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Ashoopgesprekke...

Hoe dikwels beleef ons as gelowiges vervolging, smart, pyn en lyding? En dan probeer die vyand ons verhouding met God versteur met leuens, vervreemding en beskuldigings teen Hom. Die waarheid is egter dat die Here Hom laag neerbuig om ons te help in Sy tere liefde. Wanneer Hy met jou ontmoet, is daar uitkoms en oorwinning oor jou smart en pyn en ondervind jy 'n verbysterende klemverskuiwing van jou begrip van God! God is selfs in die grootste storm teenwoordig om ons uit te red. Ons bou op die lewende Woord, die Bybel, wat deur God ingegee is en woord vir woord deur die Heilige Gees geïnspireer is. Ons glo in die gesag van die Woord, sowel as die krag van die Woord, en ons glo die krag van die Woord lê in die toepassing daarvan. Al voel jy hóé klein, gering, betekenisloos en niksbeduidend, die Almagtige is aan jou kant! “Wat sal ons dan van hierdie dinge sê? As God vir ons is, wie kan teen ons wees?” (Rom. 8:31). En dan verder: “Hy wat selfs Sy Eie Seun nie gespaar het nie, maar Hom vir ons almal oorgegee het, hoe sal Hy nie saam met Hom ons ook alles genadiglik skenk nie?” (Rom. 8:32). Psalm 113:7 praat van God “wat die geringe uit die stof oprig, die behoeftige van die ashoop af verhef...” En Hy voeg by: “Ek sal My deur die geringe laat ken...” Kom ons kyk na 'n paar voorbeelde van “ashoopgesprekke” in die Bybel en wat ons daaruit kan leer en op ons eie lewe kan toepas.

1. JOB LEER VERTROU OP DIE ASHOOP

Job en sy vriende se teologie was dat as 'n ramp jou tref, is dit God wat jou straf vir jou sonde. Satan wil Job op die proef stel deur te sê: “Is dit verniet dat Job God vrees?” Hy vrees God net omdat God hom beskut aan alle kante. Job is vroom en opreg, God-

vresend en hy wyk af van die kwaad, omdat hy en sy vriende glo dat as jy sonde doen, sal God jou straf. Maar tas net sy lewe aan, laat rampspoed hom tref sodat sy teologie “se boom uitval” dan sal hy God vloek; Hebreeus = *bārak*; seën (Job 1:5) of “vloek”, “vervloek” of “laster”, veral teenoor God. Hier is 'n persoonlike toets vir elkeen van ons: Wat is jǒu fondamentsteen waarop jy bou? Hoe tree jy op wanneer rampspoed jou tref? Dan vervolg Satan: “Tas net sy liggaam aan met 'n siektetoestand, dan sal hy U vervloek!” En God laat dit weer eens toe!

Daarna volg verskeie gesprekke op die *ashoop*; aanhoudend, byna onophoudelik. Job sit met uiterlike en innerlike pyn. Hierop volg konflikte tussen blote aannames teenoor werklike belewenisse. Selfs Job se vrou sê vir hom: “Seën (*bārak*) God en sterf!” Job antwoord haar, teen sy heersende teologie in: “Soos 'n dwaas praat, praat jy! Die goeie sou ons van God aanneem, en nie ook die slegte aanneem nie? By dit alles het Job nie gesondig met sy lippe nie” (Job 2:10). Op 'n ander keer sê hy vir sy vriende: “Wat julle sê, ken ek ook...” En verder: “Kyk, al wil Hy my ombring - ek hoop op Hom; ek sal tog my wandel voor Sy aangesig bepleit” (Job 13:15). In die Engelse vertaling: “*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: but I will maintain mine own ways before Him.*” Waaraan Job vashou, is: Al verstaan ek nie, sal ek Hom vertrou. lewers deur die gesprekke heen roep hy uit: “Maar ek, ek weet: My Verlosser leef; en Hy sal as laaste oor die stof opstaan” (Job 19:25). Job sê ook: “Want Hy weet hoe my wandel is; as Hy my toets, sal ek soos goud te voorskyn kom” (Job 23:10).

En toe, asof uit die niet, verskyn God op die toneel, toe Job se

vriende uitgepraat is na sewe dae op die *ashoop* saam met hom. En God wys hom op sy verkeerde aannames in hoofstuk 40 en 41 en gee uitkoms. Hy spreek ook Job se vriende aan. Nadat Job en sy vriende hulself voor God verootmoedig, sê Hy vir Job om vir hulle te bid en te offer. En dan voltooi God die verlossing: “*En die HERE het die lot van Job verander toe hy vir sy vriende gebid het; en die HERE het Job se besittings vermeerder tot dubbel soveel as voorheen*” (Job 42:10). God vergoed hom dubbel wat hy gehad het. Hierdie gebeure is nie 'n mite nie. Die Here sê vir die profeet Esegïel, al sou Noag, Daniël en Job in die land wees, hulle vanweë hul eie geregtigheid net hulself sou kon red. Dus was Job 'n werklike, historiese persoon. Ons leer uit hierdie *ashoop-gesprek* dat boosheid 'n misterie is wat nie maklik is om te verklaar nie. Daar is nie altyd eenvoudige antwoorde soos om sonde aan iemand toe te skryf nie. Ons word egter saam met Job uitgedaag om God te bly vertrou, al gaan dinge hoe moeilik. Om te bly glo dat God goed is en dat Hy ons dra, te midde van die stryd. Dat Hy ons sal uitred en herstel en ons karakter vorm. Ons vind ons betekenis en waarde in ons verhouding met Hom. Ons vertrou in Hom verdiep in sulke tye - Hy sal ons nie verlaat nie.

2. BEPROEWING BRING HEILIGMAKING OP DIE ASHOOP

Die Here wys my onlangs 'n beeld. Ek sien 'n beker van klei wat binne skoonmaak word, sodat jy skoon water, *heilige* water, daaruit kan drink. Jesus sê vir die Skrifgeleerdes en Fariseërs: “Maak eers die binnekant van die beker skoon.” 'n Beeld wat hulle kon verstaan, met hulle rituele om diens te doen in die Tempel. Dit is *heiligmaking*. Jesus dra hierdie beeld oor by die bruilof in Kana in Galilea, toe hy gewone, skoon

water in helende wyn verander het. Hy is die God van *heiligmaking* en *heling*. Daarvoor het Hy gekom, gely, en dan praat Hy deur simbole wat hulle verstaan. Wyn was in daardie dae 'n simbool van *ontsmetting* en *heling*.

Ons lees in Rom. 12:1-2 dat ons onself moet wy as “*n lewende, heilige en aan God welgevallige offer.*” Die *lewende* offer wat ons bring, is die feit dat Hy ons lewend gemaak het by wedergeboorte. Hierop volg nou die *heilige* offer wat ons bring om Hom welgevallig te wees. Al beland ons soos Job in die vuurproef van rampspoed en beproewinge. God *heilig* jou dag vir dag. Heiligmaking kom in drie fases: By wedergeboorte ontvang ons *posisionele heiligmaking*, ons name is deur God in die Boek van die Lewe opgekryf. Hierna vind ons die *eksperimentele heiligmaking*, of progressiewe heiligmaking, of praktiese heiligmaking. Dit is ons geestelike groei, waar God dag vir dag besig is om ons op te voed as Sy kinders, veral wanneer ons deur diep beproewinge gaan. Dan volg die *uiteindelike heiligmaking* waar alles alles voltooi is, en Jesus ons kom haal met Sy Wederkoms.

Ons moet daagliks na heiligmaking streef. Die Hebreërskrywer stel dit so mooi: “*Jaag die vrede na met almal, en die heiligmaking waarsonder niemand die Here sal sien nie; en pas op dat niemand in die genade van God veragter nie; dat geen wortel van bitterheid opskiet en onrus verwek en baie hierdeur besoedel word nie. Laat niemand 'n hoe-reerder wees nie, of 'n onheilige soos Esau, wat vir één spysgereg sy eersgeboortereg verkoop het. Want julle weet dat hy, toe hy ook later die seën wou beërwe, verwerp is, want hy het geen geleent-*

Vervolg op p. 2

As hoop gesprekke...

Vervolg van p. 1

heid vir berou gevind nie, al het hy dit met trane vurig begeer" (Heb. 12:14-17). Let op: hy skryf hierdie brief vir gelowiges in Jesus Christus. Vers 14 verklaar: "Jaag die vrede na met almal, en die heiligmaking waarsonder niemand die Here salsien nie."

In Grieks dui dit op 'n bepaalde dringendheid dat ons die vrede en heiligmaking moet najaag met alle mag. Vrede met God en vrede met jou naaste, deur vergifnis. Dit beteken nie dat jy jou saligheid verloor as jy nie "najaag" nie, maar jy kan jou intimiteit met God verloor. En dan, soos Paulus dit stel, kan jy die Heilige Gees bedroef met 'n sondige en onheilige lewenswyse (Ef. 4:30).

