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Kersfeesoffers

Kersfeestyd is 'n tyd van lig en liefde, vreugde en vrede. Ons dink terug aan die eerste aand toe die engele die vreugdevolle boodskap gebring het: God het welbehae in die mense gehad! Hy het ons 'n grootse Geskenk kom gee.

Maar dink ons ook daarvan dat Kersfees 'n tyd van offers was vir vele? Die vreugde wat ons nou ervaar is gebaseer op die oorgawe en gehoorsaamheid van ander. Kom ons bedink die prysgawe van sommige.

ABRAHAM SE OFFER

Ons lees van Abraham se roeping in Genesis 12. Hy was gehoorsaam aan God se roeping en het op vyf-en-sewentigjarige ouderdom alles agtergelaat op grond van God se belofte: "En Ek sal jou 'n groot nasie maak en jou seën en jou naam so groot maak, dat jy 'n seën sal wees" (Gen. 12:2 OV).

Paulus skryf dat hierdie woorde eintlik die Evangelie is wat aan Abraham verkondig is, en dat al die volke in die gelowige Abraham geseen sou word (Gal. 3:8-9, 14). Dit is omdat die Messias uit sy geslagslyn sou voortkom (v. 16). God het later hierdie verbond met Abraham bevestig (Gen. 15; 17). Sy naam is van Abram (verhewe vader) na Abraham (vader van 'n menigte) verander (Gen. 17:5).

Groot moes Abraham se verbaas en wroeging wees toe God hom vra om sy seun te offer, nadat hy so lank gewag het op die vervulling van God se belofte (Heb. 11:7). Maar hy het sy offer gebring, en steeds bly hoop op 'n wonderwerk (v. 18). God het Abraham se geloof geëer.

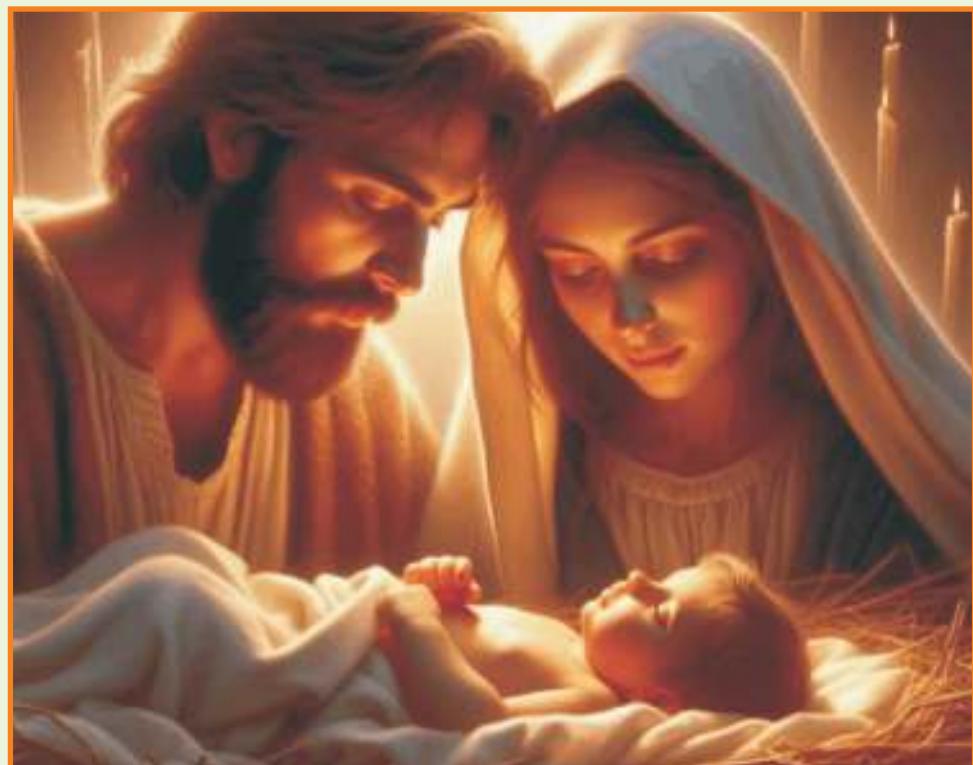
Wat het Abraham se verhaal met Kersfees te doen? Wel, God het hierdie simboliek kragtig gebruik om heen te wys na Sy Seun wat

geoffer sou word vir almal, en redding sou bring vir die wat glo. So kan ons gehoorsaamheid 'n integrale deel uitmaak van God se storie.

JOHANNES DIE DOPER SE OFFER

Sagaria en Elisabet (familie van Maria) was kinderloos. 'n Engel het egter aan Sagaria tydens sy tempeldiensbeurt verskyn en die volgende gesê: "...Moenie bang wees nie, Sagaria, want jou gebed is verhoor. Jou vrou, Elisabet, sal aan jou 'n seun skenk, en jy moet hom Johannes noem. Hy sal 'n bron van blydschap en vreugde vir jou wees, en baie sal bly wees oor sy geboorte, want hy sal groot wees in die oë van die Here. Wyn en bier sal hy glad nie drink nie, en reeds van sy geboorte af sal hy met die Heilige Gees vervul wees. Hy sal baie uit die volk Israel laat terugkeer tot die Here hulle God. En hy sal voor die Here uit gaan in dieselfde gees en krag as Elia, om vaders en kinders met mekaar te versoen, om ongehoorsames op die regte pad terug te bring en om so vir die koms van die Here 'n volk voor te berei" (Luk. 2:13-17 NV).

Johannes as jongman het in die woestyn gewoon en was 'n profeet wat Israel moes terugroept na God en die pad vir die Messias moes voorberei. So 'n pad van diep voorbereiding en konflik kon nie maklik gewees het nie, maar die innige gemeenskap met God moes aan die ander kant ook soet gewees het. Johannes was bereid om terug te staan toe Jesus prominent begin word het ("Hy moet meer word en ek minder"; Joh. 3:30). Hy het glad nie omgegee om in die skaduwees te staan sodat hy sy roeping gehoorsaam kon uitleef nie. Hy het, menslik gesproke, 'n sinnelose dood gesterf omdat hy teen onreg opgestaan het toe hy koning Herodus bestraf het omdat Ig. met sy halfbroer se vrou getrou het



(Matt. 14:4). Jesus het hom beskryf as meer as 'n profeet, en die grootste onder die mense (Matt. 11:9,11).

Sy boodskap is vandaag nog waar: "Daar is die Lam van God wat die sonde van die wêreld wegneem" (Joh. 1:29 OV). Johannes het offervaatig die pad vir Jesus se bediening, wat op Sy geboorte sou volg, voorberei.

MARIA SE OFFER

Die jongmeisie Maria was aan Josef verloof. Toe die engel Gabriël vir haar sê dat sy sou swanger word, het sy gevra: "Hoe is so iets moontlik, aangesien ek nog nooit omgang met 'n man gehad het nie?" (Luk. 1:34 NV). Hy het haar gerusgestel met die woorde: "Die Heilige Gees sal oor jou kom, en die krag van die Allerhoogste sal die lewe in jou wek. Daarom sal die een wat gebore word, heilig genoem word, die Seun van God" (v. 35). Daarna het Maria haar gehoorsaam onderwerp en haar tot God se beskikking gestel, ten spyte van die gevolge. Sy was nederig en het haarself as geseënd geag dat

God haar sou uitkies vir hierdie besondere doel. Mense sou wonder en skinder, en sy moes skielik, op 'n jong ouderdom, 'n moeder word. Maar sy was bereid om God te gehoorsaam en die gevolge aan Hom oor te laat.

JOSEF SE OFFER

Josef moes waarskynlik tot sy konsternasie ontdek dat sy verloofde reeds swanger was (Matt. 1:18). Dit kon dui op ontrouwheid, wat 'n taboe was in daardie tyd. Hierdie ontrouwheid kon ernstige gevolge van straf, selfs die doodstraf, gehad het indien die Joodse wet tot die letter toegepas sou word. Matteus beskryf Josef as 'n regverdig man wat Maria nie wou openbaarmaak of blootstel nie; maar hy het hom voorgeneem om van haar te skei (die Joodse verloving was meer bindend as wat dit in ons kultuur vandag is). Hy het egter in 'n droom die bevestiging gekry om met haar te trou, en hy was nie ongehoorsaam nie. Hy het sy eie denke, planne, en agendas opsygeskuif en was bereid om aan God

Vervolg op p. 7

Kom Sit Onder My Koelteboom

Jesus roep elkeen van Sy kinders om onder Sy koelteboom te kom sit. Om 'n bietjie eenkant te kom en aan Sy voete te kom rus. Ons sien hierdie voorbeeld waar Hy Sy dissipels ná Sy opstanding en verskyning aan hulle nooi om te kom eet. Hulle was moeg en uitgeput en honger en het nik vis gevang nie. Hulle het die hele nag deur hard gewerk. Niks geslaap nie. En nou het hulle op Sy bevel die nette weer eens uitgegoot, en wat 'n wonderwerk! Nou roep Hy hulle na Hom toe: "My kinders, het julle nie iets om te eet nie?" (Joh. 21:5). Dan roep Hy hulle toe, "Kom eet!" En kom rus 'n bietjie. Hier is My koelteboom. Kom sit aan by My tafel op die strand.

