

TRAPPED BY DRUGS, NOW I'M FREE!



Mo Timbo was about 12 years old when he became fascinated by the drug dealers he saw outside his home in South East London.

"[They had] these thick, white gold chains and bracelets, watches, cars," he shares in a Holy Production UK YouTube video.

"In my mind this was a picture of masculinity. This was what it meant to be a man. To be a man you had to have the nice chain, the nice car, the nice girls."

His fascination quickly turned into motivation to achieve what these men had.

Despite being a good student who didn't really get into trouble, Mo started hanging around with the wrong crowd.

When he started attending high school, things started to escalate. His school was between two rival gangs.

"I was used to seeing all this fighting and all these gangs and so I got sucked in," he shares. "Not only

did I get sucked in, I wanted to be part of it."

At 13 Mo started smoking cannabis. By 15 he was selling weed and getting involved in gang fighting and stealing.

"There was such an adrenaline rush from this life of crime. I felt alive. I felt like a man, and so I started chasing that feeling more and more."

Things took a serious turn how-

ever, when a friend was shot and killed during a fight with a rival gang.

Mo says he learnt a lesson that day: "This is not a game. This lifestyle is going to either take me out or it's going to put me in jail."

"Instead of leaving the street life, I decided that I need to be even worse," he admits. "I needed to become more of a gangster... I started becoming a little bit more

aggressive. I started carrying a knife on me all the time."

Mo was still only 15 when he was stabbed in the arm and back during a fight. The knife only narrowly missed his spine.

Still Mo continued in this lifestyle. By 16 he was selling crack cocaine and heroin. Eventually he built up his own drug business, making £4-5,000 a week and buying flashy cars, gold chains

and guns.

At 19 Mo made the mistake of selling drugs to an undercover police officer.

He was caught with thousands of pounds of crack cocaine and heroin on him. He was taken to a holding cell and told he was looking at five to 10 years in jail.

• Turn to page 2

Following in my father's footsteps

BY JOANNA BREAUULT

Eighteen-year-old Aaron Cosar stood cursing at his father's fresh grave site, a bottle of vodka in his hand.

"You weren't supposed to die!" he yelled. "You were supposed to help me get off this stuff!"

But Aaron wouldn't be set free of his addiction until another death had occurred – one by his own hand.

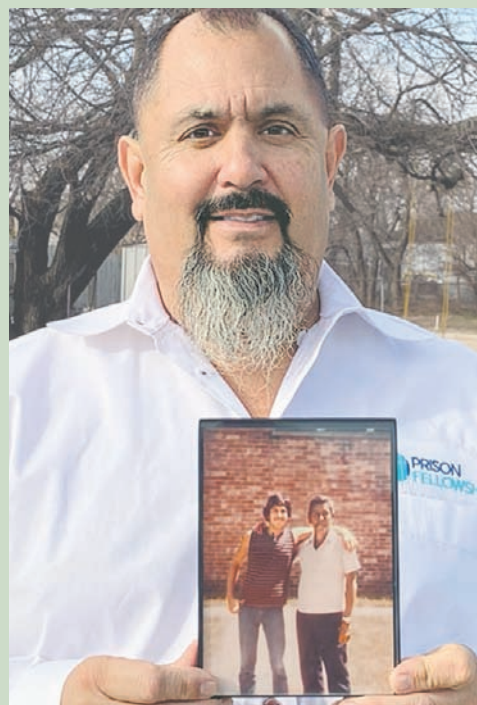
An awkward photo

Aaron had taken his first sip of vodka when he was nine. He was kicked out of high school for being intoxicated on school grounds. When he was 17, he got drunk and assaulted his father in their front yard while his siblings watched through the screen door. From then on his relationship with his father was never the same.

The day before Aaron's dad died, he came to visit Aaron at a juvenile detention center where he was being held for theft. Although Aaron wasn't in the mood to smile for a camera, his dad insisted that his mom snap their photo.

His father was a faithful provider and church deacon who read his Bible daily – but he never said "I love you" or attended Aaron's football games. Aaron felt rejected. And his dad was deeply distressed by his son's destructive choices.

After his father's death, Aaron's downward spiral accelerated. He got into fights and sold



Aaron's awkward photo taken while he was in juvenile detention, the day before his father died.

cocaine and stolen firearms to fund his addiction to drugs and alcohol.

"Did I want something better?" Aaron asks. "I'm sure I did. But when all I had known was just to drink and use drugs, I had no other

vision." When Aaron was 19, after a night of bar hopping and dropping acid, he ended up at the home of a man who mentioned owning guns. Aaron decided to steal one. As Aaron was about to leave, the man approached his car. Aaron fired the stolen gun, killing the man – and forever changing his own life.

Eventual surrender

Aaron was sentenced to life in prison. For the early years of his sentence, he walked in familiar patterns, breaking rules by selling contraband to other prisoners to support his drug habit. He heard – and even agreed with – the words of the Christians who came to share the love of Jesus. Still, he resisted giving everything over to God.

God used two moments in time to capture Aaron's attention. Aaron had told his two young sons that he would do all he could to come home. But in reality, he had been fighting in the yard – an infraction that works against early release. One day, he was deeply struck by the awareness that he had been lying. He no longer wanted to be the kind of man who would deceive his children. Another day, while walking on the ballfield, Aaron considered a new "opportunity."

"I was going to start running drugs in the [prison] system," he says. "The Holy Spirit said these very words to me, as I'm plotting in my mind. I'll never forget this. He said, 'The choice you make today will be the one you die with.'"

• Turn to page 2



30 **LASTING LEGACY**
CHRISTIAN ATSU

TRAPPED BY DRUGS, NOW I'M FREE!

• From page 1

Mo realised his life had gotten out of hand. "I looked up at the ceiling and there was a sign that said, 'Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired? At that moment I said in my heart, 'I'm tired of this life. I'm 19 years old and I've been stabbed multiple times, I've lost my best friend, I've been shot at two times, I've been raided by the police on numerous occasions.' I looked at my life, thinking 'This isn't what my life is supposed to be like.'" At the time Mo was dating a girl who had told him about Jesus Christ and how his life could be different if he followed Him.

"So when I was in the prison cell I prayed, 'Jesus, if You're real like my girlfriend's telling me, get me out of this police station and I'll give my life to You forever...' When I prayed in that cell, the police opened the door and they said, 'You are free to go on bail.'"

Mo immediately called his girlfriend and explained what happened. The next Sunday she took him to church. "I sat in the church and the preacher said, 'It doesn't matter what your life has been like, Jesus can save you. It doesn't matter if you've just come out of prison, if you've been involved in gangs, Jesus can save you.' He was preaching in a room filled with people but it was like it was only for me... He said, 'If you are here and you want to give your life to Jesus, raise your hand' and that day I repented. I gave my life to Jesus Christ at the age of 19 and I felt different... What I felt that day was deeper than the drugs that I've smoked. What I felt that day was better than the clubs that I've been to, the champagne I've bought, the cars... I made a decision that day, I said, 'I'm going to give my life to Christ forever.'"