3. OP DIE ASHOOP VIND KINDERTJIES PLEEGMOEDERS

Wanneer ons deur donker dieptes gaan, het ons 'n intense behoefte aan vertroosting en bemoediging. God vertroos ons soos 'n moeder haar kind wat pyn ervaar. Paulus skryf, "Maar ons was vriendelik onder julle soos 'n pleegmoeder (*trophos*) haar kinders koester" (1 Thess. 2:7). Die Griekse woord (*trophos*) beteken "pleegmoeder", "soogvrou" of "verpleegster" wat met liefdevolle, tere sorg na 'n kind omsien. Hierdie woord kom slegs een keer in die hele Nuwe Testament voor. Die apostel Paulus beskryf hiermee sy diepe liefde en sagmoedigheid teenoor die gelowiges, "om te voed" of "om groot te maak." God is soos 'n vader en 'n moeder vir Sy geliefde kinders. Ook vir jou en vir my in ons diepste beproewing, met onbeskryflike liefde en begrip en versorging.

Ons vind die gedagte van 'n pleegmoeder ook in 'n gedig deur A.G. Visser wat gegrond is op 'n ware gebeurtenis. Waaroor handel die gedig "Amakeia"? Dit was die jaar 1826. Die sesde grensoorlog met die Xhosa-stam. Die gedig is 'n hartroerende ballade oor getrouheid, opoffering en universele moederliefde. 'n Swart oppasser (genaamd Amakeia of "Aia") belooft aan haar sterwende wit "nonna" (die boervrou) dat sy na die babatjie sal omsien. Wanneer die plaashuis aangeval word, vlug sy met die baba na die berge (die Amatola-klowe) om hom te beskerm. Sy word deur 'n Xhosa-krygsbende gevind. Hulle eis dat sy die kind vir hulle gee. Sy weier en beskerm die baba met haar eie liggaam, waarna albei met assegaie doodgesteek word. Die gedig sluit af met die treurige wind in die berge wat herinner aan haar wiegeliedjie: "Tula - Tula - stil, my kind!" A.G. Visser, 'n mediese dokter en

digter, het veel later met hierdie agtergrond die lied geskryf om digterlike pyn en smart te verwoord. Dit het Afrikaans geword. Hierdie gedig beskryf ware moederliefde van 'n swart pleegmoeder vir 'n hulpelose kindjie. So is God se liefde ook vir ons.

In 2 Kron. 22:11 vind ons die verhaal van Jósabat, die dogter van die koning. Sy het Joas, die seun van Ahásia, gesteel onder die koning se seuns uit wat gedood moes word, en hom en sy pleegmoeder in die beddekamer gebring; en Jósabat, die dogter van koning Joram, die vrou van die priester Jójada - want sy was die suster van Ahásia - het hom vir Atália weggesteek. Later sou daardie seuntjie op sewejarige ouderdom deur die hoëpriester tot koning gesalf word. Verder lees ons van Farao se dogter wat Moses uit die Nyl geneem het en as haar eie grootmaak het. Sy het Moses se pleegmoeder geword en Moses het in die koning se paleis grootgeword! So sorg God ook vir ons in Sy troue liefde.

4. DIE ASHOOP BRING AFLEGGING EN REINIGING

Ons lees in Filipense 3:10-11 (NV) dat die apostel Paulus se grootste begeerte was om Christus intiem te leer ken. Hy wil die krag van Christus se opstanding ervaar, bereid wees om saam met Hom te ly, en uitsien na die finale opstanding uit die dood: "Al watek wens, is om Christus te ken, die krag van Sy opstanding te ondervind en deel te hê aan Sy lyding deur aan Hom gelyk te word in Sy dood, in die verwagting dat ek self deel sal hê aan die opstanding uit die dood." Hierdie verse vorm deel van Paulus se bekende pleidooi dat hy sy eie godsdienstige prestasies prysgee om alles in Christus te vind. In vers 10 fokus hy op heiligmaking (om Hom daagliks beter te leer ken), en in vers 11 verwys hy na verheerliking (die hoop op die ewige lewe).

Sy grootste begeerte is, "Al watek wens..." Dit is nie net 'n wens nie, ook nie net 'n begeerte wat onbereikbaar is nie, ook nie net 'n droom nie, maar 'n innige smagting om 'n belewenis van God se konstante Teenwoordigheid in sy lewe totdat Jesus hom kom haal. Hy wil Hom ken deur voortdurende ervaring, deur alle ander dinge wat in onbruik verval het in verhouding met God af te lê. Hy sê in vers 7: "Maar wat vir my wins was, dit het ek om Christus wil skade geag." Hy beskou alle ander dinge as drek, Grieks skubalon (vers 8). Sommige vertalers vertaal hierdie woord

as: "refuse (such as excrements, dregs, dross) cast to the dogs." Dit beteken iets wat geen waarde het nie. Dit kan ook verwys na afvalkos, oorskietkos wat vir die honde gegooi word. Al Paulus se opgang in menslike kennis, menslike filosofieë, menslike opinies in Joodse en Griekse denke beskou hy as drek wat hy verloën om sodoende Christus as wins te verkry.

5. JESUS BRING GENESING OP DIE ASHOOP

Soms kan siekte ons radeloos laat en laat voel of ons op die ashoop sit. Dit was ook eens so vir 'n radelose moeder. Tirus en Sidon was in Jesus se tyd geleë aan die Suide van Libanon, 'n nie-Joodse gebied, maar groot handelstede aan die kus. Sy besoek daar was vir meer as een rede. Hy het 'n moeilike tyd gehad met die Jode in Galilea, en wou dalk saam met Sy dissipels 'n bietjie tot rus kom. Maar veral benut Hy die tyd om Sy dissipels op te lei om ná Sy dood die mantel op te neem om die evangelie te verkondig "in Judea en Samaria en tot aan die uiterste van die aarde." Die heidense, Kanaänitiese (Siro-Feniciëse) vrou van daardie kusgebied roep tot Hom om hulp en erken Sy Messias-skap: "Wees my barmhartig, Here, Seun van Dawid! My dogter is erg van die duiwel besete." Die Bybel sê sy het al agter hulle aangeloop en aanhoudend geroep, want haar nood was groot. Die dissipels sê Hy moet haar wegstuur, maar Jesus gaan staan stil om na haar te luister. Al was dit voortydig, vóór Sy begrafnis en opstanding en verheerliking, onderskei Jesus dat hierdie vrou se pyn groot was. "Daarop kom sy en val voor Hom neer en sê: Here (*kurios*), help my!" (Matt. 15:25). En Hy het groot medelye met haar. Sy glo dat die heidene deur Sy groot genade ook 'n staanplekkie in Sy bestel het. In Matteus 15:21-28 (en Markus 7) toets Jesus hierdie nie-Joodse vrou se geloof deur die destydse Joodse idioom te gebruik: "Dit is nie mooi om die kinders se brood te vat en vir die hondjies te gooi nie." Hy gebruik egter die sagter Griekse woord vir huishoudelike troetelhondjies (*kunaria*), 'n sagte verkleinwoordjie, teenoor rondloperhonde. Sy slaag die geloofstoets: "En sy sê: Ja, Here, maar die hondjies (heidene) eet darem van die krummels wat van die tafel van hulle base afval. Toe antwoord Jesus en sê vir haar: o Vrou, groot is jou geloof; laat dit vir jou wees soos jy wil hê. En haar dogter het gesond geword van daardie uur af" (Matt. 15:22-27). Diegene wat heidense gebruike en gewoontes navolg,

word elders ook as honde voorgestel. Paulus waarsku die Filippense teen diegene wat die ware Christus omseil deur hulle eie leringe oor die Wet. Hulle probeer om uiterlike, Joodse rituele (soos die besnydenis) as 'n vereiste vir redding op Christene af te dwing. Verder lees ons van die finale oordeel, soos opgeteken in Openbaring 22:15, en van sekere mense wat nie toegang tot die Nuwe Jerusalem het nie: "Buitekant is die honde en die towenaars en die hoereerders en die moordenaars en die afgodedienaars..." Hier beteken "honde" bloot die geestelik onreines wat die evangelie verwerp het.

Ons sien dat Jesus se genadehand uitreik na die verwerplikes, die obskures, die sondiges, en die uitgesluite partye. Tradisie of die samelewing se siening mag ons dalk uitsluit en hopeloos laat op ons ashoop. Maar Jesus verbreek kulturele taboes en deel Sy genade ook met ons. Hy stap nie verby ons nood nie, al sou ander dit ook doen. Hy reik uit en doen vir ons 'n wonderwerk!

SAMEVATTING

Alle mense beleef smart en lyding. Dit sluit Christene in. Ons is nie gevrywaar van boosheid nie, hoe onverstaanbaar dit ook al is. Maar God verskyn op die toneel van ons ashoop - as Vader van alle ontferminge en vertroosting. Sonder verwyf. Hy maak die verskil. En ons kan verskeie skatte in ons beproewingstyd ontdek. Eerstens leer ons om op God te vertrou, al verstaan ons nie. Hy is naby ons en troos ons met Sy Teenwoordigheid. Verder heilig die Here ons, sodat ons meer soos Jesus lyk. Ons groei baie meer in moeilike tye as in maklike, gerieflike omstandighede. Ons vind ook die geskenk van medemenslike omgee en liefde in ons donker tye. God rig pleegmoeders op - voorbidders en helpers en mentors - om ons by te staan in ons tyd van nood. Ons leer om alle onnodige geestelike dinge af te lê, terwyl ons streef om nader aan God te leef en meer soos Hy te word. Laastens bring Jesus vir ons liggaamlike asook innerlike genesing. Hy neem ons as Sy kinders aan en Hy stap saam met ons die pad na heling en vrymaking! Kom vandag na Jesus toe - bring jou vrae, jou seer, jou ongemak. Vertrou Hom om Sy Goddelike doel te bereik in jou tyd van beproewing. Dan sal jy terugkyk op 'n moeilike seisoen en Hom prys vir die geestelike groei wat plaasgevind het. En dit is waardevoller as goud en silwer! Amen.