So dek Hy vir ons almal 'n tafel in die woestyn, teenoor ons teëstanders (Ps. 23). Die Here sal ons met olie soos Samuel vir Dawid as koning gesalf het: "Samuel neem toe die horing met olie en salf hom te midde van sy broers, en die Gees van die HERE het van dié dag af en verder oor Dawid vaardig geword. En Samuel het klaargemaak en na Rama gegaan" (1 Sam. 16:13). Saul het misluk as koning. Kom die leierskap terug na Samuel as laaste Rigter? Nee, Hy moet vir Dawid as koning gaan salf met uitvoerende pligte.

Kyk hoe Dawid van hier af ook vir Goliat verslaan het! En so ook alle ander veldslae. En hier skryf Dawid Psalm 23 wat hy toeganklik maak vir almal. God sal elkeen van Sy kinders met die horing vol olie en rus hulle toe met die krag van die Heilige Gees. Hy verkwik ons siel. Hy giet hierdie salfolie op elkeen se hoof uit wat onder Sy koelteboom kom sit! As ons eenkant kom en stilword aan Sy voete, vernuwe Hy ons gees en ons kragte.

Die koelteboom is 'n besondere simbool van afsondeling en intieme gesprek met God. In daardie dae het elkeen sy eie vyeboom gehad waaronder hy kon sit en peins, rus en nadink oor sy lewe, en soms ook kon bid. Toe Jesus vir Natáael na Hom aangeslap sien kom, sê hy vir hom: "Hier is waarlik 'n Israeliet in wie daar geen bedrog is nie" (Joh. 1:48). En wat sê Natáael toe? Hy sê: "Waarvandaan ken U my? Jesus antwoord en sê vir hom: Voordat Filippus jou geroep het toe jy onder die vyeboom was, het Ek jou gesien." Vol verbystering antwoord hy: "Rabbi, U is die Seun van God, U is die Koning van Israel!" (Joh. 1:49-50).

Hoekom hierdie verbystering en intense reaksie? Jesus het hom gesien in die Gees toe hy hom afgesonder het om onder die

vyeboom te gaan sit vir gebed en oordenking en om met God te ontmoet! Daar was 'n verwagting by hom aanwesig dat die Messias enige tyd kon verskyn - en hier is Hy! Jesus het sy intieme gesprek met God raakgesien en erken. Dáárop sê hy vir Jesus: "Rabbi, U is die Seun van God, U is die Koning van Israel!" (Joh. 1:50). Kyk hoe spreek God met Sagaría, die profeet: "Luister tog, o Josua, jy wat die hoëpriester is ... Want kyk, Ek sal my Kneg, die Spruit, laat kom! In dié dag, spreek die HERE van die leërskare, sal julle mekaar uitnooi onder die wingerdstok en onder die vyeboom." (Sag. 3:8-10). En dit is wat Natáael gedoen het. Hy het onder sy eie vyeboom gaan sit, waar Jesus sy hartsgesindheid raakgesien het. Wat 'n seën om só in afsondeling tyd met God te spandeer en deur Sy Teenwoordigheid aangeraak te word!

Vincent lewer die volgende kommentaar: "The Jewish writings tell of distinguished rabbis who were accustomed to rise early and pursue their studies under the shade of a fig tree. St Augustine, [the famous church father] in his "Confessions," relates of himself: "I cast myself down, I know not how, under a certain fig tree, giving full vent to my tears; and the floods of mine eyes gushed out, an acceptable sacrifice to Thee" (viii. 28)." Hoe het Jesus geweet wat in Natáael se hart was? Hy het geweet deur die gawe van 'n woord van kennis uit die Heilige Gees. "Want Hy wat God gestuur het, spreek die woorde van God; want God gee Hom die Gees nie met mate nie" (Joh. 3:34). En alles val saam met 1 Kor. 12:4-11 wat handel oor die gawes van die Heilige Gees. Jesus was volkome mens, geleid deur die Heilige Gees. Hy het nie gefunksioneer in Sy Alwetenheid nie, maar Hy was eers Draer van die Gees. Ná Sy opstanding word Hy Sender van die Gees. Tydens Sy aardse bediening is Hy dus deur die Gees geleid, bekragtig, en gebruik. So moet ons Sy voorbeeld navolg, ons aan die Gees oorgee, en daagliks in die Gees wandel.

Maar daar is ook 'n ander kant van die muntstuk. Dit is wonderlik om onder die koelteboom te sit om te rus. Dit berei ons egter voor vir die volgende fase van ons roeping wat ons moet uitleef. Dit behels telkens 'n offer wat ons aan God moet bring. Ons sien verskeie voorbeeld hiervan in die lewens van bybelkarakters.

Jesus het telkemale op die berg gaan bid met 'n ander doel. Dit was om Hom aan die Vader te wy sodat Hy Sy offer volledig kon bring. Hy het telkemale ontrek en

na "Sy koelteboom" gegaan en daar God se aangesig gaan soek. Daar het Hy wysheid en rigting gekry vir die volgende fase van Sy roeping. So het Israeliete ook op die berg gaan bid om te offer. Daarom het hulle altare op die berg gebou met een doel voor oë: om te aanbid en te offer. So staan dit opgeteken in Eseg. 20:40, "Want op My heilige berg, op die verhewe berg van Israel, spreek die Here HERE, daar sal die hele huis van Israel, hulle almal, My dien in die land; daar sal Ek 'n behae in hulle hê en daar sal Ek julle offergawes eis en die eerstelinge van julle aanbiedinge by al julle heilige gawes."

Abraham moes sy offer bring op die berg Moria. Hy moes sy seun Isak gaan offer. Dit spreek van Jesus wat Homself op die berg Golgota gaan offer het. Watter kragtige beeldspraak van die uitnemendste van offers wat sou kom! Wanneer die gelowige onder die vyeboom gaan sit, is dit om hom af te sonder en aan die voete van die Here te gaan sit en sekere behoeftes aan Hom te stel. Wanneer die gelowige op die berg klim is dit egter ook om 'n offer te bring. Ons sien telkens hierdie twee kante van die saak.

So 'n offergawe is nie maklik nie. Dit vra jou alles. Jesus het Sy alles op Golgota gegee. Hy het die hoogste prys betaal, maar alles uit liefde! Hy het Self gesê: "Groter liefde het niemand as dit nie, dat iemand sy lewe vir sy vriende gee" (Joh. 15:13). En dan het Hy die liefde van God tot ons geopenbaar in Joh. 3:16, "Want so lief het God die wêreld gehad, dat Hy Sy eniggebore Seun gegee het sodat elkeen wat in Hom glo nie verlore mag gaan nie, maar die ewige lewe kan hê."

Op die kruis het Jesus uitgeroep: "Dit is volbring!" (Grieks = tetelestai). En Jesus bid verder op die vooraand van Sy kruisiging: "Ek het U verheerlik op die aarde. Die werk wat U My gegee het om te doen, het Ek volbring (Grieks = teleioō)" (Joh 17:4). Hier vind ons dieselfde kernwoord as wat Hy op die kruis gebruik het. Dit beteken "volmaak" of "voltooid". Vir tyd en ewigheid afgehandel. Sy offer wat Sy alles gevra het, is voltooi! 'n Voltooiing waarvan? Van alles wat Hy kom herstel het! Die totaliteit van die gevolg van die sondeval. Hy het die sondeval se gevolge kom omdraai. En dit het Sy alles gekos!

Dit is as gevolg van Sy offer dat Hy vir jou en my kan sê: "Kom na My toe, almal wat vermoed en belas is. Kom sit onder My koelteboom. Ek het die prys betaal vir jou sondes, jou siektes en jou smarte (Jes. 53). Ek het My werk van

verlossing en versoening op die kruis afgehandel. Kom, gee jou laste vir My. Kom tot rus aan My voete. Kyk, Ek gee jou rus."