Mo left London, realising that he needed to be away from his old friends and his old life. "For nine months I was in this church – I was learning how to pray, I was learning how to be a disciple. My life was different. I stopped smoking weed, stopped clubbing, stopped drinking."

Despite these changes, Mo still had to face up to his past mistakes. He was sent to prison, where he served three years.

"I made up my mind that while I was in prison, I was going to evangelise to all the prisoners ... By the time I left that prison over 600 men had given their life to Jesus." A month after his release, Mo married his girlfriend. They had two children and Mo later became a church pastor in the north of England before the family moved to France.

"If you feel like you're trapped in a cycle – maybe it's drug addiction, maybe it's gang warfare, maybe it's depression – I want to give you the good news that the same Jesus Christ that delivered me, is the same Jesus Christ that can deliver you." •



Which dog are you feeding the most?

How to win the battle within

BY SHANE IDLEMAN, CP GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

DAN Delzell, in a riveting blog from a decade ago titled, Google Executive's Tragic Death Sends Sombre Warning, wrote the following: "How do you go from being a devoted father of five and a successful Silicon Valley executive, into a 51-year-old man convulsing from a fatal dose of heroin on your 50-foot yacht, with a prostitute walking over your dying body to take a final sip of wine before leaving you to die?" He then presented the question, "How do tragedies like this take place?"

One step at a time

First, the enemy rarely pushes us off the cliff, so to speak. We're often led down one step at a time, one compromise at a time, one wrong choice at a time.

For example, the enemy doesn't show a couple the pain and anguish and the years of regret that adultery brings; he deceives them with the temporary enjoyment of sex and a false sense of freedom from responsibility.

If the full story was known beforehand, no doubt different choices might have been made. We're often not shown the pain that sin brings, we're enticed by the temporary pleasure.

The battle within

Galatians 5:17 says that the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what our sinful nature desires, and that these two influences, are constantly fighting against each other. As a result, our choices are rarely free from this conflict. In other words, our sinful nature and our new nature in Christ are constantly at war.

Don't be alarmed. The fact that there is a fight confirms the value of our commitment.

An unforgettable analogy

A story I heard illustrates this truth: "A young man, determined to find help for his troubled life, walked to a neighbouring church. He told the pastor that his life was meaningless and in constant turmoil. He wanted to make better choices but couldn't. He described the conflict: "It's as if I have two dogs constantly battling within me. One dog is evil, while the other is good. The battles are long and difficult; they drain me emotionally and mentally."

Without a moment's thought, the pastor asked, "Which dog wins the battles?" Hesitantly, the young man admitted, "The evil dog." The pastor looked at him and said,

"That's the one you feed the most. You need to starve that dog to death!"

What we embrace eventually embraces us

One of the reasons why men and women struggle with lust or anger is because they feed those emotions continually throughout the day. It's difficult to avoid illicit sex and outbursts of anger while continually watching media programs that promote them.

As a matter of fact, many cases of sexual violence can be traced directly back to pornography. What we embrace eventually embraces us. "The more we follow that which is good, the faster and the further we shall flee from that which is evil" (Matthew Henry).

Who controls you?

Romans 8:6 says that if our sinful nature controls our mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls our mind, there is life and peace. With God's help, you'll begin to control your thoughts instead of allowing your thoughts to control you.

For those who are skeptical about the media's influence, consider why companies spend millions of dollars on commercials. They obviously understand the concept of "suggestive selling."

Why walk willingly into the enemy's camp

In the end, the choice is yours when it comes to what you watch and listen to, but why would you willingly walk into the enemy's camp? Why would you feed wrong desires and thoughts when they do nothing but war against the soul?

If you're questioning God's existence, experiencing violent outbursts of anger, struggling with addiction or lust, or continually feeling depressed or discouraged; evaluate your diet of television, movies, the Internet, music, friends, and your thoughts in general.

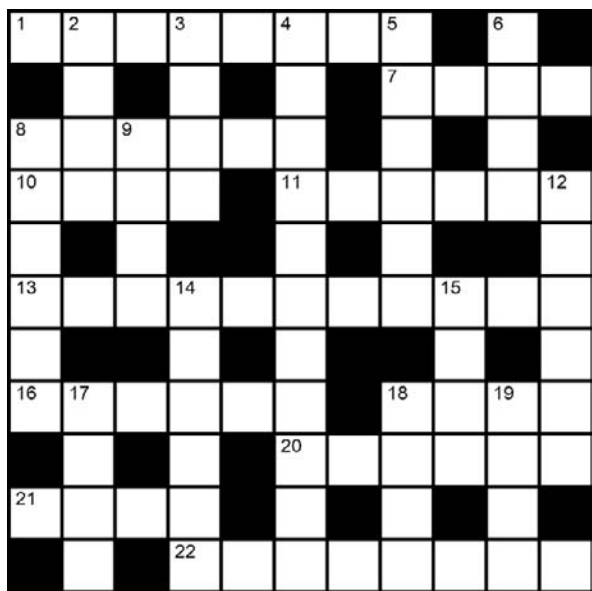
Are they lifting you up, or pulling you down? Commit your life to God and develop a powerful devotional life that consists of prayer, worship, and reading and studying the Bible. This is how you win the battle within. •

Shane Idleman is the founder and lead pastor of Westside Christian Fellowship in Lancaster, California, just North of Los Angeles. Shane's sermons, articles, books, and radio program can all be found at shaneidleman.com or wcfav.org. He is the author of Feasting & Fasting, If My People, Desperate for More of God, and Help! I'm Addicted. Follow him on Facebook at: facebook.com/confusedchurch. You can also follow Pastor Shane on the new free speech platform Parler https://parler.com/profile/ShaneIdleman/posts.

Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

- 1 Winged angels
- 7 Dog's sharp bark
- 8 Causes wheat allergies
- 10 Cathedral alcove
- 11 Ruble fractions
- 13 Too awful for words
- 16 Canal site
- 18 Apartment
- 20 Thyroid enlargement
- 21 Continental money
- 22 Staying alive



DOWN

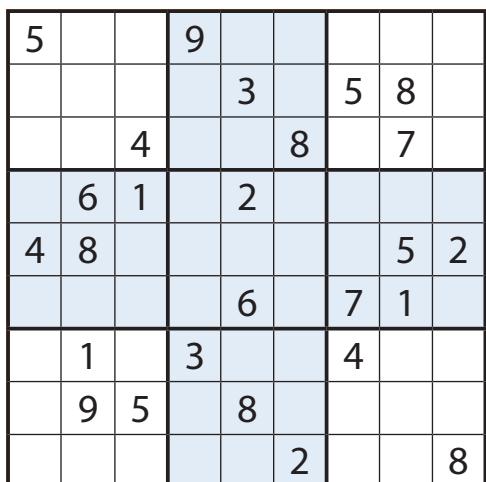
- 2 What 'SOS' means
- 3 Interest amount
- 4 Teller's boss (4,7)
- 5 Shortness of sight
- 6 Criticism

- 8 Unfairly raise a house price
- 9 Takes habitually
- 12 Slender
- 14 'Grand' instruments
- 15 Boxing prize
- 17 Shade of blue
- 18 Pacific island nation
- 19 Diva's solo

SOLUTIONS PAGE 7



"Acorns or chocolate cake?"



