

Broken face, mended heart

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

After being shot up with eight rounds at close range in Iraq, Navy SEAL Jason Redman survived but was disfigured. He had tubes going in and out of his body. What would be the reaction of his wife of just six years?

“There are stories of spouses showing up at Walter Reed (Military Medical Center), walking into the room of a severely wounded warrior and saying, ‘Nope. I didn’t sign up for this,’” Jason says on a Real Ones video. “They take their rings off, leave them on the table and walk out.”

“I was really terrified of how she was going to handle it.”

Jason grew up in a Christian family, but he wandered as he grew up. He became a Navy SEAL, the toughest and elitist soldiers on the planet,

and battled terrorists in Iraq. He was living the dream embodied by his nickname “Rambo Red.”

But the killer soldier feared by terrorists got shot up.

First, he almost was stripped of his trident, the Navy SEAL pin and badge of supreme honor.

“I started to get a little bit of ego,” he acknowledges. “I started to think I was the man of danger, that I was better than other people.”

Now he recognizes that he became too prideful to listen. At the time, he was in Afghanistan fighting the Taliban.

As the war evolved, Jason was falling behind on his tactics and strategies. The new guys actually had more up-to-date knowledge about how to deal with the enemy.

“A lot of the older tactics I had learned weren’t the same as the ones our guys were running with now,” he says.



Retired Navy Seal Jason Redman prepares to participate in his 100th skydiving jump in 2016. (Photo by Larry French/Getty Images for Crown Royal).

INSET: Jason before being wounded.



Photo credit: 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division

FOLLOWING HIS LEADER

IN Iraq in 2005, Army Sgt. 1st Class Alwyn C. Cashe dove back into a burning vehicle three times while under enemy fire to rescue trapped soldiers. During the rescue, Cashe’s uniform, which was soaked in fuel, caught on fire, giving him second and third-degree burns. Despite his injuries, Cashe continued to pull soldiers from the vehicle and refused to be placed on the medical evacuation helicopter until all other wounded men had been flown to safety. Later in the hospital, when Cashe regained consciousness, his first words were, “How are my boys?” He passed away three weeks later and was posthumously awarded the Silver Star.

After years of effort to have his actions recognized, in December 2021 Cashe was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, and his family accepted the award on his behalf. He is the first Black recipient of the medal since 9/11. Cashe died like his Saviour, giving his life as a ransom for many. Jesus Christ said: “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” •

“I was insecure,” he says. “I was unwilling to say to the young guys, ‘Hey man, I don’t know how to do that. Can you help me?’”

To douse his insecurities, he turned to the bottle between battles. Jason became a hard drinker.

When a bunch of American soldiers came under Taliban ambush in an Afghan valley, Jason responded rashly.

It was not-well-thought-out. “I made a bad call,” he admits.

For his foolhardy antic, Jason got called in by his commanding officer. He was informed that military personnel were upset. For endangering so many of his fellow soldiers, there were vigorous calls for him to be kicked out of the SEALs.

“Guys wanted my head on a block,” he says.

In that instant, Jason’s dreams died in disgrace. “They were going to take my trident,” he says. “My world was over.”

After the dressing down, Jason went to his room and, blaming everybody else, grabbed his pistol and stuffed the muzzle into his mouth.

“As I got ready to pull the trigger, I think the Big Man Above kind of punched me in the back of my head,” he remembers. “I looked up, and there was the picture of my wife and kids on the table. My son was six, my middle daughter was three, my youngest was one.”

What are you doing? God

impressed on his heart. *What message are you sending them doing this?*

Jason set his gun down and went to look for the chaplain.

While God had saved his life, Jason didn’t fully turn to God. He still remained very much a man of the world.

His trident wasn’t revoked. Instead, he was sent to Army Ranger school.

To submit to Ranger school was, for Jason, a stinging humiliation, “part of my punishment.”

As unsavory as it was, after two-and-a-half years, Jason was a different man, more mature. His credibility restored, he returned to the battlefield, this time in Iraq.

Hunting terrorists and engaging in firefights was again his daily life.