Wanneer jy tot rus kom, bevryding en innerlike genesing en vrede kry, mag Hy vir jou vra: Sal jy jou lewe vir My gee? Sal jy jou offer vir My bring? Dit bly 'n keuse wat jy vrywillig moet bring. Jesus het Homself vrywillig aangebied: "Toe het Ek gesê: Kyk, Ek kom in die boekrol is dit van My geskrywe - om U wil te doen, o God." Nadat Hy hierbo gespreek het: 'Slagoffer en spysoffer en brandoffers en sondoffers wou U nie hê en het U nie behaag nie' - wat volgens die wet geoffer word - het Hy daarna gesê: 'Kyk, Ek kom om U wil te doen, o God.' Hy neem die eerste weg om die tweede te stel. Deur hierdie wil is ons geheilig deur die offer van die liggaam van Jesus Christus, net een maal" (Heb. 10:7-10, 'n aanhaling uit Ps. 40).

Jesus herstel ons wanneer ons onder Sy koelteboom kom sit, om te hoor wat Hy vir ons wil sê rakende ons krisis, smart, rampspoed, pyn en lyding. Hy doen dit sodat Sy koninkryk in ons en met ons tot voltooiing kan kom. Jesus nooi ons elkeen om onder Sy koelteboom te kom sit om te mediteer, bid en ons laste aan Sy voete te kom neerlê. En wanneer ons rus vind onder Sy koelteboom, vra Hy ons om ook ons offer te bring vir diens soos ook Hy gedoen het. Daar sal telkemale 'n wisselwerking kom tussen koelteboom en bergtop, tussen rus en offer, wat nooit nie maklik is nie. Vir elke opdraend is daar 'n afdraend... Vir elke vallei 'n bergtop, vir elke storm 'n stilte, vir elke vuuroond 'n uitkoms, na gelang van die aanslae en teenslae in ons lewe wat by herhaling voorkom. Volhard net om aan die voete van die Here te sit. Hy sal jou ook telkemale deurdra, jou gebed verhoor, en jou uitkoms is verzek: "Die vurige gebed van die regverdige het groot krag" (Jak. 5:16). Dit is salwingdraende gebed, gesalf deur die krag van die Heilige Gees. Leef in hierdie oorwinning!

En nou vra Hy vir my ná my genesing onder die skaduwee van Sy koelteboom om ook my voltooide offer te bring: Gaan getuig en vertel dat Jesus red! Nadat jy Hom beleef het, moet jy hierdie belewenis gaan deel. Is jy gereed daarvoor? Dit berus by jou eie wilsbesluit. Hy dwing niemand nie. Selfs Jesus het gesê in Ps. 40:9: "Ek het lus, o my God, om U welbehae te doen, en U wet is binne-in my ingewande." Wat is jou besluit?

My Need for the Spirit

As I've pondered Romans 7 and 8, the Word highlighted my need for the Spirit of God in my weakness. It speaks of how the flesh cannot fulfil the law because of its sinful nature. We are weak, and although we want to be a friend of Jesus and love as He did, we find that we cannot do it without the Spirit of God. According to Paul, we don't even know how to pray. I often ponder this as I long to be a friend to Jesus and love others well, yet I see my weakness as a daughter, wife, mother, and friend.

But, Paul offers hope and describes in Romans 8:26 how the Spirit is the One Who helps us in our weakness. When we do not know how to pray as we should, He intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings, and He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. I believe Paul is painting a picture we can see lived out by Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Spirit helped Him in His moment of weakness.

As we look at Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, we see His humanity as He asks His disciples to help Him. He wants them to comfort Him and pray in His moment of weakness, but the disciples can't because they are in despair. Jesus asks for their help three times and then tells them in Matthew 26:41, "Keep watching and praying, so that you do not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." I often think about the disciples and how they must have longed to stay awake to comfort Jesus in His time of need, but they were unable to. Their sorrow and despair led them to sleep. Just as Paul promises the Spirit will do for us, in Jesus' time of need, we see the Spirit Himself comforting Him and leading Him to pray in partnership with the desires of His Father as Jesus says in the very next verse, "My Father, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink from it, Your will be done." We are witnessing Jesus yielding His mind and flesh into deep surrender and submission to the Spirit of God and, in essence, the

will of the Father. The groan of the Spirit led Him into the glory of the Father. It was the Spirit that led Him to the will of His Father. We must let the Spirit of God teach us and lead us like He did for Jesus.

Humanity cannot function on its own. We are like the disciples who cannot stay awake and comfort the One we love; we cannot fulfil the law alone. We may look for help within ourselves or for others to help, but it is only when we embrace our weakness and receive the groan of the Spirit that He is perfected in power and leads us to Himself. Only then can the Spirit lead us to deep surrender, obedience unto death, and fulfilling the will of our Father.

Only then is the Word made alive by His Spirit, transforming us into His image and likeness. Only by His Spirit can we partake in His sufferings; in this place, we are transformed by love to love well. It is not about our eloquent words; it is about a true partnership with the groans of the Spirit that lead us to love Him and give up our

lives for the One we love and those that He loves. The Spirit reveals the One Who longs to partner with us and teach us to pray. Only He can grant you the groans of compassion and love. This is the REWARD! Romans 8:30 says, "And those He predestined He also called, and those He called He also justified, and those He justified He also glorified." This is the GOSPEL!

Prayer: Father, we acknowledge our need and our weakness. We recognise the need for Your Spirit; we ask You, Holy Spirit, to teach us to pray and lead us to Jesus. Jesus, we surrender and ask that You form us in Your likeness. Grant us the ability to receive Your love. Forgive us if we have been led by our flesh and in our pride. In our weakness, we ask that You grant us the grace to surrender to Your will willingly; we long to love You and to love well.

-Marcela Barcelona, Co-Founder of One Voice Student Missions + Founder of Women at the Well, www.upperroom.org

KE KA NTLHA YANG RE TSHWANETSE GO KETEKA BOTSAKO JWA KERESETE?

Why must we celebrate the birth of Christ?

Go keteka botsalo jwa Keresete, jo bo tlwaelesegeng ka leina la Keresemose, go na le botlhokwa jo bogolo mo Bakereseteng mme go na le mabaka a mantsi a a fetang ngwao fela. Fa ke mabaka a a botlhokwa a go keteka botsalo jwa gagwe go leng botlhokwa:

**BOTLHOKWA
JWA SEMOWA**

Go nna Nama ga Modimo: Botsalo jwa Jesu bo emela go nna nama, fa Modimo a ne a nna motho go nna le rona. Tiragalo eno ke motheo wa tumelo ya Bakeresete, e supa kopano ya Modimo mo bathong ka sebele (Johane 1:14).

Go Tswakanya Mafoke a Boporofeti: Botsalo jwa Jesu bo netefatsa diporofete tse dintsitisa Tesetamente ya Kgale, tse di tlhomamisang gore ke Mesia. Sekai ke diporofete tse di fitlhewang mo bukeng ya Jesaya le Miga, tse di tlhalosang botsalo jwa gagwe le lefelo le a neng a tsholwa kwa go lone, tse di tshegetsang tumelo mo maikemisetsong a Modimo.

Poloko: Motheo wa go keteka ke tumelo ya gore Jesu o tshotswe

go boloka batho mo dibeng. Jaaka go kwadilwe mo Matheo 1:21, o ne a tla go "boloka batho ba gagwe mo dibeng tsa bone," se se dirang botsalo jwa gagwe nako ya botlhokwa mo ponagalang ya kgololo.

**BOTLHOKWA JWA
NGWAO LE SETSHABA**

Kutlwano le Kopano: Keresmose e tsweletsa kutlwano le go kopana ga ba lelapa. E kgothaletsa dipokano, go ja mmogo, le ngwao tse di nonofatsang kamano mo malapeng le ditsala.

Ditiro tsa Bopelotlhomogi le Boineelo: Nako ya malatsi a Keresemose e tshegetsa boleng jwa lorato, kutlwelobotlhoko, le boiketlo. Ngwao ya go aba dimpho e tshwantsha boitshwaro jo bo sa ikakanyegeng le boitumelo jwa go aba, e supa lorato lo Jesu a nang le lone.

Ngwao ya Botlhokwa: Go keteka Keresemose go thusa malapa go tsenelela ngwao e e rategang e e fetisediwang kwa ditlogolwaneng, go tlisa dikakanyo tse di sa lebalesegeng tse di agang botho le ngwao.