Journey to truth

A poem by D. Utting, Acacia Prison, Western Australia

Fractured bodies, shattered lives, broken heart, a mother's tear
In my life I have been the cause of all these things
I paid only a drop of my debt by being in a cell for 27 years
I was never willing to accept responsibility for what my life brings.

I once read about a Man, calling for repentance
"Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him" (Matthew 3:3)
What did He know – He hasn't done my sentence
How can He claim to take away my most grievous sin?

I looked to this Man once my life had fallen into hell's pit
I see now that indeed this Man more than walked my path

"The Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18)
This Man truly suffered so I could avoid God's wrath.

I did not know this Man even knew of my plight
I thought I suffered alone but He suffered right along beside me
"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2)
From this day forward I will worship Him and to Him alone I will bend my knee.

I still am not worthy of His grace – yet I am still bathed in it
I am beneath His notice – yet He walks beside me every day
Within me, now and forever, dwells His Holy Spirit
"By grace you have been saved, through faith." (Ephesians 2:8)

With this poem I bring word that you can trust
"Death is the destiny of everyone, the living should take this to heart" (Ecclesiastes 7:2)
"We tell you the good news, what God has promised our ancestors, He has fulfilled for us" (Acts 13:32)
Don't be the fool I was – let nothing keep you and God apart.

If you think you have succeeded in life on your own – you haven't got a clue
There is no other who should be more highly adored
"If on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you" (Philippians 3:15)
"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

I FORGAVE MY ABUSIVE MOM

Demetrius Guyton was two months old when his mother tried to kill him.

She laced his bottle of milk with hydrochloric acid so she could cash in on a \$25,000 life insurance policy. Miraculously, Demetrius survived but was left permanently scarred, a constant reminder of what his mother had done.

"I hated my mother," he admits in an interview with CBN. "I resented her very bad and it was horrible." His mother was sentenced to 15 years for first-degree assault. Aside from the scarring, Demetrius' nose collapsed due to the attack, leaving him with no nasal passages.

"I went through two years of intense surgical attention," he explains in his book, *The Chosen One: A Touch from Above*.



Demetrius' mother laced his bottle of milk with hydrochloric acid.

Then Demetrius' world changed again. "I was given into custody of some very, very hateful foster parents.... My only meal would be multiple slices of light bread."

He lived with three other boys there, including his own brother, although he didn't learn that they were related until later in life. When he was five years old, Demetrius went back to live with his grand-

mother. At school he faced ridicule, abuse and rejection.

"It was very terrible for me growing up because I had to deal with a lot of bullying, a lot of low self-esteem, a lot of everything that comes with being ostracized and alienated."

As a teenager, Demetrius started using drugs and joined a gang. Strangers who stared at his scars were often met with Demetrius' violent

anger. As a result, he was in and out of juvenile detention on assault and battery charges.

When he was 20, Demetrius caught his girlfriend cheating on him.

"Being rejected like that and betrayed took me to a horrible, horrible place of anger," he says. He attacked the man he found her with and police arrested him on attempted murder charges. He was given a life sentence.

Demetrius worried about the attention his scars would bring behind bars but he was quickly befriended by a Christian inmate.

As a high school dropout, he never learned to read or write but his new friend taught him using the Bible. The more Demetrius read the Bible, the more he wanted to know about God. One night he was praying when he heard God speak to him: "I love you and I want to use you."

Demetrius started telling others about what had happened.

"I began to share transparently about how angry I used to be, how I used to hate Jesus, how [I used to think] He wasn't real and how even though I'm in this jungle He appeared to me and He's real."

Demetrius told CBN about a visiting speaker who had previously been cellmates with a woman who tried to kill her son.

"She was saying about this lady that had poisoned

her son and she came to a place where she finally forgave herself and the speaker used that as a testimony of truth to try to empower us to forgive ourselves."

After the meeting, he spoke to the woman and confirmed that the woman she was talking about was his mother.

The speaker told Demetrius that Jesus had a purpose for his life. It was then that Demetrius finally surrendered his life to God.

"I fell on my knees and I began to cry out, tears began to leak out of my eyes: 'First of all, God thank You for manifesting Yourself to me and showing me that You are real. Second of all, thank You for dying for me and shedding Your blood for me. Third of all, forgive me for all of my sins and help me to live for You.'"

As he prayed, Demetrius felt peace and joy wash over him.

Demetrius was granted early parole for good behavior and released after five years. Immediately, he found his mother and told her he forgave her.

"All I wanted to do was just tell her, 'I love you. I forgive you.' She fell on her knees and began to weep towards Jesus, thanking Him that I was alive, thanking Him that I had forgiven her." ●



Demetrius Guyton has now reconciled with his mother.



Aaron now works full-time as a Prison Fellowship Academy program manager.

Following in my father's footsteps

● From page 1

In that moment, Aaron knew he had heard God. He also knew he didn't want to die in prison. He entered a drug treatment program and joined a Prison Fellowship Bible study, learning all he could about God. He eventually became a chaplain's clerk, a role he held for 15 years.

A new calling

Throughout his stay in prison, Aaron kept that photo his mom had taken long ago. One day, a rehabilitation treatment specialist asked him about his father, and then she commented, "Did you ever think that God gave you that picture with your dad so that you would know that your dad was saying he was okay with you?"

Aaron broke down. He had never considered that his dad's desire to have their photo taken together spoke of love and forgiveness.

"That was enough to forgive myself," Aaron recalls, wiping away tears. Aaron even found love while in prison. He and Justeen met when she came to visit a friend's husband. To her surprise, God impressed on Justeen's heart that Aaron was to be her husband, and she began writing letters to him. They fell in love and married, enduring six parole denials and 13 years apart before he was released in November, 2010. Aaron's sentence had been



Aaron and his wife Justeen in 1999.

commuted to 65 years by the governor of Oklahoma, and he was released after 25.

Carrying on a legacy of love

Now, at 55, the once lost and angry young man has a sense of purpose in his life. Aaron works full-time as a Prison Fellowship Academy program manager. He also works one-on-one with prisoners to help them explore their own stories and receive healing from God.

In his father's footsteps

At the time of his father's death, the church deacons presented Aaron with a cane representing his father's legacy of godly service. They said to Aaron, "You know what your responsibilities are," meaning to carry on in his father's footsteps.

Aaron wasn't ready at the time, but 37 years later, he is doing just that. Following his release from prison, that keepsake was one of the first things Aaron retrieved. And the photo from the juvenile detention center hangs by the front door of his home, the last thing Aaron sees before he goes out to serve Christ each day. "This is what I watched my dad do - go to churches, go visit somebody in the hospital," Aaron says. "Here I am. I'm out now and doing the same thing. So, I'm a lot like my dad, and I'm proud of that." ●

The original of this story can be found at www.prison-fellowship.org and it is used with kind permission.

World Hope Ministries Mzansi
"Making known Jesus - The Hope of the world"




Physical Address:
106 Nurney Ave.
Crosby
Johannesburg
2092

Contact Numbers:
Tel: 011 837 3437
Fax: 011 837 9104

The World Hope Ministries Spiritual Care Programme consists of the following courses:

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP 1

The lessons in this course will help the student engage the scriptures. This course consists of 4 books: Relationship with God, Fellowship with God, Responsibility to God and Accountability to God. Upon completion of all 4 books, one is issued with a bible in a language of his/her choice, and a certificate.

