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Closer Than You Think

In one unsuspecting moment, everything can change. A relationship can shatter, a dream can suddenly end. Your heart can break for a thousand different reasons: grief, rejection, loneliness, uncertainty, tragedy, betrayal.

When something terrible happens and the world makes zero sense... Then we can be encouraged by this beautiful Scripture: "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed" (Psalm 34:18 NLT).

David, the writer of Psalm 34, preached what he lived. He experienced some intense highs and fierce lows, but he recognised God's Presence in the midst of his circumstances. He knew that God was near, and God

could change any situation in an instant.

Is your heart broken? Is your spirit crushed?

God is near.
He hasn't left you to fight for yourself.
He sees you in your heartbreak.
He meets you where you are.
He has not forgotten you.
He has not abandoned you.

This doesn't mean you won't face hard things. In Jesus' words, "*In this world we will have trouble.*" But even when your mind races and your heart doubts, God offers a peace and an intimacy that cannot be fully explained. Jesus has overcome the world, and so can we!

Because of Jesus' death and

resurrection, we now have constant access to God's Presence through His Holy Spirit. There are many places in the Bible where the Holy Spirit is described as the Comforter - ready to soothe, guide, counsel, and encourage. He wants to comfort you in your grief and pain, if you let Him.

The comfort we receive from God is a gift from His Spirit Who is always with us. He speaks softly to our hearts. He indeed heals the broken-hearted. So if your heart is breaking and your spirit is crushed, know that you are in good Hands. God is near, and He will not abandon you.

When we are weak, He is strong in us. When we are hopeless, He provides hope and direction. When we are confused, He provides clarity. When we are

lonely, He surrounds us with His love.

Today, take a few moments to name anything that has crushed your spirit. Then, give yourself permission to just sit in God's Presence for a few moments. When you're ready, consider memorising Ps. 34:18 and meditate on it throughout your day.

Prayer: Father God, You are always near, whether it feels like it or not. But today I am inviting You to come close to me. Show me how close You are. Here are my burdens - please take them. I am tired of pretending I can carry them. Remove my fears and replace any heaviness in my life with Your relentless love. Come close to me as I come close to You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

-Adapted from YouVersion

Ek Sal Jou Dra...

Wanneer jy voel dat jou krag swak is
Wanneer die gewig en onsekerheid van die lewe jou omring
Onthou dat Ek jou Herder is.

Ek is die Een wat jou beter ken as enige iemand anders
Wat na jou diepste fluisteringe luister en jou verborge stryd sien.
In daardie oomblikke van swakheid is Ek aan jou sy en Ek hou jou met
My ferm Hand vas.

My liefde vir jou vervaag nie, maak nie saak hoe moeilik die pad is nie.
Soos 'n herder vir sy skape sorg, sorg Ek vir jou - met 'n liefde wat
konstant, getrou is en nooit faal nie. Dit maak nie saak hoeveel keer jy
val of hoeveel keer jy verlore voel nie

Ek sal jou altyd optel, op My skouers dra en jou na 'n veilige plek lei.
Vertrou dat jy in My arms skuiling, krag en rus sal vind. Ek sal jou nooit
verlaat nie, My kosbare kind!
- Oorgeneem



In die Vallei van Doodskaduwee

"In the Valley He Restores My Soul"

My Liefeling, dit is nou weer lente hier by ons. Die "Barberton daisies" waarvoor jy so lief was, staan in volle blom, meer blomme as ooit tevore. Ook die liggeel lelies wat ons van jou broer se plot gekry het, en wat jy gekoester het. Ja, dit is weer lente! 'n Nuwe seisoen het weer aangebreek. Ook vir ons in ons geestelike lewe. Jy het ons verlaat met die aanbreek van die winter. Maar die lente is weer in ons lewens in volle blom, al is die verlange en die gemis nog steeds intens.

Hoe sal ons dan ooit vir God kan verwyt of vir Hom kwaad kan wees dat Hy jou weggenem het? Jy bestaan nou in volmaaktheid, maar ons wat agterbly, leef en bestaan voort in 'n stukkende wêreld en ons is ook nog gebroke. Onvolmaak. Onvoltooid. En juis daarom is ons harte nog seer, hier in 'n onvoltooide, vervalle en sondedeurdrenkte wêreld. Alles is mos stukkend hier. Alle mense is stukkend, die skepping is stukkend en ons, vol hartseer en pyn. Telkemale voel ek nog ek kan nie kop bo water hou nie. Maar dan kom nogeens Sy sagte influistering in my: "Ek versterk jou, ook help Ek jou, ook ondersteun Ek jou met My reddende Regterhand..." En Paulus se woorde: "Sodat ek Hom kan ken, en die krag van Sy opstanding..." En dan gaan ons weer aan. Elke dag opnuut. Want God is getrou. Hy laat vaar nooit die werke van Sy hande nie. En weer eens, my beker loop oor! Ten spyte van my vallei van doodskaduwee wat ek nou beleef.

Dawid skryf in Psalm 23 oor die dal van doodskaduwee en hoe die Goeie Herder hom oppas: "Al gaan ek ook in 'n dal van doodskaduwee, ek sal geen onheil vrees nie..." In die vallei kom die aanslae van die vyand wat my wil vernietig, maar in die vallei kom ook God se ingrype in my lewe om my te herstel met Sy liefde vir my. Die dal van doodskaduwee word ook 'n dal van intense versoeking om teen God te sondig. Om teen Hom in opstand te kom, Hom te bevraagteken.

Ek het die "dal van doodskaduwee" al verskeie kere beleef. Aan die begin van my/ons pastorale bediening leef ons in die geloof met net ons roeping "om te gaan" om voltyds vir God te werk. Ons is jonk en pasgetroud, en het al ons sekuriteite prysgegee. My vrou het by my aangesluit, gereed vir wat ook al vir ons voorlê. Ons werk tussenkerklik met alle mense wat in nood verkeer. Geen geld nie. Geen kos nie. Ek verstaan nie, maar bely hardop: "Ek sal my God nie verloën nie." Herhaaldelik! Seker dosyne kere,

sodat Satan dit ook kan hoor! Want wie kan sonder kos en water lewe? Ek was in die dal van doodskaduwee! Maar uitkoms het gekom! Keer op keer het selfs vreemdes 'n mandjie kos gebring. Of 'n skaapboud uit die Gamtoosvallei. Vrugte. Groente.

Regdeur was ons lewe het ons 'n pad van geloof gestap. Valleie van doodskaduwee was daar baie. Somtyds was daar geld en voorsiening, somtyds nie. Ons beleef die Woord. Ons volg Jesus! Hy het gesê: "Ek is die Goeie Herder" en, "My skape luister na My Stem, Ek ken hulle, en hulle volg My." So, Hy ken ons, en ons volg Hom. Letterlik en figuurlik, met alles wat ons is en het. Maar Jesus sê: "Wee die wêreld weens die struikelblokke! Want dit is noodsaaklik dat daar struikelblokke kom, maar wee die mens deur wie die struikelblok kom" (Matt.18:7). A Faithful Version (so ook ander vertalings) lees: "Then He said to the disciples, 'It is impossible that no offenses will come, but woe to the one by whom they come!'" Dit is onafwendbaar. In die wêreld sal ons verdrukkinge hê, waar Satan ons sal versoek om te sondig deur ongelowige, sondige uitsprake te maak, soos om teen God in opstand te kom soos wat die Satan self gedoen het.

So is dit ook wanneer jy kom in die doodvallei waar Jesus gekom het. Ons loop in Sy voetspore. Die Heilige Gees is ons Helper. Die struikelblok het ook vir Jesus gekom, toe Petrus vir Hom wil vermaan om nie na die kruis te gaan nie: "Maar Hy het omgedraai en vir Petrus gesê: Gaan weg agter My, Satan! (Nie jy, Petrus, nie). Jy is vir My 'n struikelblok, omdat jy nie die dinge van God bedink nie, maar die dinge van die mense" (Matt. 16:23). Dit beteken Petrus het hom deur Satan laat verlei om Jesus aan te spreek!