KAKGELO YA MOWA

Nako ya Kakgelo: Nako ya Keresemose e kgothaletsa batho go akanyetsa ka matshelo a bone, go leboga masego a bone, le go akanya ka kamano ya bone le Modimo. Ke nako e e fa tshono ya go tsosolosa mowa le boineelo.

Tsholofelo le Lesedi: Keresemose e diragala ka nako e e lefifi mo ngwageng kwa mafelong a mantsi mo lefatsheng. Dipontsho tsa lesedi - fela jaaka dikerese le dikgabiso tse di emelang tsholofelo le tsosoloso, tse di gakololang badumedi ka lesedi le Keresete a le tlisang mo lefatsheng.

KAKARETSO

Ka kakaretso, go keteka botsalo jwa Keresete ga se tiragalo fela ya hisitori mme ke go ela tlhoko boteng jwa lorato Iwa Modimo, go phethagatsa boporofeti, le tsholofelo ya poloko.

Go fa tshono ya boitumelo jwa setshaba, kakgelo ya motho ka esi, le boineelo jo bo tsosolosiwang go tshela ka boleng jo Jesu a bo bontshitseng mo ngweng otlhe.



Johan Zerwick
Sêle ke 083 458 3837

Mokete ono ke karolo ya botlhokwa ya tumelo ya Bakeresete e e tseneletseng mo dipeleng tsa batho ka bongwe le mo setshabeng ka kakaretso.

Jesus - the reason for the season.
Jesu ke lebaka la paka.
Jesus is die rede vir die Vrede.

Merry Christmas and a Happy new year / Keresemose e e Monate le Ngwaga o Moswa o o itume-disang! / Geseende Kersfees en 'n Voorspoedige nuwe jaar!

Say "Yes" to What Matters

"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:23-24 NIV).

Peter sat in grief and darkness. He had publicly denied knowing Jesus just before Jesus was crucified. And for a couple of days, Peter had to process his guilt without expecting it to go away. But on the third day, Jesus' tomb was found empty and the stone rolled away!

Not long afterward though, Peter was out in a boat with several other disciples doing what he was trained to do before he met Jesus: fishing.

It's as he's doing this that Jesus appears. But instead of letting

Peter continue to live with the shame of his past, Jesus pulls him aside and asks him a question that propels Peter into his purpose: "Do you love me?"

Three times Jesus asks Peter this - one for each time Peter denied him. This wasn't a passive-aggressive question: Jesus was inviting Peter to reaffirm the relationship he'd previously denied.

Every time Peter responds with, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you," Jesus recommissions Peter by calling him into the role of church builder and shepherd.

Jesus' resurrection meant that Peter didn't have to be defined by his mistakes. He could still embrace the call on his life and become the leader Jesus knew he

could be.

Like Peter, you also have the opportunity to say "yes" to loving Jesus and being loved by Him. No matter how dysfunctional your life looks, or how far from Jesus you feel, there is nothing that can separate you from His love.

Your past mistakes or current problems do not dictate your purpose when your life is rooted in Christ.

God has given each of us access to a free gift we don't deserve: a free gift that is available when we choose to love God and receive His relentless, sacrificial love for us.

The resurrection reassures us that no situation or mistake is impossible for God to redeem.

There is no fear Jesus cannot conquer and no life He cannot heal. No darkness can stand against the power of the risen God who conquered death on our behalf.

There is nothing our God can't do, and no one our God can't redeem. Today, say "yes" to Jesus and allow Him to reveal His deep, unending love for you!

Prayer: God, thank you for making me righteous in Your sight. There is nothing I can ever do to earn this - it's something You have freely offered because You love me! Thank You! Forgive me for all the times I have selfishly rejected You. Please show me how to live a life that honours You! In Jesus' Name. Amen.

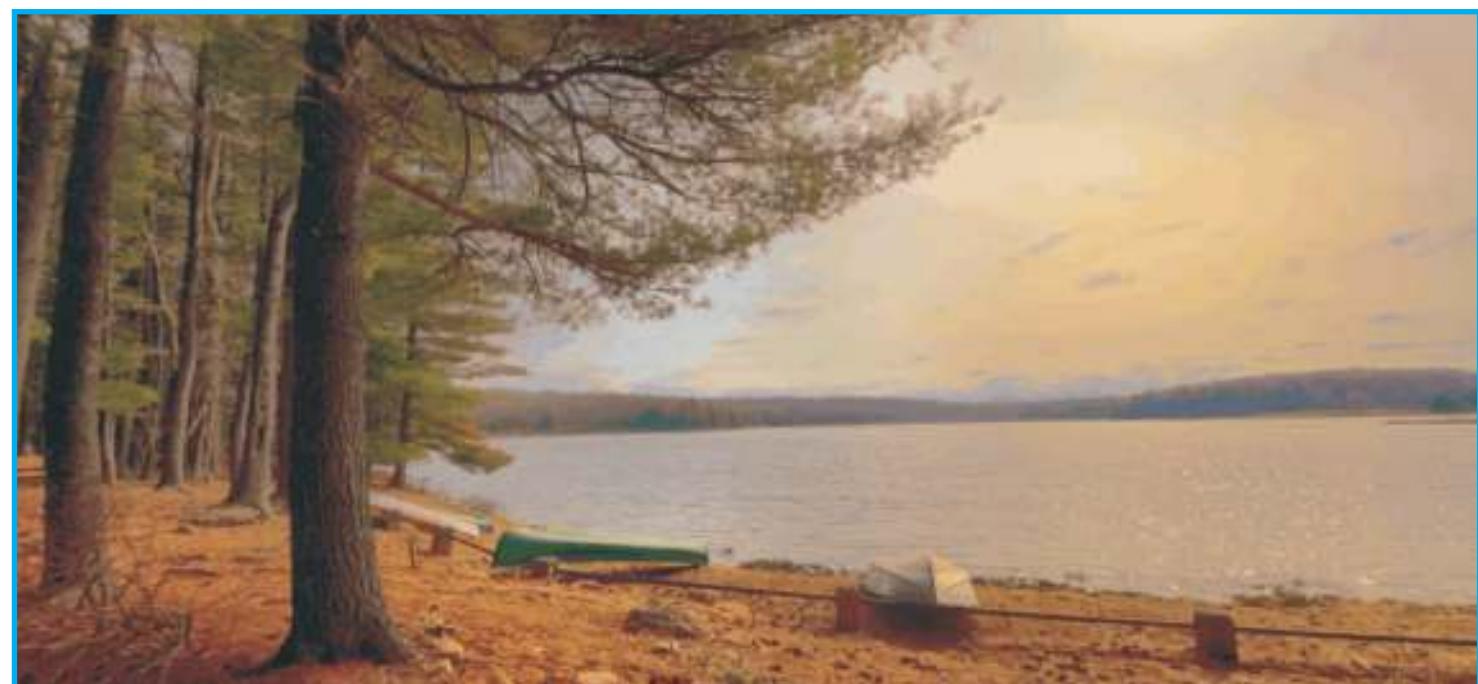
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Sabbath and Worship

"By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done" (Gen. 2:2-3).

"He said to them, 'This is what the Lord commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.' So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. 'Eat it today,' Moses said, 'because today is a sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.' Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. Then the Lord said to Moses, 'How long will you refuse to keep my commands and My instructions? Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day He gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out.' So the people rested on the seventh day" (Ex. 16:23-30 NIV).

For many Western Christians, Sunday has become what Eugene Peterson called a "bastard Sabbath" - the illegitimate offspring of the Sabbath and a secular day off. Sabbath isn't just a day to sleep in, relax, and do



whatever brings you joy. It's all of those things, but also more: It's a day for worship.

In Genesis 2:2-3, we read that God made the seventh day "holy." In Hebrew, the word *holy* is *quodosh*. And it literally means "unique, special, or uncommon." A theological definition would be "set aside for God's special purposes." It's a similar idea to having something like a special set of dishes for Christmas or some other special occasion. It's set aside - not for everyday use.

That's what the Sabbath is to the rest of the week - holy. Set apart. But for what? Or better said, for Whom? In Exodus 16, we read, "*Tomorrow is to be a day of sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord.*" That phrase, "*a holy Sabbath to the Lord,*" can be translated "set apart for the Lord" or "dedicated to the Lord." The

Sabbath is an entire day that is set aside, not just for rest or celebration, but for God. Put another way, it's a day for worship.

A lot of us hear the word worship and we think of singing, and that is an example of worship. But worship is so much more. In the biblical sense, to worship is to orient and reorient your entire life around God, our Creator, our Centre.