THE JESUS FILM

This film which is based on the biography of our Lord Jesus Christ, from birth to His ascension, is screened by a World Hope facilitator as part of our course.

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP 2

This course builds on the foundation laid by Discipleship 1 and provides a deeper understanding of the word of God in the Christian walk. This course consists of two books A and B, each 13 lessons. A certificate is awarded upon completion of each of the books.

GODS ANSWER TO AIDS

The purpose of this course is to enlighten and educate individuals of how to overcome the scourge of HIV/AIDS, based on what the Word of God says. This course consists of six lessons six weeks, engaging a DVD and a resource workbook. It is taught by a World Hope Ministries facilitator.

ALL OUR COURSES ARE QUALITY ASSURED AND OUTCOMES BASED
HOPE MAKES ALIVE

I HEREBY APPLY TO ENROL WITH WORLD HOPE MINISTRIES TO COMPLETE THE SPIRITUAL PROGRAMME FOR PRISONS

NAME..... PRISON NUMBER.....

PRISON..... SECTION..... CELL.....

Post to: PO Box 96176, Brixton 2019

Violent man's transformation

John Lawson knew what it was like to be locked up before he had ever gone to prison. At the age of 10 his father locked him in their home alone and left, never to return. It was four days before he was found by some friends, hungry and scared.

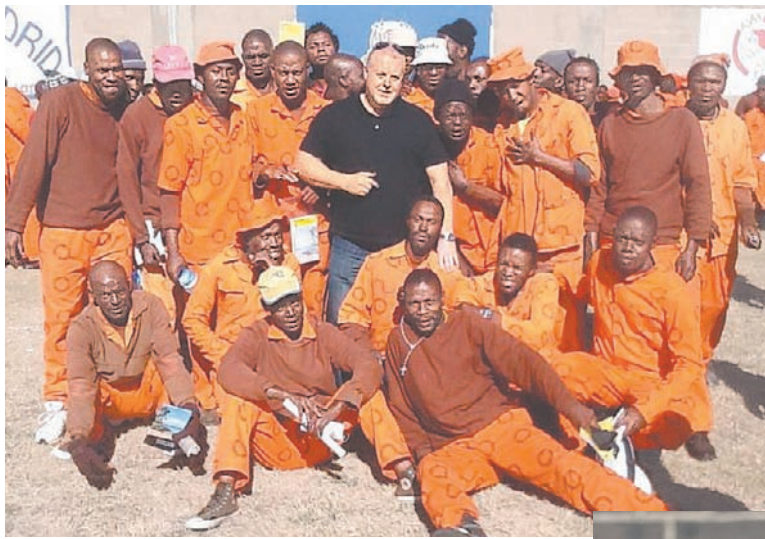
As an adult, John experienced a different kind of imprisonment when he was jailed for five years for extortion. But it was there he says he found true freedom, which set his life on a new path.

In an interview with 100 Huntley Street, John says as a young child his family seemed perfect.

He and his younger brother lived with their police officer father and their mother, who worked in an upmarket store. They had immigrated to South Africa from Scotland and they loved the outdoor lifestyle.

Then John's grandfather was diagnosed with terminal cancer and his mother and brother rushed back to the UK. John stayed in South Africa with his father so he could continue at school.

At the end of term, John's father picked him up from school, took him home and told him he had to work late. He locked John in the apartment and abandoned him for a new life with his mistress.



John Lawson visiting with some inmates at Johannesburg Central A Prison. INSET: John is now a different man compared to the violent man he used to be.

When family friends called John's house, he answered and his distress was obvious. They came to the apartment and broke down the door. John was put on a plane and reunited with his mother and brother.

His family then lived in a council flat in a rough housing estate, where John encountered violence for the first time.

"I saw other kids my age sniffing

glue, taking drugs, carrying blades and being prepared to use them... I discovered I had an ability to take a punch and an ability to fight." In school John was always getting into trouble. Then when he graduated he



became a bouncer and joined a biker gang in a search for brotherhood.

"I got married at 21 and by the time I was 22 I was divorced," John tells Premier Christianity.

Now a single dad to a young son, John joined his gangster uncles in London's red light district, running peep shows, strip bars and the biggest brothel in London.

"I worked with a team of men who were ex-Special Forces. We would be sent to nightclubs where the local doormen couldn't handle the situation any more.

"We went in and restored order to nightclubs. We would be very heavy-handed and the levels of violence began to get bigger. I liked violence and I liked nothing better than to be paid for it."

Then John worked as a bodyguard for bands such as The Rolling Stones and AC/DC.

He married a second time to another single parent and had two more sons.

"I met so-called businessmen who

were involved in fraud and were owed huge amounts of money.

"They didn't want to get their hands dirty so they came to idiots like me and my men. We kidnapped a lot of people, held them hostage and they would pay their money."

He felt untouchable but the police caught up with him in 2003 and sentenced John to five years in prison for extortion.

When his marriage also fell apart, John felt as though he had truly lost everything.

In prison, John was invited to a Bible study, where he was struck by how the other men there appeared so happy. They sat back in their chairs and began to sing *Open the Eyes of*

"I liked violence and I liked nothing better than to be paid for it."

My Heart Lord.

John read the lyrics from the song sheet. "I cried," he admits. "I hid my face behind the paper."

The next day John began to read the Bible for the first time.

Ezekiel 18:27 stopped him in his tracks: "But if a wicked man turns from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he will save his life."

As he read further he read that God would give him a new heart and a new spirit if he repented (turned away from wrongdoing against God).

John recalls the prison chaplain sharing the good news about Jesus with him.

"He said, 'You were in court, you stood before a judge, the judge found you guilty and you went to prison. One day you're going to stand before God on Judgment Day – will you be guilty or innocent?'"

"He took me through a few of the Ten Commandments and I said, 'I'm guilty'. He said, 'Heaven or hell? It's as simple as that.' I said, 'I think I'm headed to hell.' Then he said to me, 'If a rich man came and paid your fine in court, the judge could set you free."

"When Jesus Christ went to the cross, He paid your fine. It's like He wrote a check for your life and after three days the check cleared and a legal transaction took place in heaven.

"God can legally dismiss the case against you because Jesus paid your fine, if only you're willing to put your faith and trust in Him."

John repented of his sins and put his faith in Jesus that day and since then, nothing has been the same. He has traveled to many countries, speaking in some of the toughest prisons on the planet.

"I've been into more prisons today as a free man than I ever did as a criminal," John says. "God has an amazing sense of humor!"

John says if God can forgive a violent man like him, He can forgive anybody.

"All you have to do is trust that He's there, search for Him, repent and surrender your life to Jesus Christ.

"I promise you His Word says He will give you a new heart and a new spirit. I'm living proof that it happens."

John has written a book about his life called *If a Wicked Man*.