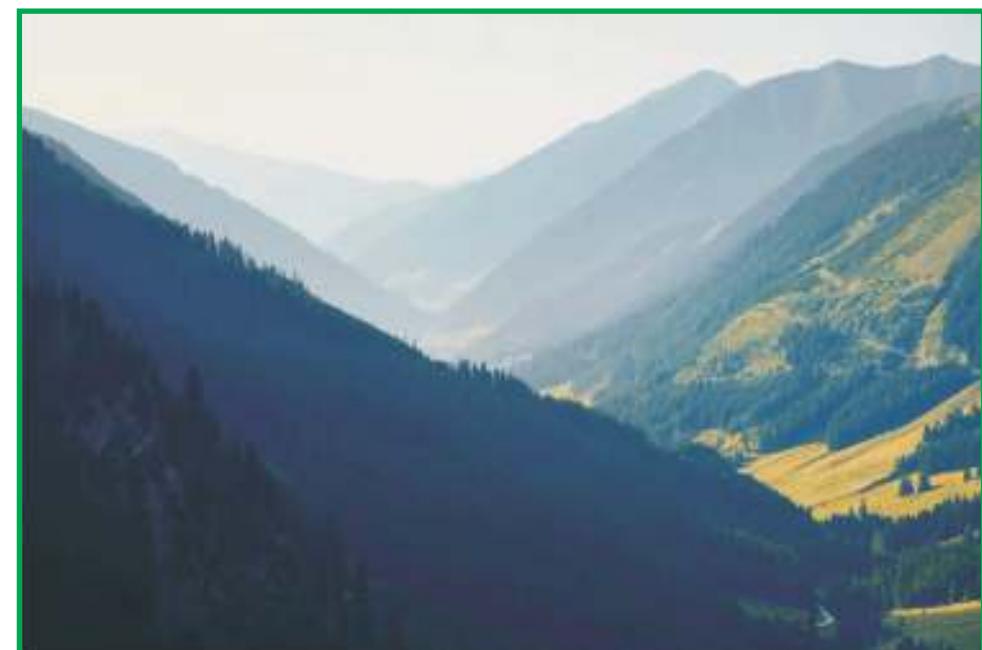
Die liederdigter, Dottie Rambo, skryf:

In The Valley He Restores My Soul

When I'm low in spirit
I cry, 'Lord, lift me up!
I want to go higher with Thee.'
But the Lord knows I can't live
on the mountain.
So He picked out a valley for me.

He leads me beside still waters
somewhere in the valley below
He draws me aside
to be tested and tried
but in the valley
He restores my soul.

It's dark as a dungeon
and the sun seldom shines
and I question,
"Lord why must this be?"
But He tells me there's strength



in my sorrow
and there's vict'ry in trials for me

He leads me beside still waters
somewhere in the valley below
He draws me aside
to be tested and tried
but in the valley
He restores my soul.

In Ps. 23:3 lees ons: "Hy verklik (Hebreeus = shoob) my siel; Hy lei my in die spore van geregtigheid, om Sy Naam ontwil." Die American Standard Version lees: "He restores my soul: He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake". 'Restores' is binne konteks 'n goede vertaling uit Hebreeus wat die betekenis inhoud van herstel tot die vorige kondisie. En dit is wat die rus van God bring. Dit is 'n geestelike en emosionele verkwikkning van die innerlike mens. Jesus sê vir Sy dissipels: "Kom 'n bietjie eenkant en rus 'n bietjie." En wanneer ons ons laste vir Hom gee, neem Hy dit, en ons gaan Sy rus binne (Matt. 11:28-30).

In die doodvallei word ons ook "tot die dood toe" getoets, sonder om die fisiese dood in te gaan, maar wel die dood van die "ek" in my. Job sê: "Want Hy weet hoe my wandel is; as Hy my toets, sal ek soos goud te voorskyn kom" (Job. 23:10). Daar vind as't ware 'n nuwe geboorte plaas. God maak alles nuut. God maak iets nuuts.

In Jes. 43:19 staan geskryf: "Kyk, Ek gaan iets nuuts maak; nou sal dit uitspruit; sal julle dit nie merk nie? Ja, Ek maak 'n pad in die woestyn, riviere in die wildernis." Aan die bannelinge van Israel het God 'n boodskap gehad, wat elke mens in nood, 'n "banneling", op homself kan toepas in sy eie omstandighede: "Want Ek weet watter gedagtes Ek aangaande julle koester, spreek die HERE, gedagtes van vrede en nie van onheil nie, om julle 'n hoopvolle toekoms te gee. Dan sal julle My aanroep en heengaan en tot My bid, en Ek sal na julle luister" (Jer. 29:12). En verder: "En julle sal My

soek en vind as julle na My vra met julle hele hart" (Jer. 29:13). In die vallei gebeur die wonderwerke van God in my en met my. Hy maak my nuut!

Ek verlang so na my geliefde, en mis haar insette op my lewe van samesyn, haar vingerafdrukke op my. Want van beide kante het ons vingerafdrukke op mekaar gelaat, vir 47 jaar, wat onuitwisbaar is. En nou is ek alleen. Sy is weg. Maar ek berus daarby, want die Here het vir my gesê, sy het haar roeping voltooi. Ons was beide gewillig om NIKS te word nie. Elkeen met 'n belowende beroep voor ons, tot nikswes verminder. Om verkleineer te word, verneder te word, verag te word, meestal sonder die sekuriteit van 'n salaris of inkomste vir ons bediening, om smarte te ly ter wille van die roeping.

God sê vir my, "Ek het toegelaat dat jy altyd klein moet wees, anders sou jy nie die werk kon doen wat jy nou doen nie." Nie almal hoef klein te wees nie. Ander kan weer verhef word tot 'n groot naam of wêreldroem. God werk met elkeen op 'n ander manier. Baie se roem en verheffing kom eers na hulle dood.

Daarom, bly net nederig aan die voete van die Here, hoor Sy stem in jou lewe, bring jou offer van selfoorgawe en gehoorsaamheid aan Sy Stem, en voltooi jou roeping met Sy ondersteuning, in die krag van die Heilige Gees. Werk getrou vir Hom! Ten spyte van jou vallei van doodskaduwee en verdrukking. Hy bly getrou en dra jou deur. Jakobus sê: "Dis nie meer lank nie, dan kom die Here." En Johannes roep uit aan die einde van die boek Openbaring: "Kom, Here Jesus, kom gou!"

Laat ons dan hoopvol opkyk, vashou aan ons allerkosbaarste geloof, en ons aan die Goeie Herder toevertrou - nou en vir ewig!

©Dr JJ Venter

Jou Daagliksse Brood

"Jesus sê vir hulle: 'Ek is die brood wat lewe gee. Wie na My toe kom, sal nooit weer honger word nie; en wie op My vertrou, sal nooit meer dors kry nie.'" (Johannes 6:35 NVL).

Na die Tweede Wêreldoorlog was Europa verwoes en orals was daar honger en hawelose kinders wat wees deur die gevegte gelaat is. Hulle is in groot kampe geplaas waar hulle kos en sorg ontvang het. Tog het hulle nie rustig in die aande geslaap nie; hulle was senuweeagtig, angsbevange en woelig.

Die versorgers kon dit nie ver-

staan nie, totdat 'n sielkundige voorgestel het om elke aand vir elke kind 'n stukkie brood aan te bied, nie om te eet nie, maar om in die bed vas te hou. Die uitkoms was verstommend!

Die kinders het deur die nag begin slaap, omdat hulle besef het dat hulle nie die volgende dag honger sou ly nie. Deur die brood vas te hou, het hulle 'n gevoel van beskerming (hulle is veilig), belangrikheid (iemand gee vir hulle om), en geluk (daar sal mōre brood wees), ervaar.

Die kinders het hierdie drie dinge nodig gehad - en jy het dit ook

nodig. Al drie kan in 'n verhouding met Jesus gevind word. Toe Hy gesê het: "...Ek is die brood wat lewe gee. Wie na My toe kom, sal nooit weer honger word nie..." het Hy bedoel: "Ek is vir jou siel wat kos vir jou liggaam is."

Brood is een van die dinge wat die meeste van ons in gemeen het. Dit behoort nie net aan 'n spesifieke streek of nasie nie. Dis in alle vorms en groottes beskikbaar. In Engeland mag dit dalk botterbroodjies wees; in Suid-Amerika, tortillas; in New York, bagels; en in Ethiopië, injera.