©Dr JJ Venter

Wanneer God my Roep

Ons lees in Exodus 2-6 die verhaal van Moses en sy roeping om die volk van Israel uit Egipte te lei. Ons vind eggo's hiervan in die preek of toespraak van Stefanus, die eerste martelaar vir Christus (Handelinge 7). Uit hierdie baie interessante gegewens kan ons 'n paar lesse vir onself neem wanneer ons kyk hoe Moses op sy roeping gereageer het. Uiteindelik was hy 'n magtige instrument in God se Hand, maar dit het 'n klipperige paadjie geneem om tot daar te kom.

1. TE HAASTIG

Ons ken die verhaal van hoe Moses uit die Nyl getrek is en in Farao se paleis gaan woon het. Dan lees ons: *“En in dié dae toe Moses al groot was, het hy na sy broers uitgegaan en hulle harde arbeid aangesien. En hy het gesien hoe 'n Egiptiese man 'n Hebreeuse man, een uit sy broers, slaan. En hy het hierheen en daarheen gekyk, en toe hy sien dat daar niemand was nie, het hy die Egiptenaar doodgeslaan en hom in die sand begrawe. Die volgende dag het hy weer uitgegaan, en*

daar was twee Hebreeuse manne wat met mekaar veg. Hy vra toe vir die een wat ongelyk gehad het: Waarom slaan jy jou naaste? En hy antwoord: Wie het jou as owerste [prins] en regter oor ons aangestel? Dink jy om my dood te slaan soos jy die Egiptenaar omgebring het? En Moses het gevrees en gesê: Waarlik, die saak het bekend geword!” (Ex. 2:11-14).

Insiggewend is Stefanus se kommentaar op hierdie gebeure. Hy noem dat Moses veertig jaar oud was: *“En nadat hy die ouderdom van veertig jaar bereik het, het dit in sy hart opgekom om sy broers, die kinders van Israel, te besoek; en toe hy sien dat iemand onreg aangedoen word, het hy hom verdedig en die man wat mishandel was, gewreek deur die Egiptenaar te verslaan. En hy het gedink dat sy broers sou verstaan dat God hulle deur sy hand redding sou gee; maar hulle het dit nie verstaan nie”* (Hand. 7:24-25).

Moses het God se roeping reeds as veertigjarige (en jonger) beleef. Hy wou opstaan teen die Egiptiese

onreg en hy wou sy volk help. As redder van sy volk is hy 'n skadu van Jesus wat later die Redder van die wêreld sou word. Moses het met 'n rustelose passie rondgeloopt en die omstandighede van sy broers aanskou. Sy hart het gebrand met simpatie en woede jeens onreg (dit is waarop “aangesien” in Ex. 2:11 sinspeel; so het God ook die swaarkry van die Israeliete “aangesien” in v. 25). Ongelukkig het Moses die reg in eie hande geneem en 'n moord begaan. Dit het daartoe gelei dat hy na Midian moes vlug vir sy lewe. Daar sou hy vir nog veertig jaar woon.

Ons sien dus dat daar wysheid daarin is om eers van God te hoor. Wanneer daar 'n gedagte of sterk drang in ons harte opkom om 'n sekere weg te volg of iets te doen, moet ons die Here vra vir die korrekte tyd wanneer dit moet ontplooi (indien wel). Ook dat Hy saam met ons gaan en ons lei, sodat ons nie in eie krag optree nie. Oorhaastigheid en onwysheid kan baie skade maak. Die angel van anachronisme. Aan die ander kant kan dit baie seën mee-

bring as ons op God se leiding wag en dan op die regte tyd optree, in die krag van die Heilige Gees. Dit neem egter nederigheid, onder-worpenheid en vertroue. Dalk het 'n jong en vurige persoon hierdie les nog nie mooi geleer nie, en neem dit 'n woestynervaring, soos in die geval van Moses, om hierdie karaktereenskappe te ontwikkel. Die Here kan ons nie gebruik as ons nie aan Hom oorgegee is nie. Mag ons dus fyn luister na die Gees se Stem en op die regte tyd optree.

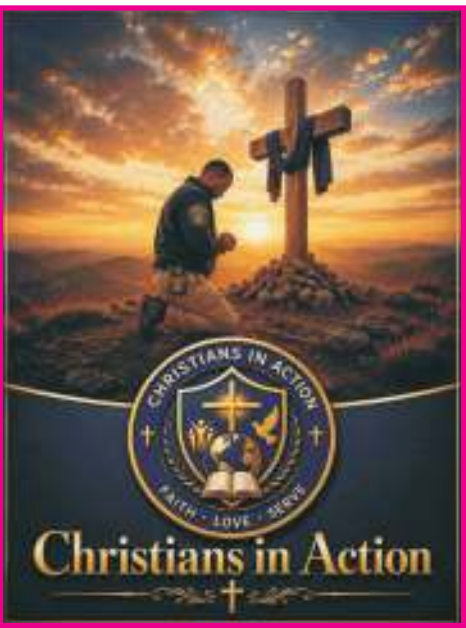
2. TE PASSIEF

Ons sien dat Moses veertig jaar in Midian gewoon en kleinvee opgepas het. Dit is nogal ironies - 'n 'prins' van Egipte moet kleinvee oppas voordat hy weer geroep en verhoog word tot nasionale leier van Israel. Net so het God vir Dawid agter die kleinvee gaan haal en hom later koning van Israel gemaak. 'n Mens wonder wat deur Moses se gedagtes gegaan het gedurende hierdie veertig jare van selfopgelegde ballingskap. Het hy ooit aan sy roeping gedink? Hieroor gebid?

Vervolg op p. 4

NNA MOKERESETE MO TIrong, NNA MOKERESETE WA CIA!

(BE A CHRISTIAN IN ACTION, BE A CIA CHRISTIAN!)



DIKAKANYO

Kwa America go na le mapodisi a a bitswang CIA. CIA ke Central Intelligence Agency. Ke karolo ya bopodisi e e tshabegang e e kotsi e e dirang ka maatla le ka bokgoni. Fa re ka tsaya ditlhaka tse re di tliša mo bodumeding re ka e bitsa Christians in Action. Fa re e fetola re ka e bitsa Bakeresete mo Tirong. Mo bukeng ya Jakobo 2:14 go 26 re buisa ka ga ditiro le tumelo. Tumelo le ditiro di tshwanetse go tsamaisana. Tema ya 18

ya re: “Jaanong motho o ka re: ‘Wena o na le tumelo, nna ke na le ditiro.’ Mpontshe tumelo ya gago e e se nang ditiro, mme nna ke tla go bontsha tumelo ka ditiro tsa me.” Ka nako ya go tsena sekolo re ne re opela: “Ke tsamaya lese ding la Jesu” O a tsamaya. Ga o a ema fela. Mo o dirang teng o tsamaya le Jesu. Mo lenyalong o tsamaya le Jesu. Kwa sekolong o tsamaya le Jesu. Mo dipolotiking o tsamaya le Jesu. Go nna Moke-

resete ga se go dula fela. A batho ba ka re wena o Mokeresete fa ba lebelela motsamao wa gago le maitseo le ditiro tsa gago. Lebelela ditemana tse di latelang tse di bontshang gore le Lefoko la Morena le tlhoka ditiro. Madiri a ke a a bontshang ditiro tse di tswelatang, ga se tse di diragalang gangwe kgotsa gangwe le gape fela. Leba Madiri a Tiro a le Ditemana tsa teng. Di bontsha tiro e e tswelatang.

DITEMANA

Love! - “Love one another” (John 13:34).	Ratana! - “Lo ratane” (Johane 13:34).
Serve! - “Serve one another humbly” (Galatians 5:13).	Direlanang! - “Direlanang ka boikokobetso” (Bagalata 5:13).
Pray! - “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).	Rapela! - “Rapela lo sa kgaotse” (1 Bathesalonika 5:17).
Forgive! - “Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13).	Itshwareleng! - “Itshwareleng jaaka Morena a lo itshwaretse” (Bakol. 3:13).
Witness! - “You will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8).	Supang / Pakang! - “Lo tla nna basupi ba me” (Ditiro 1:8).
Persevere! - “Run with endurance the race set before us” (Heb. 12:1).	Itshokeleng! - “Siana ka boitshoko lobelo lo lo beilweng fa pele...” (Bah. 12:1).
Show Compassion! - “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36).	Utlwelanang botlhoko! - “Nnang kutlwelobotlhoko, jaaka Rraeno...” (Luka 6:36).
Walk! - “Therefore, as you received Christ ... so walk in Him...” (Col 2:6-7).	Tsamaya! - “Ka jalo, jaaka lo amogetse Keresete Jesu Morena, tsamayang jalo mo go ene...” (Bakolose 2:6-7).