Michelle is living in the light

BY JOANNA BREAUULT

To her neighbors, Michelle's life looked picture perfect. She and her son's father lived in a five-bedroom home on several acres of land. On the weekends, they socialized with their friends, and zoomed around on their snowmobiles or four-wheelers. Her daughter was off at college and they had a son at home.

But beneath the surface lay horrific memories and deep guilt. A traumatic childhood. An abortion Michelle hadn't wanted. Drug abuse. And now – a long-term relationship that was falling apart.

Secrets concealed

Like the one she had created, Michelle's family of origin looked good on the outside. But her mother was an alcoholic whose depression overshadowed their home. Michelle's father, whom her mother had divorced when Michelle was six, was also an alcoholic and frequently violent.

Growing up, Michelle endured physical and sexual abuse but did not tell a soul. At 13, she began numbing her pain with alcohol and promiscuity.

"It came from wanting to be loved," Michelle explains. Michelle's adolescence was one of risk-taking and living in the moment. But when she got pregnant at age 19, she decided it was time to settle down.

She took a job doing the books for a local business. In 1988, she married her baby's father, a man 13 years her senior. But he turned out to be much like her own father – angry and abusive.

When she unexpectedly became pregnant a second time, he forced her to get an abortion. Michelle became suicidal, and they divorced after 10 painful years together.

Then Michelle became involved with a much younger man. She loved their life of fun and the new son they welcomed into the world. However, they became entangled in drug addiction, and after a while, he became abusive. In 2006, Michelle asked him to leave. Later, she discovered he had been unfaithful with her best friend. She was devastated.

One bright spot?

Michelle's work life was a bright spot amid her



Since her release from prison, Michelle has paid back all the money she owed after committing tax fraud and tax evasion.

painful relationships. A talented accountant, she found it fulfilling to help grow a small business to a multimillion-dollar corporation over 20 years.

But the financial practices at work had always been a little shady. The business didn't always track cash payments, and employees were compensated both legally and under the table. Voluntary audits were unheard of.

Around the time Michelle separated from her son's father, her boss directly asked her to help him hide money.

"He'd say things like, 'You need me. You don't have a college degree, so you'll never get another job that pays what you make here. And that guy you live with – he's a loser. But I'll take care of you,'" she recalls. "I helped him break the law. I helped him commit tax fraud and tax evasion. It was our secret."

At the same time, Michelle was determined to hold on to the one thing that seemed stable in her son's life – their home. She started paying

personal bills with a company card and taking advances she promised herself she'd repay.

Several years later, the business was audited. Knowing she would likely be indicted, Michelle began to attend church, hoping it might garner favor with a judge.

At church, she made a friend named Sue who urged her to come clean. Michelle thought the way Sue talked about God being the answer to her pain sounded crazy. But, exhausted and empty, she did as Sue suggested: She told the truth. She was arrested in August 2010, and the judge gave her two to six years for grand larceny.

The words of a child

Right away, Sue and three other women from church began regularly visiting Michelle and sending her letters. Their church participated in Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree, which delivers gifts to children on behalf of their incarcerated parents. Sue made sure Michelle's 11-year-old son received a gift. Sue also invited Michelle's son to church, where he heard and responded to the Gospel.

During their weekly calls, Michelle would read to her son, doing her best to keep nurturing his mind. In turn, he shared truths he was learning at Sunday school.

"He started telling me about Jesus," says Michelle. "My son led me to Christ."

As Michelle grew in Christ, she started facing the pain that lay beneath her poor choices.

"When I was in prison, it was the first time that I was allowed to get real with my feelings," she says. "I was able to look at myself as Jesus does, as a child – and to love that child in me and heal the hurts of that child."

Living in the light

Since her release in 2012, Michelle has started her own ministry, Beacon of Light, that helps ex-prisoners, and she has repaid all the money she owed. She owns her own home, and she is passionate about financial transparency. She has required her son to file tax returns since he started mowing lawns at age 14. Beacon of Light is audited yearly. In Michelle's mind, in the light is the only place to be.

The original of this story can be found at www.prison-fellowship.org and it is used with kind permission.

Abasontayo nabo bangalahleka

Zulutranslation

FRANCOIS JOUBERT

Ngakhulela ekhaya elikhulwayo. Sa siya esontweni njalo ngesonto. Sakhulela eplazini ngangikuthanda ukulima nendalo. Ukulima, ukugibela ammahashi, ukuzingela nokudweba bekuyizinto engizithandayo lezo. Ngangingomncane ngenenkani nekhandla elilikhuni.

Kusukela ekukhuleni kwami ngangingothando lokumkhonza uNkulunkulu. Kodwa ngangingazi lutho ngokuzalwa kabusha. Kwathi sengisemabangeni aphezulu, lesithupha omele I CSV (student Christian association) wavakashela iskole sethu. Ngahamba ngayokhuluma naye ngomunye engangikhathazekile ngaye. Wangibheka wayesethi. "Uthini ngawe?"

Wayesengibuza ukuthi ngiyaya yini ezulwini.

Nganingafuni ukukhukhumeza ngaphendula ngathi: "Ngithemba kanjalo, kodwa angiqinisekanga." Wayesengibonisa u Johane 1:12, engichazela ukuthi ngingaba nesiqiniseko kanjani.

Ngonyaka olandela lowo ngamaholide ka April, i CSV yayine camp ya bafana eWinkelspruit.

Sasibaningi singabafana, cishe 300. Kodwa kwakunokuganga okuniningi, kwakubhenywa kanti nempahla yasekhishini yalahleka. Ngakubona kuphume endleleni kakhulu lokho futhi ngangingavumelani nakho. Ivangeli lashumayelwa ngobuqotho okwakuyigugu.

Ngobunye ubusuku abafana abaningi basukumela phambili, uma bemenywa ukuthi bezolungisa izinto noNkulunkulu. Ngangicabangela, kuhle ukuthi bayaphenduka bayakudinga lokho!

Ngalesosikhathi ngangizishaya isfuba.

Busuku bumbela inkonzo iphakathi, iNkosi yangibonisa ukweduka kwami. Ngabona ngizihlalele ukuthi uma iNkosi ibuya emafini, ngangilahlekile. Kwakuwumuzwa onamandla engangingakwazi ukuwugwema.

Emva kwenkonzo ngagijimela kumshumayeli wathandaza nami.

Ngavuma izono zami ngalungisa izinto neNkosi.

Ngezwa ngathi ngithulwe umthwalo obewusemahlabombi ami. Ngangingazi ukuthi abantu abalungile abalibambayo isonto nabo bangalahleka. Kwakungasibona

abanye abafana ababeddinga ukusindiswa, nami uqobo! Ngalesosikhathi iNkosi yanginika lelivesi, ngokukaJohane 10:28 "Ngibanika ukuphila okungunaphakade, angeke basabhubha. Akekho oyobahlwatha ezandleni zami."

Uma ngiqeda amabanga aphakeme ngaya eTechnikon yasePitoli lapho ngahlangana khona nonkosikazi wami esineminyaka ewu 31 sishadile.

Kwaba khona isikhathi lapho ngakhohliseka khona, ngaqala ukugxeka wonke umuntu oseeduze kwami, ngilandela imithetho eyenziwe ngabantu. Umoya wokwahlulela wangenza itshe elikhuni elingajabulisi uNkulunkulu. Ngangibukhali ngingathandi.