Deur middel van 'n eenvoudige

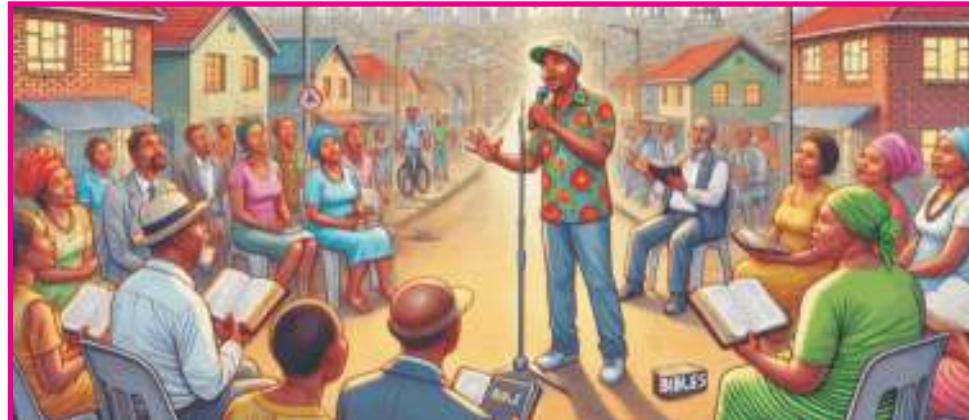


stelling het Jesus ons daaraan herinner dat Hy ons voedingskrag orals en elke keer is. Maak dus seker om jou Bybel elke dag te lees; dis jou daagliksse brood.

- Bob & Debby Gass

BOLELANG BATHO KA JESU!

(TELL THE PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS!)



DITEMANA

Matheo 28:18-20. "Jesu a tla kwa go bone, a bua nabo a re: 'Thata yotlhe ke e neilwe kwa legodimong le mo lefatsheng. Ka moo he, yaang lo dire merafe yotlhe barutwa, lo ba kolobetse mo leineng la Rara le la Morwa le la Mowa o o Boitshepo, lo ba rute go tlhokomela tsotlhe tse ke di lo laetseng. Mme itseng, nna ke na le Iona ka malatsi otlhe go ya bokhutlong jwa lefatshe.'"

Ditiro 1:8. "Mme lo tla bona nonofo ya Mowa o o Boitshepo, motlheng o tleng mo go Iona; lo tla nna basupi ba me mo Jerusalema le mo Jutea yotlhe le mo Samaria le go ya kwa bokhutlong jwa lefatshe."

DIKAKANYO

A Bakeresete botlhe ba tshwanetse go nna le seabe mo go phatlalatseng Efangele ya ga Jesu Keresete, a ga se tiro ya Moruti fela? Mabapi le potso ya gore a Bakeresete botlhe ba tshwanetse go nna le seabe mo go phatlalatseng Efangedi ya ga

Jesu Keresete.

Batho ba bantsi ba akanya gore ke tiro ya baruti fela. Nyaa ke tiro ya modumedi mongwe le mongwe. O ka timana jang ka tumelo? Fa wena o itse gore Efangedi e tlisa bophelo jo bo sa khutleng o ka timana jang ka seo?

Ke fela jaaka fa o tshwere melemo e e ka foidisang mongwe kankere me o sa mmolelele mme o sa mo fe. Go na le dithuto tse di farologaneng tsa Beibele le tlhaloso ya tsone. A re lebelele dintlha tsa botlhokwa tse di ka elwang tlhoko:

Motheo wa Baebele:

- Taelo e kgolo: Mo go Matheo 28:19-20, Jesu o laela balatedi ba gagwe gore tsamayang lo dire batho ba merafe yotlhe barutwa. Taelo eno gantsi e tlhalosiwa e le pitsô gore Bakeresete botlhe ba ikatise mo go rereng le go dira barutwa, go supa gore go phatlalatseng Efangedi ke karolo ya botlhokwa ya botshelo jwa Bakeresete.

- Kabelo ya Kereke: Kereke e le mmele e na le boikarabelo jwa go abelana ka Efangedi. Le fa karolo ya mongwe le mongwe e ka farologana, tirisano ya setlhophah e gatelelwa mo tirong ya go diragatsa seabe se. Mophutego mongwe le mongwe o na le neo e nngwe le bokgoni bo bongwe. Re tsamaya mafelo a a farologanang. Bolelela kwa o tsamayang teng! Ditsela tse di farologaneng tsa go rera Efangedi

- Mekgwa e e farologaneng: Go phatlalatsa Efangedi ga go reye fela go rera semmuso kgotsa thomo e kgolo. Go ka akaretsa dikamano tsa bopelontle, ditiro tsa kutlwelobotlhoko, le go phela botshelo jo bo bontshang dithuto tsa ga Keresete. Mokeresete mongwe le mongwe a ka abelana tumelo ya gagwe ka ditsela tse di tshwanetseng dinonofole maemo a gagwe. Bontsha lerato la Jesu kwa o tsamayang teng.

- Tirisano le Setshaba: Bakeresete ba le bantsi ba tsaya karolo mo go rereng Efangedi ka ditiro tsa setshaba, go ruta, go thusa, go etelela pele. Morongwa mongwe o kile a re: "Re tshwanetse go rera Efangedi nako jotlhe mme nako e nngwe re tshwanetse go dirisa Beibele. Ga o rere Efangedi fela ka bua le go buisa Beibele. O rera ka mmele le ka tsamao le ka maitseo a gago. Seno se bontsha gore go tsaya karolo go ka tsaya mefuta e mentsi.

- Thuso ya Moya o o Boitshepo: Ditiro 1:8 di gatelela gore badumedi ba amogela maatla go tswa



Johan Zerwick
Sêle ke 083 458 3837

mo Moya o o Boitshepo go nna basupi. Thuso eno e supa gore Bakeresete ba a gokelelwa go abelana tumelo ya bone, mme gape e lemoga gore ga se mongwe le mongwe yo o tla dirang jalo ka tsela e e tshwanang kgotsa ka selekanyo se le sengwe.

Kakaretso Mo kakaretsong, le fa Bakeresete botlhe ba siame go tsaya karolo mo go phatlalatseng Efangedi, ditsela le selekanyo sa seabe di ka farologana thata. Taelo e kgolo e eme e le taelo ya motheo go badumedi botlhe, e ba rotloetsa go tsaya karolo mo go rereng go ya ka bokgoni le maemo a bone.

THAPELO

Rara wa rona wa kwa Legodimong, re neye maatla gore re nne barutwa ba ba ikanyegang, gore re abelane lorato le boammaaruri jwa gago ka bopelokgale, gore re diragatse Taelo e Kgolo mmogo. Amen.

Die Gesprek by die Put

Ons lees in Johannes 4 die kosbare verhaal van die vrou by die put. Sy was soekend en dorstig, en Jesus het in Sy liefde na haar uitgereik met 'n aanbod van gratis lewende water. Jesus het vanaf Judea na Galilea gereis en "Hy moes deur Samaria gaan" (v. 4). Deur die Gees geleid, het Hy op 'n Samaritaanse vrou in nood gefokus, en sy het die sleutel geword om 'n groot skare van haar volksgenote met die Evangelie te bereik.

Dit was op die middag en Jesus was moeg van Sy reis, daarom het Hy by 'n put gaan sit (v. 6). Dit was egter die put van Jakob by die dorpie Sigar in Samaria waar hierdie verhaal hom afspeel. Dit is betekenisvol, omdat Jakob die gemeenskaplike voorvader van die Jode en die Samaritane is. Maar in pleks daarvan dat dit samehorigheid bring het, was daar verdeeldheid tussen hierdie twee groepe.

AGTERGROND

RC Sproul herinner ons daaraan dat die Assiriëse ballingskap, waartydens die noordelike koninkryk van Israel weggevoer is, in 722 v.C. plaasgevind het. Dit was weens hulle aanbidding van afgode ten spyte van vele profetiese waarskuwings. Nie almal is egter weggevoer nie, en die wat agtergebleef het, het met die plaaslike bevolking (afgodedieners), wat deur die Assiriërs daarheen gebring is (2 Kon. 17), vermeng. Voorts het baie Jode vanuit Judea na Samaria getrek tydens die Intertestamentêre tydperk om sodoende die Griekse kulturele invloed te probeer ontwyk. Daar het vyandskap ontstaan tussen die Jode en die Samaritane, gegee die feit dat die Samaritane ondertrouw het, slegs die Pentateug (die eerste vyf boeke van die Bybel) as geïnspireerde Skrif aanvaar het, en dat hulle op die Berg Gerisim aanbid het in plaas van op die berg Sion in Jerusalem. Laasgenoemde is as kettery (valse godsdiens) deur die Jode beskou, en vice versa. Die Samaritane het Nehemia se pogings om die tempel te bou, teëgestaan (Neh. 6:1-14), en dit was die begin van 'n eeu-lange, bitter vete. Die Jode het die Samaritane dus verag as gevolg van hul gemengde bloedlyn en verwronge godsdiens en na hulle as "honde" verwys (vgl. Matt. 15:26), waar Jesus ook vir die Kananéese vroue sê, "Dit is nie mooi om die brood van die kinders te neem en dit vir die hondjies te gooi nie" toe sy Hom gesmeek het om haar dogter te bevry van die Bose).