Johan Zerwick
Sêlê ke 083 458 3837

KGWETLHO YA GO TSWALA

Ipotse jaana: Tumelo ya me e ntsha tiro efe? Mokeresete yo o tletseng Mowa ga a dire sepe mme o a dira, ga a didimale mme o a bua, e bile ga a nne lolea mo mafokong, tumelo e bonagala mo ditirong le gotlhe kwa a tsamayang teng.

THAPELO

“Morena, ntlatse ka Mowa wa Gago gore tumelo ya me e bonale mo loratong lwa me, tirelong, thapelong, kutlo, le kutlwelobotlhoko ya me. Amen.”

Wanneer God my Roep

Vervolg van p. 3

Was hy bloot so teleurgesteld dat hy hom maar net teruggetrek het?

Ons kan maar net spekulêr. Maar ons kan ook nadink oor ons eie lewe. Het ons dalk 'n visie of plan gekry, net om verwerping in die gesig te staar? Het ons teruggetrek en opgegee? Of het ons gebid? Het ons gehoop dat die Here die visie vir iemand anders sou gee omdat dit te moeilik blyk te wees? Werk ons aktief in gebed en doen ons voorbereidings om ons visie in vervulling te laat kom, of kyk ons maar net wat sal gebeur? Mag die Here ons die wysheid en energie gee om in getrouheid wagsesoene te deurgaan, nie in passiwiteit nie, maar in voorbereiding op wat kom.

3. TE ONSEKER

Moses sien 'n brandende doringbos en gaan nader. God begin die gesprek op 'n emosionele noot: *"En die Here sê: Ek het duidelik gesien die ellende van My volk wat in Egipte is; en Ek het hulle jammerklagte oor hulle drywers gehoor, ja, Ek ken hulle smarte"* (Ex. 3:7). Dit moes met Moses se hart geresoneer het. Dit was presies die passie wat hy in sy hart ervaar het toe hy die Egiptenaar veertig jaar vantevore doodgeslaan het.

Moses begin egter 'n reeks verskonings met die volgende woorde, *"Maar Moses het tot God gespreek: Wie is ek, dat ek na Farao sou gaan en dat ek die kinders van Israel uit Egipte sou lei?"* (Ex. 3:11). Hy trek dus God se keuse en oordeel in twyfel. God verseker Moses dat Hy met hom sal wees. Dan vra Moses wat God se Naam is. Geduldig antwoord Hy dat dit EK IS is, die God van Abraham, Isak en Jakob. God verseker Moses dat die volk na hom sal luister. Hy beloof ook wonders in Egipte, rykdomme vir Sy volk, en 'n kosbare land van melk en heuning.

Ons kan baiekeer vra: Wie is ek dat God my kan gebruik? Ek voel onwaardig en gering. Dit klink dalk nederig, maar eintlik is dit 'n vorm van rebellie teen God. As Hy my uitkies, hoekom wonder ek? Dink ek dat ek Sy werk in eie krag moet verrig? Vertrou ek nie op God se krag en Teenwoordigheid nie? Laat ek vrees in my hart toe wat my verlam tot ongehoorsaamheid?

Een Johannes 4:18 leer ons, *"Daar is geen vrees in die liefde nie; maar die volmaakte liefde dryf die vrees buite, want die vrees sluit straf in, en hy wat vrees, het nie volmaak geword in die liefde nie."* Mag ons onself

gehoorsaam aan die Here oorgee om Sy wil te doen. As ons val, laat ons opstaan en weer probeer. Die Here gee derde en vierde kanse en soveel meer. Hy vergewe altyd weer. Hy herstel ons. Mag ons in Sy liefde groei en Hom meer vrees as enige mens: *"En Ek sê vir julle, My vriende: Moenie vrees vir die wat die liggaam doodmaak en daarna niks meer kan doen nie; maar Ek sal julle wys Wie julle moet vrees: vrees Hom wat, nadat Hy doodgemaak het, by magte is om in die hel te werp; ja, Ek sê vir julle, vrees Hom!"* (Luk. 12:4-5). *"Die vrees vir die mens span 'n strik; maar hy wat op die Here vertrou, sal beskut word"* (Spr. 29:25). Laat ons dus eerder deur liefde as deur vrees of hoogmoed gedryf word.

4. TE ONGELOWIG

Die verhaal gaan voort en nog twyfel Moses. Die Here gee aan hom tekens: die staf wat in 'n slang verander, sy hand wat melaats word as hy dit in sy boesem steek (en herstel), en water van die Nyl wat in bloed verander as dit op die grond uitgegooi word. Dan beweer Moses dat hy nie 'n man van woorde is nie: *"Toe sê Moses aan die Here: Ag, Here, ek is nie 'n man van woorde nie - van gister of van eergister of vandat U met U kneg gespreek het nie; want ek is swaar van mond en swaar van tong. En die Here antwoord hom: Wie het vir die mens die mond gemaak, of wie maak stom of doof, of siende of blind? Is dit nie Ek, die Here, nie? Gaan dan nou heen, en Ek sal met jou mond wees en jou leer wat jy moet sê"* (Ex. 4:10-12). Dit is egter in teenstelling met wat Stefanus sê, *"En Moses is opgelei in al die wysheid van die Egiptenaars en was magtig in woorde en dade"* (Hand. 7:22).

Was ongeloof die basis van Moses se verskonings? Of vrees, of gemaksug? Uiteindelik word God kwaad vir Moses: *"Maar hy sê: Ag, Here, stuur tog deur wie U wil stuur. Toe ontvlam die toorn van die Here teen Moses, en Hy sê: Is jou broer Aäron, die Leviet, nie daar nie? Ek weet dat hy goed kan praat. En hy gaan ook al uit om jou te ontmoet, en as hy jou sien, sal hy bly wees in sy hart. Jy moet dan met hom spreek en die woorde in sy mond lê. En Ek sal met jou mond en sy mond wees en julle leer wat julle moet doen. En hy moet vir jou met die volk spreek, en dan sal hy vir jou 'n mond wees en jy vir hom 'n god wees. Neem dan hierdie staf in jou hand waarmee jy die tekens moet doen"* (Ex. 4:13-17). Uiteindelik blaas Moses die aftog. Hy besluit om wel terug te keer na Egipte - God het gewen.

Mag ons dus in geloof optree. God gee vir elkeen 'n mate van geloof (Rom. 12:3). Dit is soos 'n spier wat geoefen moet word sodat dit sterk kan word. Ons moet God vir 'n bepaalde saak vertrou en dan sien ons hoedat dit ten goede uitwerk. Dan kan ons Hom volgende keer vir iets groter vertrou. So groei ons in ons geloofslawe. Ons moet nie toelaat dat ongeloof ons weerhou van ons roeping of van geestelike vrug nie. Iemand het eendag 'n boek geskryf met die titel, *"Waag dit met God!"* God sal jou geloof eer en jou te hulp snel.

5. TE VEEL VERSKONINGS

Moses se gehoorsaamheid en terugkeer na Egipte is aanvanklik deur geloof begroet: *"En Moses en Aäron het vertrek en al die oudstes van die kinders van Israel bymekaar laat kom; en Aäron het al die woorde gespreek wat die Here aan Moses gesê het, en die tekens gedoen voor die oë van die volk. En die volk het geglo. En toe hulle hoor dat die Here op die kinders van Israel ag gegee en hulle ellende aangesien het, het hulle in aanbidding neergebuig"* (Ex. 44:29-31).

Farao het egter die volk begin verdruk en hulle werkslas swaarder gemaak. Die volk het opstandig geraak. Moses redeneer met die Here, *"Toe gaan Moses weer na die Here en sê: Here, waarom het U hierdie volk kwaad aangedoen? Waarom het U my tog gestuur? Want vandat ek na Farao gegaan het om in U Naam te spreek, het hy hierdie volk mishandel, en U het U volk glad nie verlos nie"* (Ex. 5:22-23).

Het hy begin twyfel? Die Here verseker hom dat Hy plaas na Egipte sal stuur en dat Farao uiteindelik die volk sal laat trek (hulle weg-drywe) uit Egipte. Nogeens sien ons Moses se vertwyfeling in Ex. 6, *"Maar Moses het voor die aangesig van die Here gespreek en gesê: As die kinders van Israel na my nie geluister het nie, hoe sal Farao dan na my luister terwyl ek onbesnede van lippe is?"* (v. 11).

So ook in vers 29. Die Here herhaal Sy opdrag, openbaar dan aan Moses dat Farao eers nie sal luister nie, maar dat hy uiteindelik nie 'n ander keuse sal hê as om gehoor te gee nie. Kyk net hoe geduldig God met Moses is!