Ngomusa kaNkulunkulu, uMoya Oyingcwele wangikhombisa ukuthi lendlela ayimkhazimulisi uThixo. UMoya oyiNgcwele wangikhombisa ngokucacile kusuka kuJohane 15 ukuthi kufanele ngithele izithelo zikaMoya oyiNgcwele (uthando, intokozo, ukuthula, ukubekezela, nesihe, noku lungu, ukuthembeka, ubumnene nokuzilawula). NgokukaJohane 15:16 "Aningikhethanga, kodwa nganikhetha mina ukuba nithele izithelo, eziyingunaphakade."

Lashintsha Impilo yami, nalabo engibathandayo kanye nawo wonke umuntu owayengizungezile. INkosi ihlala ingikhumbuzwa njalo ukuthi kumele ngithele izithelo ukuze ikhazimulise, uthando isona esikhulu kuzo zonke.

Impilo yami yokukholwa ikhuliswa isikhathi engihlala ngaso emkhulekweni nasezwini Lakhe.

Ngingayibonga ngani iNkosi ngomusa Wayo ongaka!



Francois and Mariette Joubert on their farm.

Goeie kerkmense kan ook verlore gaan

Afrikaantranslation

DEUR FRANCOIS JOUBERT

Ek het in 'n Christelike huis groot geword. Ons was elke Sondag in die kerk. My pa was ouderling en my ma was orrelis in ons gemeente. Ons het op 'n plaas gebly en ek was lief vir die boerdery en die natuur. Om te boer, perdry, jag en visvang was my plesier. Ek was 'n laatlam en baie kere hardkoppig en moedswillig.

Van kleins af was daar 'n begeerte in my hart om die Here te dien. Ek het egter nie geweet van wedergeboorte nie.

Toe ek in die hoërskool was, standerd 6, het 'n reisende sekretaris van die CSV (Christelike Studente Vereniging) ons skool kom besoek. Ek het met hom gaan praat oor iemand wat ek oor bekommerd was. Hy het na my gekyk en gesê: maar wat van jou. Hy vra toe vir my of ek hemel toe gaan. Ek wou nie voor op die wa klink nie en sê dat ek so hoop, maar is nie seker daarvoor nie. Hy wys toe Johannes 1:12 aan my, en verduidelik aan my dat ek wel sekerheid kan hê.

Die volgende jaar was daar tydens die April vakansie 'n CSV Kamp vir seuns by Winkelspruit aangebied. Ons was 'n hele klomp seuns omtrent 300. Daar het maar baie verkeerde dinge ook gebeur, daar is skelm gerook en items is uit die kombuis gesteel. Dit was vir my heeltemal verkeerd en ek het nie daarmee saamgestem nie. Die boodskappe was kosbaar en dit was die evangelie. Een aand het 'n hele klomp seuns na vore gegaan op uitnodiging om met die Here reg te maak. Ek het by myself gedink: dit is goed dat hulle regmaak, hulle het dit nodig.

Op die stadium was ek heeltemal tevrede met myself.

Op een aand tydens 'n diens het die Here my skielik oortuig van my verlorenheid. Ek het daar gesit en besef as die Here nou op die wolke kom, dan is ek verlore. Dit was 'n

baie sterk en radikale oortuiging.

Na die diens het ek na die prediker gehardloop en hy het saam met my gebid. Ek kon my sonde bely en met die Here regmaak. Toe ek daar opstaan, het dit letterlik vir my gevoel asof daar 'n las van my skouers afval. Ek het nie besef goeie kerkmense gaan ook verlore nie. Dis was toe nie net die ander wat redding nodig gehad het nie, maar juis ek! In die tyd het die Here vir my Joh. 10: 28 gegee. "En Ek gee hulle die Ewige Lewe, en hulle sal nooit verlore gaan tot in ewigheid nie. Niemand sal hulle uit My hand ruk nie."

Na my hoërskool loopbaan is ek na Technikon Pretoria toe. Daar het ek my vrou ontmoet, met wie ek vandag nog gelukkig getroud is na 31 jaar.

Op 'n stadium in my lewe het ek verval in 'n misleiding. Ek het almal om my begin veroordeel en mensgemaakte wette begin najaag. Die gees van veroordeling het my 'n moeilike mens gemaak wat God nie behaag het nie. Ek was hard en liefdeloos. Deur die genade van God het die Heilige Gees my oortuig dat hierdie lewe nie strek tot eer van God nie. Die Here Jesus het my duidelik gewys uit Johannes 15 dat ek vrug moet dra [liefde, vreugde, vrede, verdraagsaamheid, vriendelikheid, goedheid, getrouheid, sagmoedigheid en selfbeheersing. Die vrug van die Heilige Gees. Johannes 15: 16: "Julle het My nie uitverkies nie, maar Ek het julle uitverkies en julle aangestel om vrug te gaan dra en dat julle vrug kan bly." Dit het my lewe kom verander, my verhouding met my geliefdes en almal om my. Die Here het dit weer en weer vir my kom bevestig dat ek vrug moet dra tot Sy eer waarvan die liefde die grootste is.

My Christelike lewe en groei hang af van my persoonlike tyd met God. Sy Woord en gebed.

Hoe kan 'n mens ooit die Here genoeg dankie sê vir Sy onuitspreeklike genade.

Churchgoers can be lost too

Englishtranslation

BY FRANCOIS JOUBERT

Igrew up in a Christian home. We went to church every Sunday. We lived on a farm and I loved farming and nature. Farming, horse riding, hunting and fishing were my pleasures. I was the youngest, and often stubborn and willful.

From childhood there was a desire in my heart to serve the Lord. However, I did not know about being born again.

When I was in high school, standard six, a representative from the CSV (Christian Students Association) came to visit our school. I went to talk to him about someone I was worried about. He looked at me and said: "But what about you?"

He then asked me if I was going to heaven.

I didn't want to seem arrogant, so I said: "I hope so, but I'm not sure about it." He then showed me John 1:12, and explained to me that I could have certainty.

The following year, during the April holidays, a CSV Camp for boys was offered at Winkelspruit.

We were a whole bunch of boys, about 300. But a lot of naughty things also happened, there was sneaky smoking and items were stolen from the kitchen. I thought it

was completely wrong and I didn't approve. The messages were precious and they were the gospel.

One evening a whole bunch of boys went forward, when invited, to make amends with the Lord. I thought to myself: It is good that they are repenting. They need it!

At the time I was completely satisfied with myself.

One night during a service, the Lord suddenly convinced me of my lostness. I sat there and realized that if the Lord returned on the clouds, then I was in trouble. It was a very strong and radical conviction.

After the service I ran to the preacher and he prayed with me.

I confessed my sin and made things right with the Lord. It literally felt as if a burden had been lifted from my shoulders. I did not realize that good churchgoers could also be lost.

It was not only the other boys who needed saving, but me! At that time, the Lord gave me the verse John 10: 28. "And I give them Eternal Life, and they shall never perish forever. No one will snatch them out of My hand."