Bogenoemde agtergrond verklaar

die revolusionêre aard van Jesus se gelykenis van die Barmhartige Samaritaan (Luk. 10:29-37): ten spyte van die feit dat Jode en Samaritane geen gemeenskap met mekaar gehou het nie en mekaar verag en vermy het, het hierdie Samaritaan die kulturele taboes verbreek en na 'n Jood in nood uitgereik, terwyl sy eie volksgenote dit nie gedoen het nie, omdat dit hulle dalk onrein vir die tempeldiens sou maak. Die Samaritaan se deernis het die tradisie van mense verbreek. Bestaande verklaar ook hoekom baie Jode uit hul pad gegaan het om Samaria te vermy (hulle het letterlik óm hierdie landstreek gereis, al het dit hulle reis baie langer gemaak) wanneer hulle vanaf die suide na Jerusalem gereis het, tipies om te gaan aanbid by die tempel, omdat hulle Samaria as onrein beskou het. En laastens verklaar dit hoekom die Samaritaanse vrou asook Jesus se dissipels so verbaas was toe hulle sien dat 'n Jood met 'n Samaritaan, en 'n man met 'n vrou, in gesprek was – beide hierdie sake was kultureel onaanvaarbaar. Gelukkig ag Jesus die kosbare siel van 'n verlorene hoér as die tradisie van mense, en ons behoort dieselfde moed aan die dag te lê, sou so 'n geleentheid hom voordoen om die Goeie Nuus met 'n verwerplike te deel.

TWEE KERNGEDAGTES

Hoewel daar baie oor hierdie verhaal gesê kan word, wil ek dit graag ontleed aan die hand van twee kernmotiewe wat telkens voorkom. Ons sien hoe Jesus die vrou meesterlik maar ook met groot liefde, teerheid en geduld benader met twee waarhede: (i) Wie Hy is (Sy identiteit) en (ii) wat Hy vir haar kan / wil gee (die gratis gawe van die ewige lewe). Soos die verhaal hom afspeel, sien ons hoe Jesus die vrou lei op 'n ontdekkingstog om self die antwoorde op hierdie twee vrae te vind. Hy is die Messias en Hy het huis gekom het om die wêrelde van sonde en dood te bevry. Hy lei haar om te ontdek dat Hy die ewige lewe en 'n verhouding met God moontlik maak, want Hy is die Weg na die Vader (Joh. 14:6). Uiteindelik word hierdie twee sake onlosmaaklik een: die Messias is die Redder wat ons na Hom toe roep, en deur geloof in Hom word ons geestelike dors geles en verkry ons die ewige lewe.

Die gesprek begin waar Jesus vir die vrou water vra om te drink (Joh. 4:7). Wat 'n interessante en praktiese aanknopingspunt! Hy gebruik die plaaslike konteks van die put van Jakob en die motief van water as metafoor vir die ewige lewe wat Hy aan die vrou



bied. Die vrou is dadelik op haar hoede, maar Jesus gaan voort om die vrou se geestelike nood sagkens te ontbloot, sodat sy vrymaking kan kry: sy het lewende water nodig, en net Hy kan dit vir haar gee op grond van Sy identiteit as God se Gestuurde (v. 10).

Natuurlik val hierdie geestelike waarhede vreemd op vleeslike ore. Wie is hierdie vreemde Man, en van watter water praat Hy? Die vrou wys ongelowig uit dat Jesus nie eens 'n skepding het nie en die dat die put diep is (v. 11). Dit spreek die 'gawe' aan. So is ons logika baie keer in die pad van die Gees se openbarings. Daarna daag sy Sy identiteit uit: Hy is tog nie groter as hul vader Jakob nie? (v. 12).

Dit is interessant dat Jesus haar nie uitskel of teregwys nie, maar haar geduldig op haar ontdekkingstreis lei. Hy antwoord eers deur inligting te gee oor God se gawe: natuurlike water kan slegs tydelik iemand se dors les, maar Jesus se 'water'-redding en gemeenskap met die Gees - saltot in ewigheid die gelowige se geestelike dors les (v. 14; Joh. 7:37-39). Steeds ongelowig antwoord die vrou (spottend?) dat Hy dan vir haar hierdie wonderlike water moet gee, dan hoef sy nie meer moeitevol water op die hitte van die dag te kom skep nie. Sy is nog nie oortuig dat Hy die gawe vir haar kan gee nie, en sy verstaan ook nog nie die aard van hierdie besondere geestelike gawe of Wie Hy is nie.

Jesus verskuif die gesprek nou na Sy identiteit wanneer Hy haar aansê om haar man te gaan roep (Joh. 4:16). Hy ken natuurlik haar hartseer geskiedenis, en Hy

openbaar dit aan haar. Dadelik besef die vrou dat hierdie vreemde Man 'n profeet moet wees (v. 19) - hoe anders sou Hy hierdie dinge weet? Sy is al 'n stappie nader aan die ontdekking van Sy volle identiteit!

Aangevuur deur hierdie ontdekking dat Jesus 'n Godsman is, begin sy oor 'n godsdienstige twispunt gesels: waar moet 'n mens God aanbid - in Jerusalem soos die Jode glo, of op die berg Gerasim soos die Samaritane glo (v. 20)? Interessant genoeg is daar 'n gemeenskaplike skakel van afgodery ter sprake: nie net die Samaritane nie, maar ook Israel (die gespreksgenote se onderlinge voorsate) het afgodery beoefen, en Israel se verkeerde en verwronge, vleeslike aanbidding het veroorsaak dat hulle in ballingskap gegaan het. Die tema van aanbidding is dus baie relevant.

Hoe wonderlik bring Jesus die waarheid dat ware aanbidders God nie meer op 'n bepaalde plek hoef te aanbid nie. 'n Nuwe bedeling het met Sy bediening aangebreek: die "plek" of wyse waarop gelowiges Hom moet aanbid, is in Gees en in waarheid, omdat God Gees is (v. 23-24). Dit sluit aan by die geestelike water wat Jesus bied, wat ons in 'n intieme verhouding met die Vader bring - waar ons vrymoedigheid het om tot Hom te nader (vgl. Heb. 4:16). Die Gees kom ons swakhede te help en leer ons om te bid en te aanbid (Rom. 8:26).

Nadat Jesus haar vraag oor die aard van ware aanbidding van die God van Jakob so insigvol, duidelik asook gesaghebbend beant-

Vervolg op p. 5

Die Gesprek by die Put

Vervolg van p. 4

woord het, begin die vrou wonder of Jesus dalk die Messias of Christus, die Gestuurde en Gesalfde van God kon wees (v. 25). Ons sien hier hoe belangrik geestelike saad in enige mens se lewe is - daardie woorde van wysheid en waarheid wat gesaai is deur 'n ouer, grootouer, predikant, Sondagskoolonderwyser, vriende, of familielede. Die Gees kan enige positiewe waarhede of agtergrond gebruik en daarop voortbou totdat 'n persoon ten volle verlig is. Jesus bevestig dit in 'n latere vers, waar Hy praat van beide die saaier en die maaier wat loon sal ontvang, omdat elkeen 'n unieke bydrae gelewer het tot die geestelike oes van siele (v. 36-38).

Iemand het een keer geskryf dat daar baie skakels in die ketting is op die pad na iemand se oorgawe aan die Gees se Roepstem en gevolglike redding. Ons moet tevrede wees om een skakel te wees wat deur 'n woord of daad iemand nader kan bring aan

daardie punt, sonder om so 'n persoon te probeer forseer tot 'n besluit of oorgawe. 'n Klip breek na vele hamerhoue, maar elke hou bring die klip nader aan verbrokkeling. Ons moet tevrede wees om soms God se kanale van waarheid te wees sonder dat ons dadelik resultate sien.