Dalk begin ons 'n nuwe projek en dinge loop mooi. Maar dan is daar hekkies om te oorkom, onverwagse probleme, moeilike sake. En ons verstaan nie. Ons wonder of dit werklik God se opdrag aan ons was. Het ons reg gehoor en reg verstaan? Dit is goed om die oorspronklike mandaat van die Here op te skryf en dan in moeilike tye daarheen terug te keer tot bemoediging. Laat ons ons lewe bou op God se Woord en Hom bly glo en vertrou, ten spyte van teenstand. Hy sal vir ons die oorwinning verskaf tot die eer van Sy Naam! As die opdrag maklik was, kon ons dit in eie krag volbring. Nou het ons Hom nodig, en Hy sal wonderwerke verrig sodat Hy die eer kan kry.

SAMEVATTING

Ons sien uit Moses se lewe hoedat hy vroeg al 'n roeping in sy hart onderskei het. Hy het egter oorhaastig opgetree en reg in eie hande geneem, met skadelike gevolge. Tog het die Here hom nie verlaat nie, maar sy roeping op tagtigjarige ouderdom hernu. Uiteindelik het Moses 'n groot profeet en wetgewer geword.

Stefanus herinner ons aan die ironie van die saak: *"Hierdie Moses wat hulle verloën het deur te sê: Wie het jou aangestel as 'n owerste [prins] en regter? - hom het God as owerste en verlosser gestuur deur die hand van die Engel wat aan hom verskyn het in die doringbos"* (Hand. 7:35). God kan groot dinge deur ons vermag as ons bereid sal wees om ons vrese, verskonings, gemak en ongeloof opsy te skuif en te besluit om Hom op Sy woord te neem. Laat ons ook *"waag met God"* en sien watter wonderwerke Hy in ons lewens sal verrig!

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"I choose kindness. I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid. And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me."

- Max Lucado

It's Not About Me

All About Me
When my daughter was three or four years old, she got a little toy Casio keyboard for Christmas. I will never forget her banging on that keyboard and singing (or mis-singing) one of our beloved praise choruses: “O God, You are my God! And I will ever praise me!”

My husband and I thought it was hilarious. That is, until she said one day, “Look, Mom! I’m you!” The less hilarious part is that on most days, that sentiment is spot on. If I am being honest, I could open a worship set with that song, following it up with “I Could Sing of Myself Forever,” then close with a rousing rendition of “To Me Be the Glory!” Let’s face it. I love to talk - and sing - about myself!

Though these titles would obviously never be sung in a worship service, we have to admit that oftentimes our spiritual lives tend to be self-centred rather than God-centred. Consider the last book you read, the last song you sang, or the last prayer you prayed. What was the focus? Was it about God, His glory, His kingdom, and His purposes? Or was it more focused on the role God plays in helping your life “work”? If God answered every one of your prayers, would it change the world or simply change your world?

It's All About God
A truly reverent heart communicates one clear message: It’s all about God. It’s not about us. What is the end goal of our lives? The Westminster Shorter Catechism answers this query succinctly: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” We exist to glorify God. If we were created to glorify God, then why are we so prone to glorifying ourselves? What exactly is glorifying self?

Initially discussed by Augustine of Hippo and later expanded by Martin Luther, the Latin phrase *incurvatus in se* describes the tendency of our hearts to turn inward toward self rather than outward toward God and others. Ever since the very first self-centred decision Adam and Eve made in the garden, every one of us has been born with the propensity to think of ourselves first. One major facet of God’s plan of redemption is His call for us to return to placing Him above ourselves. Hosea says it so simply: “Come, let us return to the Lord” (Hos. 6:1).

Ultimately, God changes our desires through Christ’s finished

work on the cross. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:15, “He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him Who for their sake died and was raised.” We can experience true freedom from our obsession with self, even if, on this side of heaven, it is still a daily battle (Rom. 7:18-25).

Here is the question I want us to consider now: As we seek to live more reverent and God-consumed lives, what are ways that we unintentionally focus on self, even in our spiritual pursuits?

I Wanna Talk About Me
I am a huge nineties country music fan. I still love that old tune by the late Toby Keith, “I Wanna Talk About Me”! He makes a list in song form of everything his girlfriend wants to talk about, and how he loves to listen to her, but then sheepishly confesses, “I like talking about you, you, you, you, usually. But occasionally, I wanna talk about me!” So often our spiritual lives are too focused on ourselves. Consider the following questions as a bit of a self-assessment.

1) Are my prayers primarily self-interested? Am I more concerned with personal blessing, success, and comfort than God’s will being done or His kingdom coming on Earth? Is my prayer time ever spent focusing solely on praising Him for His attributes and his nature? How frequently do I confess sin before God? How often do I pray on behalf of others? When my prayers are not answered the way I had hoped, how do I typically respond?

2) Do I evaluate my worship of God based on my feelings or on the exalting of God’s glory? Do I tend to reflect on what the sermon on a given Sunday taught me about God, or am I preoccupied with how much I “got out of it” or found it personally motivating? Do I base my opinion of a worship service on whether or not I was emotionally fulfilled? Do I evaluate my pastor and worship leaders based on how clearly they communicated the truth about Christ or on how closely they aligned with my stylistic preferences? How do I react when the pastor or worship team tries something new, maybe for the purpose of reaching a different demographic or generation? Are the lyrics helping me form my view of God according to Scripture? Or are they mostly about God fixing my problems and increasing my self-esteem?

3) Is my Bible reading selective and self-serving? How do I

choose Bible passages to read in my devotional time? Do I tell the Bible what it means, or does the Bible to tell me what it means? When was the last time Scripture challenged my expectations for how my life should go and caused me to change the way I think or act? How does my pride or desire for control prohibit me from listening to the Spirit’s leading when He speaks through His word?

4) Is my participation in church community conditional? How often do I seek to serve and invest in other people in my church? Did I join my church merely because I enjoyed the worship style, or did I consider how the church displays the Gospel, the ways my family and I could grow in faith, and my prospects of developing iron-sharpeningiron friendships with other believers (Prov. 27:17; cf. 1 John 1:7)? When my church makes a programmatic change, am I the first to complain about how it affects me or my family, or do I seek to understand the reasoning? Do I consider how that change may meet the needs of others in the church?

5) Do I measure my faith by external blessings? Do I believe that material success and good health are indicative of how pleased God is with me? Have I ever doubted God’s goodness when experiencing suffering or some struggle in life? Does my faith wane over time if I am not experiencing any recent external blessings or prosperity?

6) Do I serve God for recognition or personal gain? Do I become resentful or contemplate quitting if my service to others is not acknowledged or appreciated? Am I likely to serve in a role that is unseen, underappreciated, or lowly? Can I articulate the true motivation behind why I serve?

7) Is my life lacking gratitude and contentment? How often do I experience spontaneous moments of gratitude and contentment? How often do I thank God for his past faithfulness to me or my family? How often do I struggle with comparing my circumstances to those of others who are seemingly better off than I am? It’s a good thing we don’t have to turn in this pop quiz for a grade, or I would fail miserably. Yes, every poor response is covered by the grace of God, but such an assessment can still help us recognise where we have veered off course and become our own objects of worship and reverence. We need to recognise this not only for God’s glory but for our freedom. Consider the words of Gavin Ortland in his



book *Humility*: “Being a big deal is a burden. Humility, in contrast, means you don’t interpret everything in relation to yourself, and you don’t need to. It is the death of the narrow, suffocating filter of self-referentiality. It is the nourishing, calming acceptance that you have a small place in a much larger story: that your life is being guided by something far bigger than your plans or controls, and serving something far bigger than your “sole benefit.”

The goal isn’t to think less of yourself. As the late Tim Keller said, “The essence of Gospel-humility is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less.”

If we can now admit that we sometimes tend to make our spiritual lives about ourselves rather than about God, what might be the trends that perpetuate this irreverence? In other words, what good spiritual resources or practices have unintentionally placed my focus on self and my personal satisfaction rather than on God and His glory?

-Adapted from *Stand in Awe: How Reverence Transforms Our Worship and Our Lives* by Laura Story (MATS, Covenant Theological Seminary).
Laura is a Grammy- and Dove Award-winning singer-songwriter, known for her certified platinum song “Blessings.” She serves as a worship leader at Perimeter Church and is also a Bible teacher and author of several books, including *Stand in Awe* and *When God Doesn’t Fix It*. Laura lives with her husband, Martin, and their four children in Atlanta, Georgia.

Sexual Temptation: The Spiritual Screwworm

The screwworm eats living flesh. Similarly, sexual sin destroys our minds, marriages, society, and souls. Christians are by no means immune: 75% of Christian men and 40% of Christian women admit that they view pornography.

In a recent survey, 23% of the pastors who responded admitted to sexually inappropriate behaviour with someone other than their wives. In what ways are Christians especially susceptible to sexual temptation?

Let's consider four common mistakes we make.

One: Not preparing to face temptation

Christians are a threat to Satan and thus the targets of his wrath (1 Peter 5:8). He wants to defeat us spiritually and destroy our witness.

He is especially adept at using sexual temptation for this purpose, since God created humans as sexual beings and intends us to experience sexual fulfilment within the covenant of marriage. Sexual impulses and desires are thus part of our make-up.

Accordingly, in a culture where "sex sells" nearly everything and pornography is more readily available than ever before, we should expect to face sexual temptation today and every day.