On one mission, he was tasked with leading a team to track down some jihadists hiding in foliage at 0300 in Iraq’s Anbar province. Jason, seven SEALs, an interpreter and an explosive ordinance detonation expert crept upon them from the south side through bamboo

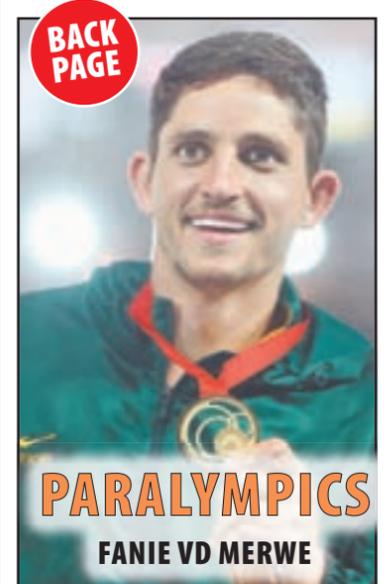
that snapped loudly with every movement.

“Something didn’t feel right about it. I should have stepped back and consulted with my team,” Jason says.

“But you’re in tons of these super dangerous situations, so I just executed based on our tactics.”

Part of the team peeled off to the left in the creep-up. This raised the specter of casualty by friendly fire.

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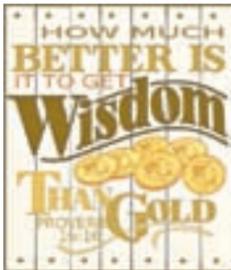
BACK PAGE

PARALYMPICS
FANIE VD MERWE

How to be wise

BY DR VICTOR KULIGIN (ABRIDGED)

AS we look at the mayhem that is all around us today — terrorist attacks, economic recessions, viral pandemics — we see now perhaps more than ever the need for wisdom. We hope our political leaders will exercise it, we trust that parents impart it properly to children, we turn to trusted people in authority to use it for our benefit — yet, unfortunately, we often see foolishness take the dominant roll. Where can we find a trusted source of wisdom?



In the New Testament, both Paul and Jude refer to God “who alone is wise”. If this is truly the case, then everywhere we see wisdom, we must assume that its source is God. If God “alone” is wise, then no other being has its own source of wisdom apart from God.

The Book of James tells us that God is happy to share His wisdom with us – we just have to ask. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” – James 1:5. But it all starts with knowing God – who He is and what He

First, though, we need to define wisdom, and we can do so using a helpful comparison between wisdom and knowledge. Perhaps you’ve heard the saying, “Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad.” To know something simply means you identify the bare facts about that thing, but wisdom is taking that knowledge and understanding how to properly use it. Dictionary.com defines wisdom this way: “Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgement as to action.”

The Bible describes God as the source of wisdom. Job 12:13 says: “With Him are wisdom and strength, He has counsel and understanding.” Note that God’s wisdom is coupled with His strength. Not only does He know what is best to do, but He is also fully able to do it.

commands. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding have all those who do His commandments.” – Psalm 111:10.

One way that we acquire God’s wisdom is by reading and studying His Word. The book of Proverbs is a great place to find wisdom. This Old Testament book is solely devoted to the pursuit of Godly wisdom and how to exercise it properly in earthly living. Do you want to be known as a wise person? Heeding the directives of Proverbs is a great place to begin.

Of course, we will never be as wise as God. That is why we need to humbly submit to Him. If God’s wisdom means that He always makes the best choices and the right plans, then submitting to His will is the wisest thing we can do.

Obey His commands, do what God directs us to do; don’t do what He prohibits. It really is that simple. ●



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When they emerged from the foliage, the SEALs’ medic stepped on an insurgent whom he didn’t see in the dark, despite having night vision goggles.

The jihadist rolled over and shot him.

“Cease fire!” Jason yelled. There was danger of dying from friendly fire, and he yelled instinctively from his training days.

His yells drew enemy fire. Suddenly, Jason found himself under a barrage of machine guns. Fourteen Islamists trained their weapons on him.

Eight bullets in total struck him in the arm, head, and between the body armor.

The battle became chaotic. Jason thought his arm had been blasted off entirely. The pain felt like hitting one’s funny bone – only 10 times worse.

As he fell to the ground, Jason knew he was in a desperate situation. He was bleeding profusely. As the vessels clamped up as an automatic body response to keep blood in the internal organs, he felt his extremities grow cold and struggled to breathe.

He knew he was dying.

That is when Jason returned to the God of his childhood. He prayed fervently and sincerely.