Jesus bevestig dat die naamlose vrou uiteindelik verstaan het Wie Hy is: "Ek Is, is die Een wat met jou praat." (v. 26, DV). Soos baie ander kere in die boek Johannes, gebruik hierdie evangelieskrywer die frase "Ego eimi" - Ek is. Dit is 'n duidelike verwysing na Jesus se Godheid (Ex. 3:14)!

Na haar ontdekking van Wie Jesus is, het die vrou haar waterkan net daar laat staan en stad toe gegaan om die mense tot selfontdekking te roep. Dit is tekenend daarvan dat ons ons eie pogings en rituele moet versaak, omdat dit slegs God se genade is wat ons in 'n verhouding met Hom kan laat staan. Hy moet ons

prioriteit wees. Hom alleen moet ons aanbid. Hoe ironies dat Jesus huis die onwaarskynlike uitgeworpene (sy wat op die hitte van die dag kom water skep om sodoende veroordelende oë te vermy) gebruik het om die skares van Sigar te bereik. Hulle wat haar twyfelagtige geskiedenis geken het. Uiteindelik glo hulle op grond van Jesus se woord dat Hy die Verlosser van die wêreld is, nie meer op grond van die vrou s'n nie (v. 42). Hulle het ook tot die ontdekking gekom van Jesus se identiteit, en die gawe van ewige lewe wat Hy aan elkeen bied wat in Hom glo.

TOEPASSING

Ons sien dat Jesus gehoorsaam was toe die Gees Hom gelei het om deur Samaria te gaan - iets wat nie graag deur Jode van daardie tyd gedoen is nie. Ons sien ook dat Hy deur die Gees 'n gesprek, besprinkel met wysheid en kennis, kon voer wat die vrou se lewe verander het. Ons moet nederig leer om ook daagliks op

die Gees te steun en Hom na te volg in woord en daad. Ons moet Hom vra vir moed om met verworpenes kontak te sluit, omdat hulle Hom so nodig het. Hy kan ons die wysheid gee om iemand se agtergrond te verstaan en elemente daaruit te gebruik as aanknopingspunte om hulle na die waarheid te lei. Hy kan ons die deernis gee om iemand in hul nood te bedien, ten spyte van hul agtergrond en sonde (nie dat ons volmaak is nie, maar huis uit genade sondevergiffenis ontvang het, andersins was ons ook nog vasgevang in sonde).

Ons moet ook stilstaan by die geestelike waarhede dat God ware aanbidders soek wat Hom in Gees en in waarheid aanbid, en Hom dank vir die gawe van Sy Seun en van die ewige lewe, deur die kragtige werking van die Gees in ons lewens. Mag ons kanale van God se Gees wees wat hierdie lewende water aan elke dorstige bring!

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LOVE'S HEALING RESTORATION

So often, when I read from the precious Word of God, I experience something of a sudden, breathless joy, an enlightening moment, even when the words are so familiar. Reading then often becomes a prayer.

How I love to pray Colossians 1:9-14! I make it personal as I pray Paul's prayer for the believers in Colosse: "I ask You, Father God, to give me complete knowledge of Your will and to give me spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way I live will always honour and please You, that my life will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, I will grow as I learn to know You better and better. I also pray that I may be strengthened with all Your glorious power so I may have all the endurance and patience I need. May I be filled with joy, always thanking You, Father. You have enabled me to share in the inheritance that belongs to Your people who live in the light."

How the life-giving, restoring Word kindles worship to flow!

Paul explains it so beautifully in Galatians 5:22-23 (and The Message does a glorious job here):

"But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard - things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely."

Our Father longs to occupy our hearts and lives fully with divine, immeasurable love, a love able to do anything! As He spoke to Israel through Hosea, He speaks to you in these promises if we draw near to His heart: "Then I will heal you of your faithlessness; My love will know no bounds. I will be... like a refreshing dew from heaven. I am the One Who answers your prayers and cares for you. I am like a tree that is always green; all your fruit comes from Me" (Hosea 14:4-7).

May our hearts ever long for a closer walk with Him and remain in the nearness of His loving Presence!

- Helen du Plessis, 083 332 0895.

Making an Impact by Sharing What You Have



The majority of us lead quiet, unheralded lives as we pass through this world. There will most likely be no ticker-tape parades for us, no monuments created in our honour.

But that does not lessen our possible impact, for there are scores of people waiting for someone just like us to come along; people who will appreciate our compassion, our unique talents. Someone who will live a happier life merely because we took the time to share what we had to give.

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.

It's overwhelming to consider the continuous opportunities there are to make our love felt!
- Leo Buscaglia

How Jesus Redeemed Peter

Jordan Wilbanks

The famous scene near the close of John's gospel is the kind from which one cannot look away. This leader among the disciples, this member of the inner circle of Jesus' ministry, had denied knowing Jesus three times at the critical moment of Jesus' arrest. John gives the accounts in chapter 18:15-18; 25-27:

Accuser 1: "You're not one of this man's disciples too, are you?"

"I am not."

Accuser 2: "You aren't?"

"I am not!"

Accuser 3: "Did I not see you in the orchard with Him?"

"Then Peter denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed."

Luke 22:61-62 provides a chilling added detail, and its result: "Then the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, 'Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly" (NET).

PETER'S RESTORATION

The scene in John 21 is post-crucifixion and post-resurrection, but pre-ascension. Peter had by this point already run to the empty tomb with John, he had encountered the risen Lord and rejoiced, he had received the first commission, and he had received the Lord's promise of the Holy Spirit.

But this is the first recorded conversation we have where the proverbial elephant is in the room. Jesus is speaking with Peter, perhaps in front of everyone, or perhaps alone. One can imagine what Peter might have felt every time he looked into the eyes of the risen Saviour. Would he ever forget the moment of meeting the eyes of Jesus, bound for crucifixion, and looking right at Him as he had denied knowing him for a third time?

'He said I would do it, and I said I could never do it - then I did. Is that unforgivable?' Peter might have thought. Would Peter ever have the right to the ministry Jesus had first called him to? Even though the risen Jesus had commissioned and empowered them as a group (John 20:21-23),

what about him? What could he ever do to erase his failure at the most critical moment?

It is here that the Great Physician begins sanctifying surgery on Peter. For three denials, Jesus asks variations of the same healingly incisive question three times. For His Own sovereign reasons, Jesus calls Peter to confess his love for his Lord three times.

"Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these do?"

"Yes, Lord, You know I love You."

"Feed My lambs."

"Simon, son of John, do you love Me?"

"Yes, Lord, you know I love you."

"Shepherd My sheep."

"Simon, son of John, do you love Me?"

"Lord, You know everything. You know that I love You."

"Feed My sheep."

Jesus then foretells Peter's death for his faith, and He repeats the initial call to him as Simon the fisherman: "Follow Me."

PETER'S FAILURES ARE UNDONE

Jesus is doing more for Peter than giving him or future Christians an example of good leadership in restoring someone after failure. As his loving Saviour, He is displaying that Peter's failures are undone. As his Companion and Friend, He is empowering Peter with the affirmation of his belief. And as his God and Master, He is commanding Peter and setting him loose with power - the Spirit's indwelling will be the confirmation.

Jesus is going to work through Peter to build His church, and there is work to be done. He is bringing Peter three times to verbal confession of love for Him. He is tasking Peter three times with aspects of the pastoral office: feeding and shepherding. He had known Peter would deny Him - Jesus knew when He chose him that this would happen.

There is a beautiful companion passage both to this scene in John 21 as well as to the accounts of Peter denying knowing Jesus. It is found in Acts 2:14-36. When

you encounter Peter's denial, don't neglect the same Peter and his address at Pentecost in Acts 2. Here, Peter has now been filled with the Holy Spirit, and just over 50 days after denying Jesus, he preaches this great gospel sermon with power, and the Lord brought 3 000 people to saving faith. What brought on such a drastic transformation in Peter? What was the root of this new confidence displayed by Peter?

RESURRECTION

He was witness to the reality that God had undone death itself. The resurrected Jesus! Peter could speak with clarity, conviction, and confidence because: (1) Peter had encountered the resurrected Jesus; (2) the resurrected Jesus had affirmed Peter's love; (3) the resurrected Jesus had trusted him with shepherding the Church;

and (4) the resurrected and ascended Jesus had sent the Holy Spirit to the Church.