Two: Trying to win in our strength

Satan is better at tempting than we are at resisting. He doesn't bother with the temptations he knows we can easily defeat in our own strength.

But he knows the temptations we cannot defeat in our ability, what the Puritans called "besetting sins," so these are the strategies he utilises.

He also knows that God will give us the strength to defeat every temptation if we turn to Him for help (1 Corinthians 10:13). So our enemy employs temptations we cannot defeat ourselves but disguises them so that we will think we can. In this way he lures us into sin as if it were quicksand.

As we fight back, we inevitably become trapped. To shift metaphors, he turns the lights down slowly until we become accustomed to sitting in the dark.

As a result, every time we are tempted, we need to bring that temptation immediately to God.

If we try to resist in our own strength, we may win today but we will lose tomorrow. Conversely, if we develop the reflex of using temptation as a catalyst for prayer, we use Satan's evil for God's glory and experience "the victory that has overcome the world" (1 John 5:4).

Three: Refusing to seek the help of others

Sexual temptation can be embarrassing for believers to admit. But the church is the "body of Christ," the visible manifestation of His continuing Presence in the world. As a result, turning to fellow Christians for help is a practical way to turn to Christ.

We can ask other believers to pray for us and to hold us accountable for godliness. We can do the same for them. And we can utilise other resources to help as well. With digital temptations, *Covenant Eyes* and other tools can filter pornography and alert an accountability partner regarding our online activity.

Martin Luther was right: you can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from nesting in your hair.

Four: Succumbing to self-reliance

Our culture is built on self-reliance. We applaud self-made success stories. But for Christians, self-reliance is spiritual suicide. Paul advised us: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). This is because the Spirit is far more powerful than Satan. He can defeat every temptation we face and enable us to "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might" (Ephesians 6:10).

Zechariah 4:6 is a vital principle here: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of Hosts." In His strength we can "abhor what is evil" and "hold fast to what is good" (Romans 12:9).

The key is admitting our weakness and then trusting His strength. This is why Paul testified, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). St. Augustine said of his own struggles with sexual sin, "Lust indulged became habit, and habit unresisted became necessity."

But he also noted, "Purity of soul cannot be lost without consent." And purity of soul can be gained whenever we submit to the Spirit, for then "the Spirit helps us in our weakness" (Romans 8:26) and molds us into the holy character of Christ (v. 29).

How to choose "life and peace"

Now we have a decision to make every moment of every day: "Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit" (Romans 8:5). The stakes could not be higher: "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace" (v. 6). Where will you "set your mind" today?

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Love that Lasts

For years, nothing in King David's life looked "good." His family underestimated him, giants despised him, and his father-in-law spent years trying to kill him. But the whole time, David clung to a promise that God would establish him and make him king of Israel.

David never gave up or gave in - he stayed close to God and waited for Him to act. And when God acts, this is how David responds: "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever" (1 Chronicles 16:34 NIV).

Despite the pain David endured, he knew that even when life didn't look good, he still served his good God. And this same God

actively fights for us.

Through His Son, Jesus, He has given us continual access to Himself. We can never lose His unfailing love toward us - a love that endures forever, no matter what goes on around us.

David recognised this, and proclaimed it. And every day, we have the opportunity to do the same thing. Here are two practical ways we can respond to God's goodness and love:

- Thank Him in Prayer

When Jesus was teaching His disciples to pray, He told them to start like this: "Our Father in heaven, help us to honour Your Name." It's fine to ask God for things, but real relationships include both give and take. So at

least once a day for the next week, go to God in prayer, and thank Him for something He's done - without asking Him for anything in return.

- Share Your Story

The writer of Hebrews encourages us to honour God by "proclaiming our allegiance to His Name." (Hebrews 13:15-16) So what has God done for you? Where have you seen Him provide, protect, show up, or show off through your life? Look for natural opportunities to share what God is doing in you with someone else.

Right now, reflect on your life and thank God for His eternal goodness. Nothing you have faced or will ever face is too much for the God Who loves you and died for

you. Bring Him your concerns, surrender your expectations, and allow Him to reveal the evidence of His goodness in your life.

Prayer: God, thank You for being unstoppable, unchangeable, all-powerful, and incomparable. You alone are worthy of all my praise, honour, and glory! Your love endures forever, and I am forever grateful for Who You are! Thank You for making a way for me to know You personally. No one and nothing compares to You! Amen.

"The Lord appeared to me (Israel) from ages past, saying, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you and continued My faithfulness to you.'" (Jer. 31:3 AMP).

Die Paar Skoene

Toe Oupa Dawie oorlede is, het die familie sy kas begin uitpak. Daar was nie veel nie. 'n Paar netjiese hemde. 'n Ou Bybel waarvan die blaaië al geel geword het. 'n Paar foto's wat al begin verbleik het. En heel onder, in die hoek van die kas... 'n Verslete paar bruin werkskoene.

Een van die kleinkinders het daarna gekyk en geglimlag. "Gooi hulle maar weg. Niemand sal ooit weer daardie skoene dra nie." Oupa se oudste dogter het stil vooroor gebuk, die skoene opgetel en dit teen haar vasgehou. "Nee," het sy sag gesê. Sy het met haar hand oor die afgeskuurde leer gevee.

"Met hierdie skoene het Pa elke oggend, lank voor sonop, werk toe gestap. Ons het nie 'n motor gehad nie. Soms het hy kilometers deur koue wind en reën geloop, net om seker te maak daar is saans kos op ons tafel." Sy het vir 'n oomblik stil geword.

"Toe ek as kind ernstig siek geword het, het hy my in sy arms tot by die kliniek gedra." Sy het weer na die skoene gekyk. "Dit was die skoene wat hy daardie dag aangehad het."

'n Traan het stadig oor haar wang gerol. "En op my troudag... was dit ook hierdie skoene wat my pa tot by die kansel gedra het. Hy het nie mooier skoene gehad nie, maar hy het altyd eerste aan sy gesin gedink."

Die vertrek het doodstil geraak.

Skielik het niemand meer ou skoene gesien nie. Hulle het die opofferings daarin begin raaksien. Die kilometers. Die winters. Die reëndae. Die lang ure se harde werk. Die stil gebede wat net God gehoor het.

Die kleinseun het die skoene versigtig uit sy tannie se hande geneem. Hy het met sy vingers oor die dun sole gestreel. Toe fluister hy: "Hierdie skoene is nie oud nie... Hulle is moeg." Niemand het geantwoord nie. Want almal het verstaan. Daardie skoene was nie deur tyd verslyt nie. Hulle was moeg gestap deur liefde.

Eendag sal ons huise leeg staan. Ons geld, ons besittings en alles waarvoor ons gewerk het, sal agterbly. Maar die liefde waarmee ons ander gedien het... die opofferings wat niemand raakgesien het nie... die gebede wat in stilte gebid is... en die spore van 'n lewe wat vir ander geleef is... sal nooit verdwyn nie. Want liefde laat spore wat selfs die tyd nie kan uitvee nie. En lank nadat ons laaste tree gegee is, sal daardie liefde steeds aanhou stap in die lewens van die mense vir wie ons geleef het.

"Moet dus nie moeg word om goed te doen nie, want as ons nie tou opgooi nie, sal ons op die regte tyd oes" (Galasiërs 6:9 NLV).

"Baie mense sal voorgee dat hulle lojale vriende is, maar waar is daar iemand wat regtig betroubaar is?" (Spreuke 20:6 NLV).

"“As julle in klein sake getrou is, sal julle ook in groot sake getrou wees. As jy selfs 'n klein bietjie oneerlik is, sal jy nie eerlik wees met groot verantwoordelikhede nie ” (Lukas 16:10 NLV).

© God se Planne is Groter as Joune



Vol Bewe, Maar Leë Hart

“Een van die grootste tragedies van ons tyd is dat mense ’n mooi lewe kan vertoon, maar tog leeg van binne leef” (Matteus 12:45).

Ons leef in ’n era van vol huise, vol programme en vol besittings. Tog is daar dikwels leë harte. Ons vul ons dae met werk, verantwoordelikhede, tegnologie en doelwitte. Maar ten spyte daarvan ervaar baie mense min vrede, min ware verbondenheid en min van God. Dit is moontlik om alles te hê waarvoor jy gewerk het en steeds leeg te voel. Waarom? Omdat die diepste behoefte van die mens nie meer dinge is nie, maar God.

Geld kan gerief koop, maar nie vrede nie. Sukses kan bewondering bring, maar nie vervulling nie. Mense kan jou liefhê, maar steeds kan daar leegheid binne wees. Die menslike hart is gemaak vir Christus. Geen mens, besitting of prestasie kan die plek inneem wat net Hy kan vul nie.

Aksie vir vandag: Maak vandag tyd om alleen met die Here deur te bring. Sit jou selfoon opsy en fokus vir ’n paar minute net op Sy teenwoordigheid.

Bid saam met my: Here Jesus, ek bely dat ek soms na vervulling op die verkeerde plekke soek. Vul my hart met U vrede en Teenwoordigheid. Amen.

Mag jy vandag ontdek dat ware vervulling nie in meer dinge lê nie, maar in ’n dieper wandel met Christus.