After my high school career I went to Technikon Pretoria. There I met my wife, with whom I am still happily married after 31 years.

At some point in my life I fell into a deception. I began to condemn everyone around me and chase after man-made laws. The spirit of condemnation made me a difficult

person, who did not please God. I was harsh and unloving.

By the grace of God, the Holy Spirit convicted me that this way of living does not show forth to the glory of God. The Lord Jesus clearly showed me from John 15 that I must bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit [love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control]. John 15: 16: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to bear fruit and that your fruit may remain."

It changed my life, my relationships with my loved ones and everyone around me. The Lord has confirmed it to me again and again that I must bear fruit for His glory, of which love is the greatest.

My Christian life and growth depend on my personal time with God, through His Word and prayer. How can one ever thank the Lord enough for His unspeakable grace!

“ I was completely satisfied with myself. ”

WORDS FOR THE HEART

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Welcome to this Bible Study. Read slowly what I have written. If you have a Bible, look up the reference verses given, and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to your soul through them. – ALAN BAILEY

John 20:19- 21:6

INTRODUCTION

WE now draw near to the end of the Gospel of John. It is a climax of great importance because of the resurrection triumph of the Lord Jesus. Each of the four Gospels move toward this notable event; Christ risen, victorious, and leaving this scene to be with His Father in heaven. It is most important for us to see just how all this affects us. Keep this in mind as we look at the passage for today.

Chapter 20 verses 19, 20 *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'* After He said

this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

The disciples thought that the authorities may arrest them as followers of Jesus, so they hid as best they could. Even though the room was locked the Lord suddenly appeared. He had truly risen physically, but His body was now of a different nature, able to pass through a solid wall. Showing His hands and side gave proof that He was Jesus who was crucified. It is not hard for us to understand that believing in a resurrection from death was very difficult for these men. But the proof gave them reason to rejoice that He had actually defeated death.

There were many outcomes from this victory which they were yet to fully appreciate.

Verses 21-23 *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive*

anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

The Father had sent Jesus on a mission to mankind. His task was to reveal God and to make a way of salvation by dying as a sacrifice, and to have that salvation spoken of throughout the whole earth.

Now He is saying the those whom He had taught, that they were to go on a mission. They were given the task of taking the Good News to the world. Their authority to forgive or to withhold forgiveness was something just for them which was not passed on to future disciples.

Verses 24, 25 *Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. When the other disciples told him that they had seen the Lord, he declared, "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe it.*

People have thought that back in Bible times people were superstitious and ready to believe the incredible. Thomas shows this to be wrong by his attitude. He wanted clear proof, undeniable evidence. He has come in for much criticism over the years for his unbelief but any one of them could have said the same thing before they became eye-witnesses. And we could place ourselves in that situation and feel the same way.

Verses 26-28 *A week later His disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"*

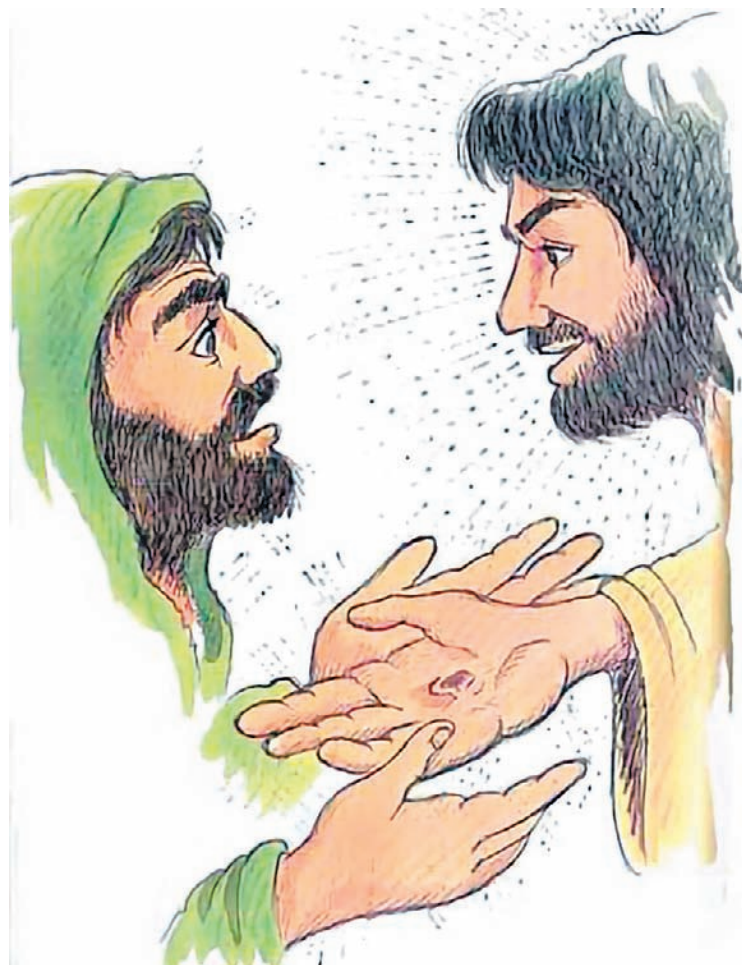
Notice that Jesus does not strongly rebuke Thomas for his unbelief. Instead, He is making up to him what the other disciples had experienced. It is an act of kindness.

Verse 29 *Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

The record shows that there were only several hundred people who saw Jesus alive after His death, all in differing circumstances. The largest group was probably at the scene of His ascension. There was no doubt that the resurrection was and is a reality. All theories aimed at denying the fact have failed.

As Like says in Acts 1:3, Jesus left "many infallible proofs" and no-one has ever been able to give an alternative explanation. All had to agree that the tomb was empty. The disciples all went on to give their lives for the truth. They would not die for a lie.

So down through the centuries to



C	H	E	R	U	B	I	M	F	5	7	8	9	4	1	2	3	6
E	A	A	Y	E	L	P	1	2	9	6	3	7	5	8	4		
G	L	U	T	E	N	O	A	6	3	4	2	5	8	9	7	1	
A	P	S	E	K	O	P	E	K	S	9	6	1	7	2	5	8	4
Z	E	M	I	T	V	9	6	1	7	2	5	8	4	3			
U	N	S	P	E	A	K	A	B	L	E	4	8	7	1	9	3	6
M	I	N	E	L	2	5	3	8	6	4	7	1	9				
P	A	N	A	M	A	F	L	A	T	8	1	2	3	7	9	4	6
O	N	G	O	I	T	R	E	3	9	5	4	8	6	1	2	7	
E	U	R	O	E	J	I	7	4	6	5	1	2	3	9	8		
A	S	U	R	V	I	V	A	L									

HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through Jesus Christ

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

<p>OUR PROBLEM: "Everyone has sinned. Nobody is good enough because God's standards are perfect" (Romans 3:23)</p>	<p>OUR SOLUTION: "God demonstrates His own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)</p>	<p>ADMIT</p>
<p>GOD'S REMEDY / SOLUTION: "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12)</p>	<p>OUR RESPONSE: "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12)</p>	<p>BELIEVE</p>
<p>OUR RESPONSE: "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12)</p>	<p>OUR RESPONSE: "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12)</p>	<p>COMMIT</p>

Here is an example of how you can pray.