Like Peter, in times of fragile faith we too have denied the Lord in His plain view. But as Christians, we have encountered the resurrected Jesus. He has ordered our lives and affirms His love for us. He trusts us with His mission to the world. And He has sent us His Holy Spirit to empower us for all He will accomplish through us.

Peter had a unique ministry and a unique calling. But ours comes in the same lineage from the same Lord. Sometimes our Lord does surgery on our hearts as He draws us closer to Himself. But He always has a purpose in what He permits and what He ordains.

- Selected

How Are You Filling Your Heart?

"Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips" (Prov. 4:24 NIV).

Have you ever made a poor decision and thought - "Why did I do that?"

In the Old Testament, the heart was considered the centre of inner life, and people believed it dictated thoughts, emotions, and actions. It was essentially a combination of someone's soul and mind.

When Proverbs 4:23 tells us to "guard our hearts" what it's essentially saying is - "pay careful attention to how you fill your inner life."

What goes into your soul and mind determines what comes out of your mouth. And what you say influences your actions and decisions. While you might not notice the effect your choices have on you today - over time, they will impact the direction of your life.

So how do we intentionally take

care of our inner lives?

Our bodies were made by God, which means the thing they need most is God. He is the One who sustains us. So some of the best things we can do for ourselves is intentionally seeking God through prayer, studying Scripture, reflecting on His blessings, and inviting the Holy Spirit to speak to us throughout our day.

The best way to guard our hearts is by giving our hearts to God. When we make Him the Centre of our lives and the Source of our strength, what we do will flow out from Him.

So instead of fitting God into our daily routines, let's create our daily routines around our relationship with God. Let's create space for God to speak to us and restore us. Let's allow God to heal the parts of our lives that are broken so that what comes out of us is God-honouring, encouraging, and reflective of the good we've allowed into our hearts.

- Selected

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Callings and Relationships

"He who walks [as a companion] with wise men will be wise, but the companions of [conceited, dull-witted] fools [are fools themselves and] will experience harm" (Prov. 13:20 AMP).

Sometimes in life, 'we don't rise to the level of our gifts and potentials, we rise to the level of our relationships and systems.'

Your gifts, potentials, and brilliance are not enough to fulfil God's call on your life; you need people and the right relationships.

David was a man after God's Own heart, but he wouldn't have ascended to his throne without the help of Jonathan.

Relational alignments are critical to living the life God intends for you. It is said, "If you want to go fast in life, go alone, but if you

want to go far, go with people."

But not just with any people, but the right kind of people. God's model for creation is interdependency. Who has what you need? Who knows what you need to know, and who has succeeded in the area of your calling? How can you leverage their experience to your advantage? Build strong relationships around people with similar calling as yours.

At the age of twelve, Jesus was already sitting in the temple with the rabbis, learning and asking questions; your association is often a preview of your destination.

Samson could have done more for God before his premature death, but the relationships he kept were not in alignment with his purpose. Moses had a call to set the Israelites free from the



land of bondage, but he was a stammerer (Exodus 4:10). However, his lack of eloquence did not invalidate his call. God gave him a helper, Aaron, who would speak on his behalf. Other people's gifts have to complement yours for you to succeed in your area of calling. Even Jesus called twelve disciples to succeed in His ministry.

Be selective of your association, and choose them unapologetically. It is not the number of

friends you have that counts; it's the quality and alignment of your relationships that matter.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, please give me the strength and wisdom to let go of toxic relationships. Send me the right people, dear Lord, and for the right ones I currently have, help me to nurture them. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

- Daniel Cole

Vergifnis en God se Teenwoordigheid

Ek het dikwels die valstrik van onvergewensgesindheid in my bediening teekom. Toe ek vir die eerste keer in Indonesië bedien het, het ek in die huis van 'n welgestelde sakenman tuisgegaan. Hoewel hulle die dienste bygewoon het waar ek bedien het, was hulle nie gered nie.

Gedurende die week wat ek daar bedien het, is sy vrou gered. Daarna het hy tot bekering gekom, asook al drie hulle kinders. Daar was bevryding en die hele atmosfeer in die huis het verander. Daar het groot vreugde geheers!

Toe hulle hoor dat ek weer na Indonesië sou kom saam met my vrou, het hulle ons genooi om by hulle tuis te gaan en het ook aangebied om die vliegtuigmaartjies van my drie kinders en die baba-oppasser te betaal.

Ons het daar aangekom en tien keer in hulle kerk bedien. Ek het oor berou en die Teenwoordigheid van die Here gepreek. God was teenwoordig in die dienste en daar was tranen van berou.

Ons het ook weer hierdie hele familie bedien. Die man se moeder wat in dieselfde stad gewoon het, het elke diens bygewoon. Sy het ook geld geskenk ten opsigte van die kinders se vliegtuigmaartjies. Teen die einde van die week het sy na my gekyk en

gevra: "John, hoekom het ek nog nie die Teenwoordigheid van die Here aangevoel nie?"

Ons het net klaar ontbyt geniet en almal het al die tafel verlaat. "Ek was by elke diens," het sy vervolg. "Ek het aandagdig geluisster na alles wat jy gesê het. Ek het uitgekniel en met berou my sondes bely. Tog het ek nie God se Teenwoordigheid aangevoel nie. Om die waarheid te sê, ek het nog nooit God se Teenwoordigheid ervaar nie."

Ek het met haar gepraat en gesê dat ek vir haar sou bid om met die Heilige Gees vervul te word. Ek het haar die hande opgelê en gebid, maar die Teenwoordigheid van die Here het nie daar geheers nie. God het met my gepraat: "Sy het nie haar man vergewe nie. Sê dat sy dit moet doen."

Ek het geweet dat haar man reeds dood was. Ek het na haar gekyk en gesê: "Die Here toon aan my dat jy nog iets teen jou man hou en hom nog nooit vergewe het nie." Sy het bevestig dat dit so was en gesê dat sy tog haar bes probeer het om hom te vergewe.

Toe het sy aan my al die verskriklike dinge vertel wat haar man aan haar gedoen het. Ek kon verstaan waarom dit vir haar so moeilik was om hom te vergewe. Maar ek het gesê: "As jy van God wil ontvang, moet jy vergewe." Ek het verduidelik wat Jesus aangaande vergifnis geleer het. "Jy

kan hom nie uit eie krag vergewe nie. Jy moet dit na God neem en Hom vra om jou te vergewe. Dán kan jy jou man vergewe. Is jy gewillig om jou man vry te spreek?" het ek gevra.

"Ja," het sy geantwoord.

Ek het haar in 'n eenvoudige gebed voorgegaan: "Vader in die hemel, in die Naam van Jesus vra ek U om vergifnis omdat ek onvergewensgesind was teenoor my man. Here, ek weet ek kan hom nie in my eie krag vergewe nie. Ek het alreeds gefaal, maar voor U spreek ek hom nou vry uit die diepte van my hart. Ek vergewe hom. Amen."

Terwyl sy hierdie woorde bid, het die tranen oor haar wange gevloeい, "Steek jou hande op en bid in tale," het ek haar aangemoedig.

Vir die eerste keer het sy begin bid in 'n pragtige hemelse taal. Daar was so 'n wonderlike atmosfeer en Goddelike Teenwoordigheid by die ontbyttafel dat dit ons skoon oorweldig het. Sy het vir nog ongeveer vyf minute gehuil. Ons het vir nog 'n klein rukkie gesels, daarna het ek haar aangemoedig om die Teenwoordigheid van die Here te geniet. Sy het voortgegaan om Hom te aanbid, en so het ek haar aan haarself oorgelaat.

Toe hierdie nuus haar seun en skoondogter bereik, was hulle geskok. Die seun het gesê hy het



nog nooit sy moeder sien huil nie.

Sy kon self ook nie onthou wanneer laas sy gehuil het nie. "Selfs toe my man gesterf het, het ek nie gehuil nie."

Tydens die aanddiens is sy gedoop. Vir die volgende drie dae was daar 'n pragtige glans en 'n lieflike glimlag op haar gesig te sien. Ek kan nie onthou dat ek haar al vantevore sien glimlag het nie. Sy wou nie vergewe nie, en daarom was sy 'n gevangene van onvergewensgesindheid. Maar toe sy haar man vergewe en hom vryspreek, het sy die krag van die Here in haar lewe ontvang en het sy bewus geraak van Sy Teenwoordigheid.