- Past. Johan Nortje

WAITING WELL

Waiting can be hard. Most of us would prefer quick, efficient, and - when possible - instant results and answers. But waiting is a part of life. We must wait for seeds to grow into food, for one season to fade into the next, for babies to mature into adults, and for trees to stand tall enough to finally offer shade. Like it or not, waiting takes patience. We can wait days, months, years, or even decades for a prayer to be answered, for an overdue apology, for the timing to be right, or for a dream to finally come to pass. Waiting requires courage.

King David lived nearly 3 000 years ago, but he knew what it meant to wait for God’s timing, to wait to be king, to wait to be rescued from his enemies. He wrote: *“Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord”* (Ps. 27:14 NLT). If David thought waiting on God was important enough to write it twice in one verse, we should probably pay attention. But waiting patiently for the Lord isn’t an excuse to do nothing. We can proactively wait on God by staying in communication with Him, by looking for His fingerprints in ordinary moments, by reading about His story and His plans in His Word, by worshipping Him no matter what’s happening across the globe, by serving the people both inside and outside of our circles, and by thanking Him for the gifts He’s already given us.

Just because a specific door isn’t opening, or a particular opportunity isn’t available at this moment doesn’t mean that God isn’t moving. Even when we are waiting - God is working. Noah spent decades building an ark as he waited for God to do what He’d promised. Ruth journeyed with her mother-in-law and worked in the grain fields while trusting in God’s provision after her husband’s death. Joseph stayed faithful in prison for several years before his promotion to second-in-command of Egypt. John trusted God’s ultimate will for his life, and wrote the book of Revelation while sentenced to exile on the island of Patmos. So, no matter what you’re facing today, you can ask God for patience and trust that He is in control of your future. No matter what uncertainty lies before you, when you rely on the Lord, you can be someone who waits well. While you’re waiting, God is working!

Prayer: God, I often want immediate solutions for my problems. It can be so hard to wait, but Your timing and Your ways are perfect. As I wait for You, help me to learn from the current situation I’m in - focusing on the current blessings I have, and praising You for all the things You’re still going to do. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

- Selected

What Does It Mean to Pick Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus?

“And calling the crowd to Him with His disciples, He said to them, ‘If anyone would come after Me, let Him deny himself and take up His cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel’s will save it’” (Mark 8:34-35).

1. SURRENDER SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Jesus exhorts His disciples to surrender self-sufficiency and self-reliance so that they might be able to serve Him and bear fruit. As with the call of Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21), they must realise that the cost of discipleship means letting go of self-reliance in order to follow their Master and His purposes. In the broader context of redemptive history, the call to radical discipleship reverses the pervasive hostility against God ever since the fall of mankind. The renewed ability to walk with God represents the original design for human beings, affecting self-awareness, relationships with others, and other aspects of life and society.

The aim of the call to “deny” yourself (cf. Mark 14:30, 31, 72) and “take up” one’s “cross” has nothing to do with unhealthy self-accusation, self-abasement, self-hatred, loss of personality, or nurture of a martyrdom complex. Rather, through surrender of - and death to - self-determination and self-reliance, one becomes free from any detracting, fallen, or sinful affection, idol, or loyalty in order to “follow” Jesus’s kingdom rule in an ongoing and maturing way.

2. FOLLOWING JESUS

The motif of the call to “follow” (*akoloutheō*) Jesus arises frequently in Mark. Such a follower belongs to the Messiah wholeheartedly and persistently (Mark 1:18; 2:15). This notion echoes the calling of walking with God in the Old Testament, which expresses itself in undivided loyalty and obedience (e.g., Ruth 1:16-17; 2 Sam. 15:21). Self-denial means letting go of self-determination (Ps. 49:6-7) and control, replacing them with a comprehensive dependence upon and primary loyalty to the Messiah. Conceptually, it is close to Paul’s “*dying and rising with Christ*” (Romans 6:3-4). Taking up the “cross,” that is, carrying especially the horizontal beam of a cross to one’s place of execution, means living in a way akin to taking one’s last journey to one’s own execution. The grace of the Gospel is that one who does so discovers that the Messiah has already taken the

place of punishment. By dying a substitutionary and atoning death, Jesus has, in a real sense, taken the final judgment of each disciple upon Himself, thus affording the disciple unmerited mercy.

Jesus speaks of “*I carry the cross*” in a figurative way: carrying the patibulum, that is, the horizontal beam of a cross, to the place of execution daily (so Luke 9:23). Contrast this with Simon of Cyrene, who literally and for a limited period of time carried Jesus’s cross (Mark 15:21). It all serves the purpose of living in simple submission to the sovereign lordship of Christ rather than one’s own determination. By letting go of self-determination and self-sufficiency, the disciple begins to enter into a new life given by God (cf. 2 Cor. 1:9).

3. RECEIVING GOD’S GRACE

Such dependence begins with receiving and welcoming personally the substitutionary death of Jesus for personal sinfulness and sins. We have to put our trust in Jesus and accept Him as our Saviour. It continues with letting the love of Christ transform and mold the disciple into a new Christlike human being who uses and hones God-given abilities to the honour of God. This is sanctification, wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

In a secondary sense this also implies suffering for Jesus (cf. Mark 8:38) and being willing to die for Him as a witness. The “yoke” metaphor employed by Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 supplements Jesus’s teaching on bearing the cross daily. The more one is surrendered to Jesus, including in all the daily worries and concerns of life, the more one is willing and ready to obey and be guided by the facilitative light yoke of Jesus.

4. FINDING COMMUNION WITH GOD

In Mark 8:35, Mark presents Jesus as developing the principle laid down in verse 34. The paradoxical statement favours a figurative interpretation of saving or losing one’s life: he who persists in self-determination (i.e., seeks to “save his life”) will not discover real and eternally enduring life with God (i.e., he “will lose it”). He who gives up self-determination (i.e., “loses his life”) for the “sake” of Christ and the good news (“Gospel”) will find communion with God and eternally enduring life. It is possible that this verse refers to not only the “Gospel” proclaimed by Jesus but also the

good news about Him. An example of the paradoxical principle of “letting go in order to gain” is found in Mark 10:29-30 (cf. Luke 9:26). Such life is marked by closeness to God in all areas of existence (i.e., one “will save” one’s life; cf. Mark 8:38). Jesus’s call to surrender and full allegiance is comprehensive: true, eternally lasting life arises from a deeply personal response to Him.

5. DISCOVERING GOD’S WILL

Jesus asks questions not to learn something but rather to help His disciples and us discover truth and reality. What His disciples expect, namely, a Davidic liberator from Roman oppression, is not what Jesus has come to bring. He willingly goes to His death on the cross to liberate His followers, above all else, from the oppression of sin, with its enmity against God. He also breaks the power of Satan and all evil.

Do contemporary followers of Christ approach Him with their own agenda, or do they welcome what Jesus came to bring into their lives? Do they inquire into the mission and purpose of God? Modern followers of Jesus are confronted with the same challenges as were the initial disciples: Do modern disciples have a plan for Jesus’s life, as, for example, Peter did (Mark 8:32), even though they know Who Jesus is (cf. Mark 8:29)? Or do they seek to be involved in God’s purposes?

A follower of Christ appreciates the empowering love of Him Who calls to such radical discipleship. He becomes aware of the defilement of his own heart and welcomes the reconciling and purifying healing of Jesus’s sacrifice on his or her behalf. Subsequently, the disciple will learn to consider decisions prayerfully and to bring wishes, dreams, and plans about marriage, work, and relationships under His sovereign care (cf. Mark 8:34-35). Such a surrendered life also leads to a new way of bearing responsibility. Rather than being self-sufficient in carrying responsibility, the disciple now learns to bear responsibility by holding his or her will and thought in a teachable, guidable, and prayerful attitude before God. This form of surrender has nothing to do with self-abasement or a life of irresponsibility. The follower of Christ needs to keep in mind that the one he surrenders to is trustworthy, merciful, and powerful. Christ loves His followers and



guides them.

6. COUNTING THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

Regarding the particular cost of discipleship in Mark 8:34, Bonhoeffer rightly linked Jesus’s call to carry the cross daily (Luke 9:23; cf. Mark 8:34) with carrying the yoke of Christ (Matt. 11:28-30). While figuratively carrying the cross (patibulum) focuses on letting go of self-determination, carrying the figurative slave yoke of Christ and learning from Him focuses on the process of surrendered obedience to His good, humble, and well-calibrated guidance. An attitude and practice of deep trust and surrender (cf. John 12:24) is thus supplemented by a willingness to accept Jesus’s painful way of leading His followers from sinful ways and a “culture of death” or a “culture of pride” toward a true, God-filled life. The freedom Jesus brings enables His followers to know the difference between seeking their own lives and the life that Christ gives. Such new life gives new courage: courage to confess allegiance and loyalty to Christ in the face of threats. Likewise, Jesus will identify with His followers at the last judgment (Mark 8:38).

SUMMARY

Jesus calls each believer to take up their cross daily. We have to lay down our self-sufficiency and independence and develop a deep, trusting relationship with Him. We need to develop loyalty to Him only, and forsake any “idols” (things to which we attach too much value or importance) in our lives. This is the road to spiritual maturity. In self-denial, we keep following Him throughout our lives, obediently listening to the ever-speaking Voice of the Holy Spirit. We have to become willing to be His witness, even if this evokes suffering and persecution. This is the path to eternal life!