It's to present your entire life before Him in love and to deepen your surrender to His love. One way to do that is through worship by singing, but there are so many other ways - giving our time, our resources, our attention and affection to God, yielding our will over to God. Anything we do to centre God and to direct our heart in love to His glory, His goodness, is a form of worship.

Yes, it's a day to stop and rest and refill our tank. Yes, it's a day of delight to celebrate. But to stop there would be warping a God-centred day of joy into a self-centred day of pleasure.

The Sabbath is a day of worship - a day to contemplate the good news that God has given His life to us in Jesus, and now it is our joy to give our life back in worship. It's to come back to what the Quakers call our "holy centre" in God. It's to deepen our communing with the deepest reality there is.

So what does it look like for you to surrender your entire life before God in love?

May the God of rest fill you with his peace and Presence as you rest in Him!
- John Mark Comer, Practising the Way

HE RESTORES MY SOUL

Just being an inhabitant of Earth, navigating rocky roads and keeping away from deadly precipices in self-preservation is a daunting and menacing undertaking. However, we who belong to Christ, His soldiers and servants on the front lines of the spiritual battlefield, have a soul-lusting enemy more deadly than anything else.

Retaining our peace in Christ, our soul resting in Him, often becomes a challenge that all too easily becomes an unscalable barrier that causes us to lose hope. To a battle-weary soldier even small things can become the tipping point where we simply lose our last grain of strength and topple over the edge of helplessness, unable to fight the pain that life inflicted.

Why is it possible for a child of God to become hostage to

helplessness? Loved ones, we are ever in need of reminders and I want to share a few. The mystery of reviving our starved and parched souls lies in reminding ourselves of God's promises. They are Words of life and healing, divine restoration. If we consciously live deeply dependent on our Father's love, some of these mysterious secrets become alive and enable us to find that place of deep rest. Write these words on your heart: *"Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid [or not at peace], it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not [yet] FULLY EXPERIENCED His perfect love"* (1 John 4:18,29).

To find that place of comfort, begin to walk in love. His love. Seek that place of deep comfort in our Father's Presence. Nurture your soul in His life-giving Word.

Mark deJesus says, "Practice and develop your trust muscle". Practice that rest that is found in Him alone.

David reminds us so beautifully, *"He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams. HE RENEWS MY STRENGTH (some translations have it, "He restores my soul"). He guides me along the right paths, bringing honour to His Name."* (Psalm 23).

Rest in His love in spite of bears and lions lurking. Restored and strengthened you will be able to do well in the battle and overcome in victory. Do not accommodate fear, helplessness or unrelenting pain. Enter into the rest God has for you. Healing, restoring grace is yours for the asking. Faith is taking bold steps into unknown territory, fearlessly. "Connect to His love", Mark deJesus advises.



Helen du Plessis
083 332 0895

Stay plugged in.

Remember, you are truly, deeply loved and cherished by your heavenly Father. Trust Him.



"Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him, and He began to teach them. He said: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you'" (Matt. 5:1-12 NIV).

One of the most well-known - and subversive - sections of the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus's primer on true happiness or blessedness. These are often called the Beatitudes.

Here, Jesus describes what happiness is all about. But He doesn't primarily describe emotions or feelings. Instead, He out-

lines a surprising way of life - an upside-down existence. To be blessed is to be accepted by God, whether circumstances seem to confirm or deny it.

By starting His Sermon, not with a list of to-dos but by letting us know who is blessed, Jesus clarifies that those in His kingdom don't work for blessing but from blessing. Jesus's disciples don't have to seek blessing; they are already blessed by God. In kindness, Jesus announces what we are all looking for: joy.

Humanity has been seduced into a vision of the good life based on physical health, ample money, and minimal challenges. But Jesus turns it all around, explaining that the most fortunate people are those who are socially disregarded and recognise their deep need for God.

It's not that God despises comfortable people; it's that He knows the benefit of spiritual disruption, especially when prevailing assumptions about the good life are dangerous.

In the Kingdom of God, the happiest people are oriented around love, not accruing greater possessions or power. To walk in step with Jesus is to walk in the way of love - a love that seeks to bring reconciliation where there has been fragmentation, a love that rejoices over mercy, not

resentment, a love that works to end injustice, refusing to stand by idly. This is the path of life that satisfies our souls.

Jesus clearly states that the blessed are not free from trouble. Rather, they endure trouble as they bear witness to Jesus's subversive path. The blessed life is connected to the cross. Patterning our lives after Christ requires the death of our egos, our false selves, and the larger culture that incentivises self-centeredness.

Yet as God raised Jesus from the dead, so, too, He will raise you from the dead. As God vindicated His Son, God will also vindicate those who choose the Way of the Son.

So be of good cheer. Following Jesus on the narrow path places you among the most blessed people on Earth!

Prayer: God, help me see and seek the blessed life of dying to myself. Amen.
- Rich Villodas, *The Narrow Path*



What It Really Means to Love Your Neighbour

One of the most well-known commands in the Bible is to "love your neighbour as yourself." This directive, given by Jesus and repeated throughout Scripture, is often cited but not always fully understood or practiced. In a world that is increasingly divided and complex, what does it truly mean to love our neighbours? How can we live out this command in a way that reflects Christ's love?

1. LOVE BEYOND COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE

The command to love our neighbour isn't just about being kind to those who are easy to love or those who live nearby. Jesus expanded the definition of "neighbour" in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), showing us that our neighbour is anyone who is in need, regardless of their background, beliefs, or relationship to us.

In this parable, a Samaritan - someone who was despised by the Jews of that time - stopped to help a wounded Jewish man, while others passed him by. The Samaritan's actions demonstrated that true love transcends social, ethnic, and religious boundaries. To love our neighbour means to show compassion, even when it's inconvenient or uncomfortable. It calls us to step out of our comfort zones, to cross societal divides, and to extend kindness and care to those who may be very different from us.

This kind of love isn't just a feeling; it's an action. It's about meeting the needs of others, even when it requires sacrifice. James 2:15-16 challenges us with this: "Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?" Loving our neighbour means taking tangible steps to help those in need, not just offering well-meaning words.

2. LOVE IN THE FACE OF DIFFERENCES

In today's polarised society, it can be challenging to love those who hold different views or lifestyles from our own. Yet, this is precisely what Jesus calls us to

do. Loving our neighbour means respecting their humanity, even when we disagree with their beliefs or choices.

Jesus modelled this when He interacted with those who were marginalised or considered "sinners" by society - tax collectors, lepers, and even the Roman centurions. He showed them love and compassion, not judgment. In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another."

This kind of love isn't about compromising your beliefs, but rather about seeing the image of God in every person and treating them with dignity and respect. It means engaging in conversations with grace, listening with empathy, and responding with kindness, even when it's difficult. In doing so, we reflect Christ's love to the world.

3. LOVE THROUGH SERVICE AND SACRIFICE

Loving our neighbour often involves putting their needs above our own. This kind of love is sacrificial, reflecting the love that Jesus showed us through His life and death. Philippians 2:3-4 encourages us, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

This might mean giving up time, resources, or comfort to help someone else. It could involve volunteering at a local shelter, supporting a friend through a difficult time, or simply being present for someone who needs a listening ear. The key is to serve without expecting anything in return, mirroring the selfless love that Jesus demonstrated.

One of the most powerful examples of this sacrificial love is found in the early Church. Acts 2:44-45 describes how the first Christians "had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need." Their love for one another was so strong that they

were willing to sacrifice their own comfort for the well-being of others. This radical generosity is a hallmark of true Christian love.

4. LOVE AS A REFLECTION OF GOD'S LOVE

Ultimately, our ability to love our neighbour flows from our experience of God's love for us. First John 4:19 tells us, "We love because He first loved us." When we understand and accept the depth of God's love for us - despite our flaws and failures - we are empowered to extend that same love to others.

Loving our neighbour is a way of participating in God's work in the world. It's about being His hands and feet, bringing His love and light into places of darkness and despair. Whether it's through small acts of kindness or large-scale efforts to bring about social

justice, every act of love reflects the heart of God. **To truly love our neighbour means to see them as God sees them - as beloved children worthy of love and grace.** It means moving beyond self-interest and embracing a lifestyle of compassion, empathy, and service. As we do so, we not only fulfil Jesus' command, but we also help to build His Kingdom here on Earth.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Loving your neighbour is one of the most profound and challenging commands in Scripture. It calls us to move beyond mere sentiment and into action, to love across differences, and to serve others with humility and sacrifice. In a world that is often divided and hurting, this kind of love is more needed than ever!