- Die Lokaas van Satan, John Bevere, VG Uitgewers, 1996, vertaal deur Huegene le Roux-Venter

The Rich Young Ruler

"As He was leaving on His journey, a man ran up and knelt before Him and asked Him, 'Good Teacher [You Who are essentially good and morally perfect], what shall I do to inherit eternal life [that is, eternal salvation in the Messiah's kingdom]?'

Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is [essentially] good [by nature] except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not testify falsely, Do not defraud, Honour your father and mother.' And he replied to Him, 'Teacher, I have [carefully] kept all these [commandments] since my youth.'

Looking at him, Jesus felt a love (high regard, compassion) for him, and He said to him, 'You lack one thing: go and sell all your property and give [the money] to the poor, and you will have [abundant] treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me [becoming My disciple, believing and trusting in Me and walking the same path of life that I walk].' But the man was saddened at Jesus' words, and he left grieving, because he owned much property and had many possessions [which he treasured more than his relationship with God].

Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'How difficult it will be for those who are wealthy [and cling to possessions and status

as security] to enter the kingdom of God!' The disciples were amazed and bewildered by His words.

But Jesus said to them again, 'Children, how difficult it is [for those who place their hope and confidence in riches] to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man [who places his faith in wealth or status] to enter the kingdom of God.'

They were completely and utterly astonished, and said to Him, 'Then who can be saved [from the wrath of God]?' Looking at them, Jesus said, 'With people [as far as it depends on them] it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God'" (Mark 10:17-27 NIV).

Despite the carnage of the twentieth century, we have not yet learned the depths of our depravity. Secularists have taught us that we are basically good - all we need is education. Polls also suggest that evangelicals overwhelmingly believe in the goodness of man.

This is surprising, given Scripture's assumption that we are chronically sinful. Paul tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). In Psalm 51:5, David confesses his evil nature was present even at the moment of his

conception.

Our Saviour once met someone who was confident in his own money and moral status instead of his allegiance to God. Wondering how he could inherit eternal life, this rich young man came to Jesus wondering what he had to "do" (Mark 10:17). The use of "do" indicates that he thought he could enter God's kingdom by doing good.

However, Jesus does not directly castigate him for this belief. Rather, the Messiah responds by asking the man why he was calling Jesus "good," for no one is good but God alone (v. 18). Jesus is not denying His Own goodness; He is indirectly forcing the man to question his assumption that he knows goodness (and therefore, the Lord). In effect Jesus is saying "no one is good but God, and therefore you cannot rely on your moral behaviour to inherit the life of the age to come. Like anyone else, you must follow Me [Who is God]." Bengel notes: "Wherefore Jesus does not accept from Him the title of goodness without the title of Godhead." Jesus is challenging the young ruler's concept of goodness (and by implication his adherence to that standard), and his concept of Jesus' identity, both of which were falling short.

Christ then gives him a list of ethical commandments and tells him that if he does all these, he

will enter the kingdom of God (v. 19). The man is quite pleased, and he professes his own conformity (v. 20). Indeed, even if he did obey those commands, he was still missing something - Jesus catches him on the first commandment.

Seeing that he worships the idols of wealth and social status, Jesus tells him to sell his goods and follow Him. But the man is not satisfied, and he refuses to let go of his riches (Mark 10:21-22). Having seen the true nature of his prideful and misplaced confidence in his own moral goodness, this man is bluntly denied the possibility of entering the kingdom on his own merit. He preferred to worship his money instead of God. Let us never be found professing Christ while remaining idolaters!

Not all of us will be asked to sell everything that we have, but all of us are commanded to set aside any idol that may be present in our lives. We must all give up relying on our own efforts to earn salvation and instead embrace the grace that alone can redeem us from the curse of sin and death.

Do you depend absolutely on the Lord for redemption? Think of the ways you have not loved God with your whole heart; confess your need of Him alone to save you.

- RC Sproul, *Encounters with Christ*

The Path to Success

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is also faithful in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little thing is also dishonest in much" (Luke 16:10 AMP).

There are many definitions for success in today's culture. For some, success is defined by the number of accomplishments we've made, or the number of possessions we've attained.

Jesus' definition of success is counter-cultural. It has nothing to do with our accomplishments or our possessions - it has everything to do with our character.

Jesus' teaching in Luke 16:10 is primarily about the content of our character. He says that those who are trusted with small things will be entrusted to larger things. Those who are faithful with what

they've been given will be given the opportunity to be faithful over more. And those who are dishonest, unfaithful, and untrustworthy, will do the same with what they're given.

It's not ultimately important to Jesus whether we are financially successful in life. What's more important is what we do with what we've already been given.

Little acts of faithfulness every day is how our character is shaped over time. The small decisions and the hard decisions are what create us into people of trust and honesty.

If you're asking God for more in life, make sure that you're being faithful with the things He has already given you. Use the resources and opportunities you



have to build trust and honesty with other people.

God is looking to use people of character. Pray for God to increase your character and to give you the opportunities to become a person who is faithful and honest in every area of life.

Prayer: God, You have given me unique gifts for Your glory. Please provide me with opportunities to use these gifts for the sake of Your kingdom. Teach me to be generous with my time and resources. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

- Selected

The Gift of Rejection

"At my first defence, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (2 Tim. 4:16-18 NIV).

When you read the title of this article, you were probably perplexed because you can't imagine how being overlooked, unwanted, or discarded could be a gift. So, I want to say at the outset that the act of rejection isn't a gift.

However, what rejection can teach you about yourself and others is a gift. Pain is only its wrapping paper.

For my part, when I consider the painful rejections I have experienced, they were usually painful because I believed the person rejecting me made me disposable and unworthy. When they rejected me, I accepted their decision as an indictment on my lack of value. Please consider two things:

- What do you believe about yourself because someone else rejected you?
- Did God say what you believe about yourself?

"Do not hide your face from me, do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my Helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Saviour. Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me" (Ps. 27:9-10 NIV).

One of the reasons why I wrote the book *The Gift of Rejection* is because many of us have been hurt by wounded people who in turn were rejected by wounded people.

Rejection becomes a vicious cycle of pain that gets passed down from person to person. I believe that being equipped to recognise and heal from rejection wounds is key to ending this vicious cycle.

"Hurt people hurt people," and many times the rejection we experience in our life is because of the rejection our perpetrator experienced in theirs. But, although hurt people hurt people, healed people heal people.

Consider these questions:

- How did your earliest expe-

riences of rejection affect you; whether from a parent, friend, teacher, or someone else?

- What did their rejection make you believe about yourself from an early age?

"In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:26-27 NIV).

When we *explode*, our rejection pain becomes visible to others in the form of anger, fighting, yelling, and hurting people. This form of rejection pain is the form most often condemned as wrong. But, we can also explode into a more seemingly virtuous form of rejection pain, and that is achievement; being hyper-ambitious and consistently achieving more and more success.

On the flip side, when we *implode*, our rejection pain takes the form of self-harm. People implode into all types of addictions to try and soothe their rejection pain, including drugs or alcohol or sex or pornography. Some people cut themselves or end up severely depressed or anxious. When we implode, people observing us will usually shake their heads in disgust because they can't understand why we keep hurting ourselves.

But, whether we explode or implode, the root of the pain is the same. Our expression of rejection is how we cope with being abandoned, humiliated, embarrassed, and unwanted.

Get really honest with yourself and ask the following questions:

- How do I show up in the world because of my rejection pain?
- What do I do to anaesthetise or numb the pain?

Think about David and Goliath. When David was a teenage boy, he had to look after his father's sheep. Samuel came down to anoint a king in Saul's place. Jesse brought all his sons before Samuel, but "forgot" about David. In truth, he did not think David was worthy to even be considered. Therefore he did not invite him to the meal. This must have been a painful rejection in David's life, and it may not have been the first time. But it was in the field of rejection that David found solace in God's Presence. That is where he came to know God and to be empowered and prepared for the future God chose for him.

Then came the assignment to take food to his brothers who were part of the Israeli army that was up



against Goliath. His brothers were condescending and hateful. But David rose to the occasion because of his trust in God, and because of the preparation in his valley of rejection.

David didn't defeat Goliath in spite of rejection; he defeated Goliath *because of* rejection.

David didn't feel confident that he could defeat Goliath because of his brothers' protection or his father's protection from lions and bears, he felt confident because THE LORD had protected him!