-Hans F Bayer, crossway.org

THE ONLY WAY - FORWARD!

INTRODUCTION

Life is a journey, and every one of us faces moments of change, challenge, disappointment, and opportunity. Along the way, there are things we celebrate, things we regret, and things we wish had turned out differently. Some people become trapped in the past, either living in past victories or being held captive by past failures. But God calls us to move forward. The Christian life is not a stagnant life; it is a journey of growth, faith, and continual progress. God always has more ahead for us. The only direction we can truly go in with God is forward!

1. THERE IS A MOMENT TO REMEMBER

Psalms 77:11- *"I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember Your miracles of long ago."* It is good to remember what God has done for us. Looking back at God's faithfulness can strengthen our faith for today. We all have moments where God came through for us, protected us, provided for us, or carried us through difficult seasons. Those memories become landmarks of His goodness in our lives.

Sometimes we need to pause and remember the miracles, breakthroughs, and blessings God has already brought into our lives. The "good old days" can remind us that the same God Who was faithful then is faithful now. But we must never live only in yesterday's victories.

2. THERE IS A TIME TO PUT THE PAST BEHIND US

Philippians 3:13 (NIV) - *"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind..."*
Philippians 3:13 (NLT) - *"I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past..."*
There comes a time when we must stop living in the past. Some people are trapped by regret, guilt, disappointment, or pain. Others are trapped by success and constantly compare the present to "better days." God does not want us stuck in what was. We cannot drive forward while constantly looking in the rearview mirror. The past may have shaped us, but it should not control us. God's grace allows us to release the past and embrace the future He has prepared for us.

3. OUR FOCUS SHOULD BE ON WHAT LIES AHEAD

Philippians 3:13 (NIV) - *"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead."* God always has something ahead for us. There are new opportunities, new seasons, new lessons, and new victories

waiting for us. The enemy wants to distract us with what is behind us, but God calls us to look ahead with hope and expectation.

Faith is forward-looking. When Peter walked on the water, he succeeded while his focus remained on Jesus. What we focus on shapes the direction of our lives. If we focus on fear, failure, or disappointment, we will become discouraged. But if we focus on God and His promises, hope begins to rise within us.

4. KEEP ON PRESSING ON

Philippians 3:14 - *"I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."* Life is not always easy, and moving forward can sometimes feel exhausting. There are moments when we feel like giving up. But God calls us to keep pressing on. Progress may sometimes be slow, but slow progress is still progress. Every step of obedience, every prayer, every act of faith matters. Don't allow setbacks to stop you.

Keep moving forward, even if it is one small step at a time. God honours perseverance and faithfulness.

5. FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

1 Timothy 6:12 - *"Fight the good fight of the faith."*
2 Timothy 4:7 - *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*
The Christian life involves spiritual battles. We battle discouragement, temptation, fear, doubt, and opposition. But we are not fighting for victory, we are fighting from a place of victory because Christ has already overcome.
A good fight is a fight worth fighting and a good fight is a fight we win. Hold onto your faith, even when circumstances seem difficult. Don't surrender your hope or your confidence in God. Stay faithful through every season.

6. RUN THE RACE TO WIN

1 Corinthians 9:24 - *"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize."* The Christian life is compared to a race. Athletes train with discipline, focus, and determination because they want to finish well. In the same way, we should live intentionally and wholeheartedly for God. Don't live carelessly or half-heartedly.

Run your race with passion, commitment, and endurance. God has placed a unique race before each one of us. Don't compare your

journey to someone else's journey, simply remain faithful to the path God has given you.

7. WHAT WE FOCUS ON DETERMINES OUR DIRECTION

Colossians 3:2 - *"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."* Whatever captures our attention will eventually influence our direction. If our minds are constantly filled with negativity, fear, distractions, or worldly influences, it will affect our spiritual lives.

We need to intentionally focus on the things of God. Fill your mind with His Word, His promises, worship, prayer, and godly influences. A heavenly focus produces earthly stability. Where your focus goes, your life will follow.

8. THE LORD WILL BE FAITHFUL AND HE WILL SHOW YOU THE WAY

Psalms 143:8 - *"Let the morning bring me word of Your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in You. Show me the way I should go, for to You I entrust my life."* One of the greatest comforts we have is knowing that God will lead us. We

do not have to figure everything out on our own.

When we place our trust in Him, He promises to direct our steps. Sometimes the road ahead may seem uncertain, but God already knows the way. He sees the end from the beginning.

As we trust Him daily, He will guide us step by step. His love is unfailing, His faithfulness is constant, and His direction is sure.

CONCLUSION

Life may bring many challenges, disappointments, and unexpected turns, but God calls us to keep moving forward. Remember His faithfulness, release the past, focus on what lies ahead, and continue pressing on.

Fight the good fight, run your race with endurance, and keep your eyes fixed on Him. The Lord is faithful, and He will guide you every step of the way. Your best days with God are not behind you, they are still ahead of you. The only way with God is forward!

- Pastor Andrew W. Roebert

High-Achiever Problems

I tend to be a pretty high achiever. I love tackling challenging problems and crossing items off of my seemingly endless to-do list. I can also fall into the trap of believing that I am what I do, which suggests that if I'm not doing anything, then I am nothing.

If I could label this last season, I would call it "emptying." God even led me to stop doing things for Him, like writing my blog. This clearing of my schedule left me feeling a little purposeless and unsure of myself.

But the truth is, even when I'm not doing things for God, He still loves and accepts me. What a radical concept!

We see this play out in Luke 19:1-10, where we meet a well-known Bible character named Zacchaeus. He's a wee little man who climbed up in a tree, making his own box seats to see Jesus.

Though at this point, Zacchaeus

has done nothing for God (in fact, he has swindled money from God's people), Jesus still invites Himself over for a meal.

Zacchaeus had done nothing to deserve God's love. He didn't try to earn it, he simply received.

Out of this intimate encounter with the love of God, Zacchaeus was led to do something for God - it wasn't the other way around.

We don't have to work or strive to achieve a relationship with God. We simply receive His grace and forgiveness. Then, from that place of deep love and relationship, we can do things with and for God.

In our hurried, achievement-oriented world, understanding God's free gift of grace, belonging, and relationship can change everything. No matter what we have or haven't done, let's choose to sit with God and simply receive His grace today.

- Sarah J Callen, Our Daily Bread

The Weaver

*“My life is but a weaving
Between my God and me;
I cannot choose the colours
He worketh steadily.
Sometimes He weaveth sorrow
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper,
And I the underside.*

*Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.
The dark threads are as needful
In the Weaver’s skillful Hand,
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.*

*My life is but a weaving
Between my God and me;
I see the seams, the tangles,
But He sees perfectly.
He knows, He loves, He cares,
Nothing this truth can dim;
He gives His very best to those
Who choose to walk with Him.”
Grant Colfax Tullar (1869-1950)*



PRESENCE

“Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and His disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaheus”), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him.’ So they called to the blind man, ‘Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.’ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ Jesus asked him. The blind man said, ‘Rabbi, I want to see.’ ‘Go,’ said Jesus, ‘your faith has healed you.’ Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road” (Mark 10:46-52 NIV).

Not long ago, I caught myself half-listening during a conversation with someone I care about. They were talking, and I was nodding along, but mentally I was somewhere else - thinking about work, my schedule, the next thing I needed to do. I was reminded how easy it is to physically be somewhere while emotionally and mentally being completely absent.

A lot of us live this way more often than we realise. It’s easy to spend life somewhere other than where we are. Thinking about

tomorrow. Replaying yesterday. Worrying about what’s next. Scrolling past the people sitting right in front of us.

It’s so easy to move through life distracted, rushed, and mentally elsewhere. But the life we long for, the really good stuff, is often found in the moments we’re tempted to overlook. The conversation with your child at dinner. The quiet walk with your wife. The friend who needs someone to really listen. The few still moments you have with yourself before the day begins.

Presence is becoming increasingly rare in our world. And because it’s rare, it’s deeply valuable. Jesus was remarkably present with people. Even with crowds around Him and endless needs pressing in, He stopped. He listened. He noticed. He made people feel seen.

It’s so tempting to just focus on providing, solving, and accomplishing. But some of the most meaningful things we can offer others are our attention, our presence, and our care.

Where have you been distracted or emotionally absent lately? How can you become more fully present with God, yourself, and the people you love today?
-Authentic Manhood



Hendrik van Graan
Susana van Graan

OPTOMETRISTS / OOGKUNDIGES

PETER MOKABALAN 3 (VAN RIEBEECKSTRAAT 3)

Tel: (018) 294 7666 • Tel: (018) 294 7111

B. Optom; F.O.A. (S.A.) • Praktyknr./Practice No. 7027060

Oase van Hoop

AGS Baillie Park Gemeente

Sondagoggenddiens 9:30
JOI-Kinderdienste 9:30
E-pos: johann@safricom.co.za
Pastoor Johan Nortje 083 280 8971



Baillie Park Gemeente



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-KOFFIE KAFEE-

HEB. 6:19

est. 2023