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

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

What now?

1. Tell someone - either a fellow prisoner who is a Christian, or your Prison Chaplain.
2. Ask a friend or family member to bring you a Bible. Ask the Prison Chaplain to sign you up to a correspondence discipleship program.
3. Keep praying. Talk to God anywhere, about anything. He is always listening, and you don't need a formula.
4. Find out if your prison has church services and attend them regularly.

AS A NEXT STEP: Please send me: Bible Some 'starting off' literature Information on a helpful church

I have prayed the prayer [ABOVE]

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

Send to: **World Hope Ministries, PO Box 96176, Brixton, 2019**

Out of South Africa enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

the present day people have believed without seeing the risen Lord. It is God's way of dealing. The preaching of the cross brings faith to light and sinners put their trust in the Lord as their Savior.

Verses 30, 31 *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life through His name.*

John is making a summary of his book and then speaks to the readers. He tells of the purpose of his writing. It is that others may hear and believe. He has been an eye-witness of the events and asks us to believe. Yet it is God Himself who calls us to faith. John is simply a servant.

Chapter 21 verses 1-3 *Afterward Jesus appeared again to His disciples by the sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.*

This chapter is something of an appendix or a postscript following what seemed to be the end at the close of chapter 20.

But John has an important piece of history to record. It seems that the disciples felt at a loose end. They had been locked away in the room but now were in Galilee because the Lord had given them the message to be there.

Maybe they felt there was nothing happening and going back to their

old occupation of fishing was Peter's first thought. They fished with nets through the night but never caught a thing.

Verses 4-6 *Early in the morning Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you caught any fish?" "No, they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.*

This miraculous haul of fish must have reminded the disciples of earlier days when the Lord guided them to the right place to fish. Just yet they have not recognized Jesus but we will see that they shortly did and that He had a very serious reason for meeting up with them. In our next study we will read about it and see more of the Lord's love and care for his people.

CONCLUSION

It is not possible to over-state the importance of Christ's resurrection. There are so many aspects to what it achieved. One is that the Father showed His pleasure for the life and ministry of Jesus and that He accepted the sacrifice that Jesus offered. It was the crowning achievement of our Lord to defeat death. It means that there will be those who follow Him into the Father's glorious presence. They will be all those who believe in this life. The resurrection is a decisive blow to Satan and all evil.

For us, this one who shows Himself to be the Savior of the world, is able to save us from the penalty of sin, from its power and some day from its presence.

"If Christianity is true — and we have good reasons to believe it is — then we face judgement after death. There would be eternal consequences for those who have rejected God's offer of forgiveness for their sins. We don't face the nothingness of nonexistence; instead, we either face an eternity with God or separated from Him. That's the real truth about immortality." — theologian Clay Butler Jones



Christian Atsu of Newcastle United (left) runs with the ball during the Premier League 2 match between Leeds United and Newcastle United at Thorp Arch Training Ground on March 15, 2021 in Leeds, England. (Photo by Serena Taylor/Newcastle United via Getty Images)

LEAVING A LASTING LEGACY

Rising from abject poverty in Ghana, Christian Atsu played for English soccer teams in Chelsea, Everton, Bournemouth and Newcastle before being signed to Turkish club, Hatayspor in 2022.

Tragically it was there that he lost his life in the earthquake in 2023, aged only 31. He left behind his wife, Marie-Claire Rupio, and two sons and a daughter. He also left behind a legacy of strong faith in Jesus.

“My faith is the most important thing in my life,” he told *The Guardian*. “I know I’m one of the lucky people God has blessed. I’m very lucky and privileged to be in such a position. I had nothing and now I’ve got so much I have to give something back.”

Christian was a young teenager when he made the decision to follow Jesus for himself.

“I reached a level where my parents didn’t have to tell me I have to go to church, or do this or do that,” Christian said in an article for the Newcastle United website. “I realised that I have to make the choice. Parents don’t force their children to go to church. They make sure they bring you up in the way of the Lord, and then you make the decision yourself. That’s what I did.”

Following his death, tributes flowed in from around the world for the winger, who was once hailed as the Ghanaian Messi.

His body lay in state for a week before his funeral, which included a

military procession. He was buried in his hometown, Dogobome in Ada Foah, on Ghana’s south east coast.

Christian’s professional career began with Portuguese team FC Porto when he was 17. Two years later he joined Chelsea on a five-year contract and was immediately loaned to Dutch club Vitesse Arnhem, followed by Everton, Bournemouth and Málaga. Christian joined Newcastle United in 2016, where he stayed until 2021. He then joined Al Raed Saudi Football Club.

In September 2022, he joined Turkish professional league Süper Lig’s club Hatayspor. He played three league games and one in the Turkish Cup. The day before the earthquake, Christian scored the only goal at home to Kasimpasa in the seventh minute of added time.

He represented Ghana at the 2014 FIFA World Cup and four Africa Cup of Nations tournaments. His team was the runner-up at the 2015 Africa Cup of Nations, where he was awarded Player of the Tournament and Goal of the Tournament.

Despite Christian’s international success, however, he never forgot his roots or his family back home. “Whenever I go home, I am happy,” he told Arms Around the Child, for whom he was a global ambassador. “You never forget the person you were before you left. I survived but I don’t forget.”

He was one of 10 siblings and was only 12 when his father died. Just before his father died, he told

Christian that he should worship God and help humanity.

Growing up in poverty was not easy for Christian, however and he found it hard to accept the cards he had been dealt.

“Sometimes I would complain to God a lot: ‘Why should I suffer like this? Why should some people have it easy?’ When I was growing, I would read the Bible, trying to understand everything. ‘Why? Why? Why?’

“Then I realised that I was complaining too much. God’s power has to be manifested in my life for people to see how far He has brought me. The Bible says it is not by our hard work, by what we do, that makes us reach the level that we are now. For example, like me – it is not just by my hard work, though I am working hard, but it is the will of God, the grace of God, that has brought me this far.”

While in England, Christian attended church in Newcastle, stating that he was there to worship God and enjoy the freedom it gave him.

“In the house of God I’m normal,” he said. “I don’t want a celebrity life. When I feel normal I feel free.”

After Christian’s death, former West Ham and Fulham defender John Paintsil paid tribute to his friend. “He helped a lot of people solve their problems, gave out to those in need,” he told BBC Ghana.

Despite his sports success, Ghana’s news outlets claimed that 95 percent of tributes about Christian



Ghanaian soccer player Christian Atsu’s wife Marie-Claire Rupio (L) and children at his funeral at the State House in Accra, Ghana on March 17, 2023. (Photo by Kwame Adzaho-Amenortor/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)

were focused on his humanitarian work such as bailing out Ghanaians who had been jailed for stealing food.

DISTRIBUTED BY:



WORLD HOPE MINISTRIES
SOUTH AFRICA

106 NURNEY AVE, CROSBY, JHB
P.O. BOX 96176
BRIXTON 2019

(T) 2711 837 3437
(F) 2711 837 9104

Rev. Willie Dengler
E-mail: mbcchurch@icon.co.za