No matter who may have left you in your "field of rejection," you are not alone. God made a promise to never leave you nor forsake you; to never physically nor emotionally separate Himself from you. **And this is why rejection is a gift. Because, if you learn to stop fixating on who walked away, you will discover the One Who never left!**

Let me share a high-level overview of the practical framework I outline in *The Gift of Rejection*. I go into great detail about this in the book, so let's consider this a primer ahead of you reading it:

- OBSERVE. When rejection happens, take a moment to ask yourself, "What am I thinking and feeling right now?" Find a piece of paper or open a notes app and jot down your thoughts. As you review them, take the process a

step further by asking yourself, "Is this thought true?"

- PRAY. In Ephesians 4:26-27, Paul writes, "*Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.*" When rejection happens, pray and receive God's supernatural power to break the stronghold of anger or sadness.

- EXPLORE. Every rejection contains the gift of insight into yourself and others. By exploring the lesson, you can shift from a passive posture of "rejection victim" to an active posture of "change agent," making a conscious choice to use what you've learned about yourself to change your future.

- NAME. Your new-found insights will only serve as a gift if you set a clear action plan for how to incorporate them in your life. To do this well, you need to name your next step. Identify the action you can take to put your insights into practice. In doing that, you will be opening the gift of rejection. And that is the beginning of your healing.

I trust that you will be blessed as you decide to O.P.E.N. your gift of rejection, allowing God to shape your character, and make you a more useful instrument in His kingdom as you grow through your pain and mature in Him!

- Nona Jones, *The Gift of Rejection*

What We have as God's Children

What we have as Adam's children:

- Ruin (Rom. 5:9)
- Sin (Rom. 5:12, 15, 21)
- Death (Rom. 5:12, 16, 21)
- Separation from God (Rom. 5:18)
- Disobedience (Rom. 5:12, 19)
- Judgment (Rom. 5:18)
- Law (Rom. 5:20)

What we have as God's children:

- Rescue (Rom. 5:8)
- Righteousness (Rom. 5:18)
- Eternal Life (Rom. 5:17, 21)
- Relationship with God (Rom. 5:11, 19)
- Obedience (Rom. 5:19)
- Deliverance (Rom. 5:10, 11)
- Grace (Rom. 5:20)

Van Smart tot Sieraad

Ons almal gaan soms deur moeilike tye. Dood, verlies, egskeiding, bankrot-skap, verwerping is net van die slegte dinge wat ons daaglik beleef. Net omdat ons Christene is, beteken dit nie dat ons swaar tye vryspring nie. Maar wat belangrik is, is hoe ons hierdie swaartye hanteer.

Daar was mense in die Bybel wat ook swaar tye ervaar het. Rut se man het gesterf. Sy het saam met haar skoonmoeder, Naomi, getrek na 'n ander land. Rut het nie geweet wat haar toekoms inhoud nie, maar sy het nie stilgesit en toegelaat dat haar omstandighede haar onderkry nie. Sy was bereid om te werk. Boas het gesien dat sy 'n goeie vrou is omdat sy geweier het om Naomi te los en bereid was om vir haar te sorg. Almal het geweet dat sy 'n deugsame vrou is. Sy het nie haar deugsaamheid verloor toe sy smart ervaar het nie. Die Here het haar opgetel en weer vir haar 'n man gegee. Uit hierdie huwelik het Hy ook vir haar 'n kind gegee. Van weduwee na gesinsvrou het God haar geneem!

Josef was sy pa se gunstelingseun. Skielik bevind hy homself in 'n put en later in 'n vreemde land, verraai deur sy eie broers. Josef het nie toegelaat dat sy omstandighede hom onderkry nie. Hy het gevlug van sonde en gedoen wat reg was in die oë van die Here. Na baie jare en nog pyn van onder andere verwerping en vals beskuldigings, het Josef die tweede in bevel van Egipte geword. Die Here het alles wat hy gedoen het, voorspoedig gemaak. Nie net dit nie, die Here het later vir hom sy familie ook teruggegee. Josef het nie wraak gesoek nie, hy het sy familie wat hom verraai het, met integriteit en vergifnis behandel. Hy het verstaan dat die Here die goeie uit sy slegte omstandighede tevoorschyn laat kom het. Josef se pyn het in vreugde verander!

Hanna se hart was stukkend. Sy wou so graag 'n kindjie van haar eie hê. Haar skoot en arms was leeg. Sy is gespot omdat sy nie kinders kon kry nie. Hanna het aangehou om God te dien, te midde van haar smart. Sy het jaar in en jaar uit na die tempel gegaan

en God gedien. Sy het aangehou om God te vra vir 'n kind en Hy het haar die begeerte van haar hat gegee. Haar arms en hart was nie meer leeg nie. Sy was nou 'n moeder!

Nog baie Bybelse voorbeeld kan aangehaal word uit. Elke keer verander God die mens se smart in sieraad, 'n edelgesteente wat pragtig vertoon!

Wat staan ons dan te doen wanneer ons smart ervaar?

■ **Moenie toelaat dat smart jou geloof steel nie.** Veg met alles in jou om jou geloof te behou. Die enigste manier om deur die moeilike tye te kom, is deur jou geloof. As jy dit prysgee, sal die smart nie weggaan nie. Soos Hanna, moet ons aanhou vertrou en glo dat God ons sal aanraak.

■ **Hou aan om goed te doen.** Ons karakter word getoets gedurende moeilike tye. Dit is soms makliker om net nie meer om te gee wat ek doen of sê in moeilike tye nie. Kom ons wees soos Rut wat te midde van haar moeilike omstandighede 'n deugsame vrou gebly het.

■ **Moenie gaan sit nie.** As Josef net gaan sit het en nie aangegaan het met sy lewe nie (selfs in die tronk), sou hy nooit die oorwinning gesmaak het nie. Toe Josef opstaan, het God alles wat hy gedoen het, voorspoedig gemaak. Selfs na elke terugslag het Josef weer opgestaan en nie bly sit nie. Met God se hulp, kan ons aangaan selfs in die moeilikste van tye.

■ **Bring jou smart na die Here toe.** Los dit by die kruis. Moenie in jou eie krag probeer van jou smart ontslae raak nie. Ons is nie sterk genoeg om ons eie smart te dra nie. Ons moet dit vir God gee. "Kom na My toe, almal wat uitgeput en oorlaai is, en Ek sal julle rus gee" (Matteus 11:28).

Gedurende moeilike tye spandeer meer tyd in gebed, Bybelstudie en aanbidding. Dit sal jou deurdra.

Ons voel dikwels alleen in ons smart, maar ons is nie. Die Here is naby aan die wat smart beleef. "Hulle roep, en die Here hoor, en Hy red hulle uit al hul benooidhede. Die Here is naby die wat gebroke is van hart, en Hy verlos die wat verslae is van gees" (Ps. 34:18-19). Ons kan alles wat in ons hart is, met die Here deel. Ons mag huil, vrae vra en kwaad wees. Hy weet presies hoe ons voel en is nie bang vir wat ons vir Hom wil sê nie. Hy luister graag na ons en hou ons styf vas wanneer ons Hom nodig het.

Ons moet opstaan uit die as van smart. Ons moet die sieraadlewe leef! Dit is wat die Here vir ons beplan. "Die dag waarop Hy vir dié in Sion wat treur, eer gee in plaas van smart, vreugde in plaas van droefheid, blydskap in plaas van hartseer. Hulle sal genoem word: Bome van Redding. Die Here het hulle geplant om Sy roem te vermeerder" (Jesaja 61:3).

God beloof om alles ten goede te laat meewerk vir die wat Hom liefhet. "Ons weet dat God alles ten goede laat meewerk vir dié wat Hom liefhet, dié wat volgens Sy besluit geroep is" (Romeine 8:28). Ons moet Hom net toelaat en vashou daarvan dat goed uit elke smart kan kom. Wanneer God ons smart vir sieraad verruil het, het ons dan 'n verantwoordelikheid om ander te help. Ons kom anderkant uit met 'n getuenis wat ander kan help en ons moet dit deel. Wanneer ons ander help, neem dit die fokus weg van onsself af en dink ons nie meer so baie aan ons eie smart nie. Het jy nog smart? Moenie daarvan vasklou nie. Neem dit na die kruis, los dit daar en begin die sieraadlewe leef!

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Jer. 20:11

★★★ **B&B** *Uit die Hand*

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-KOFFIE KAFEE-

HEB. 6:19

est. 2023