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"I see it all"



"He will not forget the needs of the poor. One day the needy will be remembered, and their hopes will not be forever dashed in disappointment" (Psalm 9:18 TPT).

Beloved, I see you clearly just as you are. I see the circumstances that are outside of your control and the troubles knocking at your door. I see the way your heart is overwhelmed. Do not despair and don't lose hope. I am always close. I will bring you through this; you can count on Me. When you are afraid, put your hope in Me, and when you struggle to hope, look outside of your own experience to the fulfilled promises of My people.

I won't let the weight of the unknown crush you. I am not disinterested in your plight, My child. I will meet your needs. Look at the way that I have come through time and again. I have not suddenly turned my gaze from my people.

When the waters rise around you, I am your high place - your security in the storm. Worry won't help you. Whatever it is that threatens your peace, give it to Me. I will surround you with the blanket of my perfect peace, wrapping you up in the comfort of my love. Come in close and rest in My steadiness. I am for you, and I will work all things together with redemptive love for your benefit.

- Brian Simmons, *I Hear His Whisper* for Women



Hendrik van Graan
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Kersfeesoffers

Vervolg van p. 1

gehoorsaam te wees en die rol te vervul wat God vir hom beplan het.

DIE WYSE MANNE SE OFFER

Die wyse manne het gesien dat 'n nuwe Koning gebore is op grond van 'n ster wat verskyn het (Matt. 2:2). Dit is nie duidelik wat hierdie manne se afkoms was nie, maar daar is die gedagte dat hulle van Persiese, priesterlike afkoms was en dat hulle die sterre bestudeer het (asook spesiale tekens geïnterpreteer het). Hulle het met groot moeite en waarskynlik onder gevaar 'n lange tog aangepak om die Baba wat die Koning van die Jode (en die

wêreld) sou wees, te kom soek.

Soos Alyssa Roat skryf, het hulle uiters duur geskenke saamgebring, net die beste van hul eie land, en wou hulle Jesus eer en selfs aanbid. Hulle was ook gehoorsaam aan 'n hemelse waarskuwing in 'n droom (Matt. 2:12) en het nie na Herodus teruggekeer nie, maar met 'n ander pad na hul huisland teruggekeer. Mag ons ook sensitief wees vir geestelike gebeure en tekens of simbole of boodskappe van God, en nederig gehoorsaam wees ten spyte van die koste.

GOD SE OFFER

'n Mens kan sekerlik nie verstaan

wat deur God se gemoed moes gaan toe Sy Seun daardie dag op die kruis op Golgota gesterf het nie. Sy hart moes gebreek het toe Hy die regverdige straf van sonde op die Regverdige uitgegiet het. Watter groter teken van God se offervaardige liefde is daar? Sy geregtigheid en Sy genade is duidelik - God het Sy integriteit behou deur sonde nie ongesiens te laat verbygaan nie, maar teen 'n geweldige koste. Dit laat my dink aan 'n vers in die psalms: "Gedertierenheid en trou ontmoet mekaar; geregtigheid en vrede kus mekaar" (Ps. 85:11). Woorde ontbreek om God se grootheid te prys. Laat ons nooit vergeet dat die krip na 'n kruis gelei het nie. En die kruis na die opstanding en

'n nuwe lewe vir elkeen wat glo.

MY OFFER

Uit bogenoemde sien ons hoedat oomblikke van vreugde baiekeer vermeng is met oomblikke van droefheid en smart. Ons sien God se saligheidsplan, en mense wat bereid was om deel daarvan te wees, ten spyte van die koste. Is ons bereid om God se offer te aanvaar? Is ons bereid om ook ons offer te bring en deur Hom gebruik te word? Laat ons weer eens besin oor die diepe waarde van Kersfees, asook die heilsgeskiedenis, en ons dan as instrumente in God se hand beskikbaarstel.

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'n Helder Somerkersfees

Dis 'n besige tyd van die jaar. Soveel moet nog klaar voordat alles afgehandel is en besighede of afdelings sluit. Beplanning vir volgende jaar, personeelfunksies, finalisering van resultate, laaste struwelinge... En dan sien ons uit na die jaarlikse somervakansie. Ons hou moed en druk deur, want ons weet dat die vakansie op pad is! Sommige gaan see toe, ander moet met Jan Tuisbly se karretjie ry.

Juis in hierdie tyd luister ons na 'n TV-program. Die aanbieders is druk besig om sekere aspekte van Kersfees te bespreek:

- Hoe gaan die Kersete hierdie jaar lyk? Gaan ek en my gesin by die huis eet, of gaan ek uiteet op daardie dag?
- Watter geskenke gaan ek kry? Of wat gaan ek gee en vir wie? Hoe lyk my Kersbegroting?
- Waar gaan ons vakansie hou?
- Watter partytjie gaan ons bywoon?
- Waar gaan ons drink? En saam met wie?
- Waar gaan ons feesvier?
- Hoe gaan die weer lyk?
- Wat gaan ek aantrek?

Dit is 'n groot versoeking om meegesleur te word deur hierdie soort denke. En dit is ook nie alles verkeerd nie; 'n mens kan vooruit dink en beplan. Maar dit moet nie ons hoofokus wees nie. "Daarom sê Ek vir julle, moet julle nie bekommer oor julle lewe, oor wat julle sal eet, of oor wat julle sal drink, of oor julle liggaam, wat julle sal aantrek nie. Is die lewe dan nie belangriker as kos en die liggaam as klere nie? Let op die voëls van die hemel: Hulle saai nie en hulle maai nie, en hulle versamel niks in skure nie. Tog

sorg julle hemelse Vader vir hulle. Is julle nie meer werd as hulle nie? Wie van julle kan deur hom te bekommer, een el by sy lewe voeg? En waarom is julle oor klere bekommerd?" (Matt. 6: 25-28 DV).

Sulke besprekings is goed en wel, maar dit laat ons in reaksie hierop wonder:

- Is daar nog plek vir Jesus te middel van ons feesvieringe?
- Wat is ons motief om Kersfees te vier?
- Watter rol speel die DAG 25 Desember in ons lewe? Watter rol BEHOORT dit te speel?

WAT IS JÓU PRIMÈRE VERWAGTING VAN KERSFEES?

God het al die dae gemaak. Hy is die God van al die dae, maande, jare: "U oé het my ongevormde klomp gesien; en in U boek is hulle almal opgeskrywe: dae dat alles bepaal was, toe nog geeneen van hulle daar was nie" (Ps. 139:16 OV). God is verhewe bo tyd en ruimte, maar Hy is ook die Skepper daarvan. Aan Hom behoort die silwer en die goud, die uitgestrekte heelal, die verlede, hede en die toekoms! Hy het ook die 25ste Desember geskape. "Dit is die dag wat die HERE gemaak het. Laat ons daaroor juig en bly wees" (Ps. 118:24 OV). Dit is so dat mense die name van afgode aan verskillende weeksdae asook bepaalde vakansiedae gekoppel het. Maar dit verander nie aan die feit dat die Here die Skepper hiervan is nie. Kom ons vul 25 Desember met 'n Christelike inhoud en vier 'n wonderlike Christusfees! Kom ons vier die geboorte van Christus, asook die Wederkoms van Koning Jesus! Dit maak nie saak op watter presiese dag Jesus gebore is nie;

ons kan dit elke dag vier, ook op 25 Desember. Paulus sê: "*n afgod is niks.*" Maar die Almagtige God is allesoorheersend alles! En God heilig alle dae. Hy kyk na ons hartgesindheid en of ons in opregtheid Hom dank vir die geboorte van Jesus as mens.

Ons dink aan die grootste Geskenk wat die Vader aan ons gegee het wanneer ons in liefde geskenke aan mekaar gee. Nie uitspattig nie, maar dit wat ons het om te gee! Nie kommersiel nie, en terwyl ons ook aan die minder-bevoorregtes dink. Dit is inderdaad die gedagte wat tel! "En laat ons nie moeg word om goed te doen nie, want op die regte tyd sal ons maai as ons nie verslap nie. Laat ons dan, terwyl ons geleenthed het, aan almal goed doen, maar die meeste aan die huisgenote van die geloof" (Gal. 6:9-10 OV). Weer eens sien God ons hartgesindheid raak. As ons onselfsugtig en in dankbaarheid gee, is dit vir Hom 'n aangename offer. Want Hy is die Groot Gewer!

