the electric lightbulb, was working on a car design when he learned that a young man in his company had created an experimental car. Edison met this young man, Henry Ford, at a company party in New York and was thoroughly impressed by his gasoline-powered car idea.

Encouraged by the respected inventor, Henry Ford continued his work, eventually inventing a car that made him wealthy.


On 9 December 1914, Edison's laboratory and factory were destroyed by a fire. He was 67 years old, and the damage was too extensive for insurance to cover. However, before the ashes were cold, Henry Ford handed Edison a check for \$100 000 with a note saying Edison could borrow more if needed.

In 1916, Ford relocated his home next to Edison's. When Edison was later confined to a wheelchair, Ford also got a wheelchair so they could race each other.

Thomas Edison made Henry Ford believe in himself, creating a friendship for life. Henry returned the favour and was there to support Thomas in his time of need.

LESSON:
Don't ever be jealous of others' success. If you can't win a race, help the person in front of you break the record. Your candle doesn't lose its light by lighting another. Let us follow this example of supporting and uplifting each other!

- Selected



Ford and Edison

Jer. 20:11

★★★

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Vit die Hand

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JOI-Kinderdienste 9:30

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AGS

Baillie Park Gemeente

OASE VAN HOOP

-KOFFIE KAFEE-

HEB. 6:19

est. 2023