Die gawe van familie en vriende is ook kosbaar. Laat ons hierdie samesyn vier. Kerstdag is 'n tyd van samekoms, van liefde, van vreugde. God het ons as Sy Eie aangeneem en ons in Sy huisgesin geplaas: "KYK wat 'n groot liefde die Vader aan ons bewys het, dat ons kinders van God genoem kan word!" (1 Joh. 3:1 OV). Dit is dikwels wanneer iemand nie meer daar is nie dat ons werklik hulle teenwoordigheid mis en hulle nalentskap en herinnering dan nog meer waardeer. Laat ons nie wag totdat dit te laat is nie. Maak daardie oproep; vra hoe dit met jou ouers gaan; versoen jou met jou broer of

suster. Die lewe is kort, en verhoudinge is belangriker as om 'n argument te wen of om aardse goedere bymekaar te maak. Kom ons geniet ook die Christelike samesyn met ons gelowige broers en susters en gevul met pragmusiek wanneer ons Kerkdienste bywoon, met die hoogste prioriteit - Jesus Christus.

Laat die woorde van die bekende lied ons in hierdie tyd inspireer om stil te word in verwondering, oorgawe, lofprysing, en dankbaarheid vir God se grootste Geskenk:

Somerkersfees

(Kdu Plessis en Jdu Toit)

Welkom, o stille nag van vrede onder die Suiderkruis
Wyl stemme uit die ou verlede oor sterrevelde ruis
Kersfees kom, Kersfees kom,
gee aan God die eer
Skenk 'n helder somerkersfees
aan hierdie land, o Heer!

Hoor jy hoe sag die klokke beier in eeu-eoue taal

Kyk, selfs die nagtelike swye,
vertel die ou verhaal
Kersfees kom, Kersfees kom,
gee aan God die eer
Skenk 'n helder somerkersfees
aan hierdie land, o Heer!

Voel jy ook nou Sy warm liefde as ons die dag gedenk

Toe Hy Sy Seun
aan ons gestuur het,
ons grootste Kersgeskenk
Christus kom, Christus kom,
gee aan God die eer
Skenk 'n helder somerkersfees
aan hierdie land, o Heer!
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How should I Understand the Bible?

One of the greatest joys of the Christian life is discovering the riches of God's Word. Every verse of Scripture holds profound truth, but understanding its full meaning can sometimes be challenging.

Whether you're new to Bible study or have been reading Scripture for years, finding the meaning of a particular verse requires more than just reading the words on the page - it involves careful study, prayer, and a heart open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

To truly grasp the meaning of a Bible verse, we must first recognise that the Bible is a unified story of God's redemptive plan. While each verse has its own significance, it is part of a larger narrative. Understanding that broader context is essential to accurately interpreting individual passages. Here are some key steps that can help deepen your understanding of any Bible verse.

1. READ THE VERSE IN CONTEXT

One of the most important principles of Bible interpretation is context. A verse should never be isolated from the surrounding text because its meaning is often tied to the verses around it. To find the true meaning of a verse, start by reading the entire chapter or passage. Ask yourself: What is the main message of this section? How does the verse contribute to the overall theme?

For example, Philippians 4:13 is a well-known verse: "I can do all things through Him Who strengthens me." Taken out of context, it might sound like a promise that we can achieve any goal or overcome any obstacle. But when read in the context of Philippians 4:10-12, we see that Paul is talking

about finding contentment in all circumstances - whether in times of need or plenty - because of Christ's strength in him. Understanding the context brings clarity to the verse's true meaning.

2. CONSIDER THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Every book of the Bible was written in a specific historical and cultural setting, and understanding that background can provide valuable insights into the meaning of a verse. For instance, the letters of Paul were written to early Christian communities navigating the challenges of faith in a hostile Roman world. Knowing this helps us better appreciate his exhortations for perseverance and faithfulness.

Before interpreting a verse, consider asking these questions: Who is the author? Who is the intended audience? What were the historical circumstances at the time of writing? Resources like Bible commentaries, study Bibles, and historical references can provide valuable information to answer these questions.

3. USE SCRIPTURE TO INTERPRET SCRIPTURE

Another important method for understanding a Bible verse is to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Since the Bible is divinely inspired and without contradiction, the meaning of a difficult verse can often be clarified by comparing it with other parts of the Bible.

For example, if you're studying a verse about God's love, you can gain a deeper understanding by looking at other passages that describe His love, such as John 3:16, 1 John 4:7-8, and Romans 5:8. By doing this, you see the fuller picture of how God's love is

described throughout the Bible.

4. PRAY FOR GUIDANCE FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Bible is not just a book of ancient writings; it is the living Word of God. As believers, we are given the Holy Spirit, Who illuminates the Scriptures and helps us understand spiritual truths (John 16:13). Before you begin your study, pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you. Ask God to open your heart and mind to receive His wisdom and to reveal the meaning of the passage you're studying. James 1:5 promises that if we lack wisdom, we can ask God, and He will give it generously. Trust that God will guide you as you seek to understand His Word more deeply.

5. REFLECT ON THE APPLICATION FOR YOUR LIFE

Once you have studied the context, background, and related Scriptures, the next step is to ask, "How does this apply to my life?" The Bible is not just a book to be studied - it is meant to transform us. After understanding the meaning of a verse, consider how it speaks to your heart and how you can apply its truth to your daily walk with Christ.

CONCLUSION: A LIFELONG JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

Finding the meaning of a Bible verse is both a discipline and a delight. It requires effort - studying the text carefully, seeking historical insights, and comparing Scripture with Scripture. But it also requires a heart that is open to the work of the Holy Spirit. As you grow in your understanding of God's Word, remember that this is a lifelong journey of discovery, where God continually reveals more of Himself through the pages of Scripture.

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To God be the Glory! We give Almighty God, the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit all the praise, honour and glory for walking with us these past years. We also wish to extend to all our customers our sincerest thanks for your support, prayers and words of encouragement during these past 21 years.

Our Prayer for you:

The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn His face towards you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26

21 Years Old

Ons Bede vir u:

Die Here sal jou seën en jou behoed; die Here sal Sy aangesig oor jou laat skyn en jou genadig wees; die Here sal Sy aangesig oor jou verhef en aan jou vrede gee. Numeri 6:24-26

21

21 Jaar Oud

Ons bring aan die Almagtige God, die Here Jesus en die Heilige Gees al die lof, eer en heerlikheid vir Sy goeie gawes die afgelope jare. Ons bedank al ons klante ook opreg vir u ondersteuning, gebede en bemoediging gedurende die afgelope 21 jaar.

Aan God al die eer!

"Bly by My"

Ek het gewonder of ek hierdie boodskap moet skryf. Dit is so persoonlik. Tog dink ek dat dit gedeel moet word.

Woensdagoggend was 'n doodgewone ooggend. My kinders is met vakansie so daar was nie 'n gejaag nie. Ons sou die dag 'n bietjie tyd saam deurbring en eers die middag begin werk.

Nie te min, 'n paar minute later bevind ek myself op die badkamervlakte in paniek maar ek kan nie beweeg nie. Ek besef ek is besig om dood te gaan! Ek verloor bewussyn...

Toek ek wakker word, is my man besig om vir my te bid en ek sukkel vreeslik om my oë oop te maak. My asemhaling is so vlak en ek sukkel steeds om by te kom. Ek is daar, maar ook nie. Stadig raak ek bewus van my man wat vir my sê: "Bly by my".

"Bly by my". Ek sal dit nooit ooit vergeet nie. My gedagtes gaan

elke nou en dan terug na daardie ooggend en dit breek my hart van voor af. Sou ek vanaand in 'n lykhuis wees? Moes my man 'n begrafnis reël? Wat word van my kinders? Hulle het 'n wonderlike pa maar 'n huis het 'n mamma nodig.

"Bly by my."

Ek besef meer as ooit dat die lewe kort is en dat dit in 'n oogwink kan verander. Alles kan in 'n oomblik aan skerwe val en dan is daar geen beheer meer nie. Was ek bang? Nee. Ek glo die Here sou my kom haal het. Was ek gereed? Nee, ek het nog baie wat ek vir die Here wil doen en my kinders word nog groot. Selfs terwyl ek hierdie boodskap tik, ruk my hart.

"Bly by my."

Die lewe is só 'n geskenk en net genade! Die woord "genade" het nou vir my 'n nuwe betekenis. 'n Mens is so kwesbaar en elke asemteug is net genade. In daardie oomblik van onsekerheid

maak die druk van die lewe nie meer saak nie. Jy dink nie aan die probleme, laste, of besittings van die lewe nie. Jy dink net, "Is dit tyd?"

"Bly by God" is my nuwe leuse. Bly by Hom! Hou vas aan die soom van Sy kleed. Net God kan jou diepste vrese, jou angs wegneem en jou vul met Sy rus, jou omvou met die vrede wat net Hy kan bied.

Gaan staan 'n bietjie by jou kinders se beddens vanaand. Dit is net genade.

Hou jou eggenoot stywer vas vanaand. Dit is net genade. Spreek vry, laat gaan, leef! Dit is net genade.

Laat jou lewenslied Jesus verheerlik. Laat dit wat jy doen in jou lewe mense opbou en hulle nader aan die Here trek. Wees die 'kom ek stel jou voor aan Jesus' man of vrou.

Die lewe is kort. Leef dit, waardeer



dit! Koester mekaar. Maar meer as enige iets anders: Bly by God.

"Al gaan ek ook in 'n daal van dood skaduwee, ek sal geen onheil vrees nie want U is met my" (Psalm 23:4).

- Channie

"How could anyone love me?"

"...but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8 ESV).

"How could anyone love me?" Have you ever thought something along those lines? I have. Growing up, I was far from perfect. I still am. But as a teen, I carried a lot of guilt and shame.

People would tell me things like, "God loves you," or "He's got good plans for your life." But it's hard to believe something like that when you feel so unworthy... so unlovable. That's why I love the story of the song "Amazing Grace."

"Amazing Grace how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see."

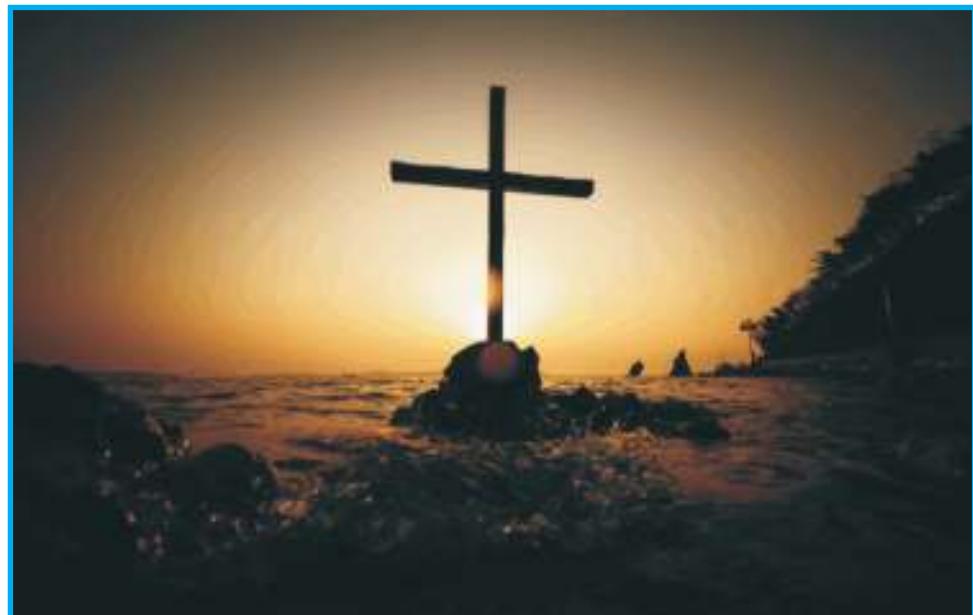
Whether you've spent time in church or not, you probably know this song. As one of the most recorded songs in history, "Amazing Grace" has been covered by Elvis, Aretha Franklin, and Bono. It was sung when Nelson Mandela took leadership and was even featured on The Simpsons! But what you might not know is that

"Amazing Grace" was written by an eighteenth-century slave-ship captain named John Newton. Newton had a reputation that would make a lot of us look squeaky clean by comparison. You think you've made mistakes? Think you're dirty? Newton's hands bore the guilt of trading in human lives for profit. So how could this man write a song celebrating how much God loved him?

The answer is grace.

The Good News of Jesus Christ is not that you and I can clean ourselves up enough to be loved by God. It's that while knowing the worst about us, God still moved towards us in love to save us from our sins.

John Newton spent years mocking God's grace. He'd heard the same things about God's love that I grew up hearing. Maybe things you've heard too. But he couldn't believe it... he didn't want to believe it. Then one night while steering his slave ship through a violent storm, he cried out to God for mercy. When his ship passed through safely, he finally put his faith in Jesus and received the grace that he'd been rejected for so long.



Later, Newton played a role in putting an end to the slave trade in Great Britain. He became a preacher, cared for the poor, and built a reputation as a pastor who brought people from all walks of life together.

God's grace not only saved Newton, it also changed Newton. But no matter how much Newton grew in his relationship with God, he never forgot that it was all because of grace. His sin deserved judgment. Ours does too. But God's love led Him to pour out that judgment on Jesus, Who willingly took our place on the cross. This is amazing grace.

Newton said late in life, "I remember two things: that I am a great sinner - and that Christ is a great Saviour!"

So, what about all that guilt and shame? What about your mistakes? What about those things you did or said that you wish you could take back? Are you unlovable? Is your sin too much for God's grace? Let's take a lesson from Newton today and rest in the overwhelming truth that God's love doesn't depend on our worth, and His grace is more than enough to save a wretch like me!

- Nick Hall

"READY! AIM! FIRE!!"

"I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; He saved him out of all his troubles" (Ps. 34:4-6 NIV).

To demonstrate the effectiveness of the bullet-proof Kevlar vests that police officers are to wear in the field, police departments employ a rather unusual training exercise. Trainers dress mannequins in bullet-proof vests, and expert sharpshooters fire rounds into the vests.

Trainees then inspect the mannequins. The vests invariably pass the test with flying colours, as the dummies are unscathed. Then the real test comes. Trainers ask

the officers, "Now, who wants to put a vest on and test how well it works on you?"

Any guesses on the response? NONE of the trainees are particularly enthusiastic about donning a vest and being shot at, not even by expert sharpshooters!

Be honest, how many of us would be willing to be shot at, even if we were wearing bulletproof vests?

Listen, you can cover my entire body with bulletproof Kevlar, then wrap me in body armor and chain mail, and lace all of that with bubble wrap and I STILL wouldn't volunteer for that assignment!

Why? Because while it is one thing to say I have faith in the vests, it is quite another thing to

put a vest ON and stand in the line of fire.

To put this another way; it is one thing to say we believe in God and it is quite another thing to trust Him when the bullets are flying!

I am pointing at a problem I call "Christian atheism." How can a Christian possibly be an atheist?

The phenomenon sounds like a paradox because it is. We are Christians, but then at the first hint of trouble, we act like there is no God. WE FREAK OUT! We ROYALLY AND REGULARLY FLIP OUT! We say we believe God is real, but then we live like He isn't. We trust Him for our eternal salvation, but then we act like He can't handle our lives here on Earth.

If we are honest, we ALL have moments like that. I'm not talking about the normal jitters or initial shocks we have upon receiving bad news. That's normal. I am talking about the deep despair we can fall into when circumstances threaten our security.

How real is our faith truly? Is what we believe as true in the trenches as it is at our church teas?

Jehovah Jireh means God our Provider. Jehovah Jireh challenges our Christian atheism. Psalm 34:4-6 remind us that we can trust God to provide for our needs and deliver us from our fears. He is indeed our Provider, and we can trust Him! He will not let us down!

- God our Provider, Carol Eskaros

Living in God's Love

"And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them" (1 John 4:16).

Have you ever met someone who was exceptionally kind and caring? Good friends are like this - welcoming, eager to know how you're doing, giving their undivided attention. A good friend reminds us of who we are. They listen to everything, the good and the bad, with compassion and love.

God is a friend like this. He listens. He empathises. He cares so much and is kind in His responses. In fact, God does more than just show love - He is love. It is impossible for Him to be anything else because love is His

very essence. His love is pure. It isn't selfish, disengaged, bitter, resentful, or passive. We can trust this kind of love. We can trust God.

In 1 John 4:16 NIV, we find a beautiful reminder of what life with God is like: *"And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them."*

How do you feel after you've spent time with a good friend? Maybe you feel more relaxed, you have a spring in my step, or you find that you have the courage to keep going. You might even find yourself loving others better because you feel so loved. The ripple effect of living in God's love is just like this and more. You



can't help but love others when you know and experience how much God loved you.

This is the life we are invited to. A life that knows and relies on the

love God has for us. Today, how will you discover the love God has for you? When you know and experience the love God has for you, everything changes!

- YouVersion

Jer. 20:11

★★★ **B&B** *Uit die Hand*

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OASE VAN HOOP

-KOFFIE KAFEE-

HEB. 6:19

est. 2023