“I need your strength to go home and see my wife and kids again,” he said.

It seemed like forever for the gunshots to die down. It seemed like forever for the medivac helicopter to arrive.

God answered Jason’s prayer, supplying supernatural strength.

Due to blood loss, there is no way he should have been able to do this, but Jason got up and walked 75 yards (68 meters) to get on the helicopter.

He was evacuated to the hospital where emergency surgery stabilized him.

Doctors marveled that he was alive.

His countenance was disfigured. His body was ripped up by bullets. After multiple surgeries, Jason was finally brought to the place where he could be flown to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

That’s where Erica, his wife, would see him for the first time since getting wounded. They hadn’t been married but six years.

“I was so afraid. I expected her to come in and be shocked and gasp,” he recounts. “She locked eyes with me and walked straight up and pushed the tubes out of the way and kissed me on the lips.”

“We’re gonna be ok, we’re gonna get through this,” she said.

Today, Jason is a motivational speaker. Reconstructive surgery has largely restored his appearance. He can walk and get around. He was awarded the Purple Heart and the Bronze Medal for Valor.

Jason and Erica are still married and their three kids are doing well. ●

This article first appeared on Godreports.com and is used with kind permission.

Wise words on suffering

IT has never been quite enough to say that God is in His heaven and all is right with the world; since the rumor is that God had left His heavens to set it right.

– G. K. Chesterton

GOD specialises in hard situations. He is most at work, most active, most powerful, most strategic when the odds are stacked against people; whether that’s lifting people out of pits, storms, dry valleys, deep waters, shipwreck, islands, deserts, wilderness, even graves. God showed up and redeemed. Hope is not God’s side hustle. God is there for you, and the harder the fight of life gets, the harder He is fighting for us.

– Benjamin Windle

WARREN Wiersbe states: “Our faith is not really tested until God asks us to bear what seems unbearable, do what seems unreasonable, and expect what seems impossible.”

I’VE lately been reminded that when it’s cloudy and you can’t see the sun, we still trust that the sun is there. It’s the same with God. He’s still there, even when it feels brutal.

– Megan

“LIFE with God is not immunity from difficulties, but peace in difficulties.”

– C.S. Lewis

“GOD allows us to experience the low points of life in order to teach us lessons that we could learn in no other way.”

– C.S. Lewis

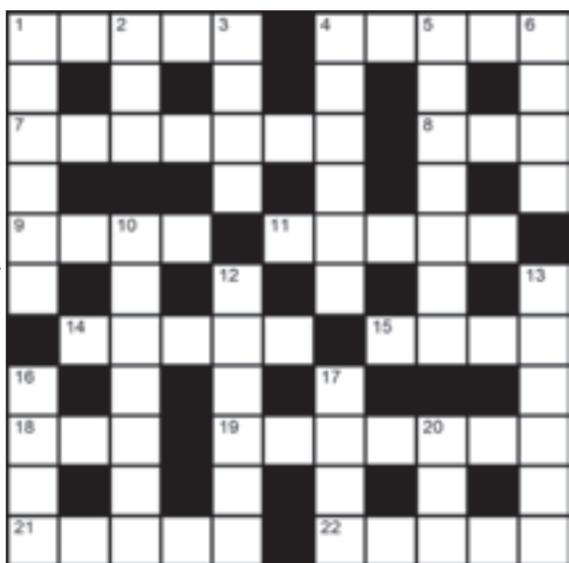
“LIFE is hard. Life is going to be hard if it’s not already really, really hard. But I believe we can live so well in the hard. ... You have a stunning capacity to endure incredibly hard because of Jesus in your story. You are actually anti-fragile.

“With Jesus in your corner, you are so much stronger than you think; you can endure very, very hard things. You can stay in the hard, you don’t have to leave. You can do it. You can do this, because of Jesus.”

– paraplegic Katherine Wolf

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 - Once around the track
 - What’s left
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 - Paternity identifier
 - Cannabis fibre
 - Shrink, as from a snake?
 - Infant’s room
 - The whole ___ world
 - Original Olympics site
 - Ferocious, savage
 - Tragedy’s opposite
 - Spill the beans
 - Land at sea
 - Food colouring



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WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE KNOWN FOR?

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

Orlando Patterson was a good jet mechanic in the U.S. Navy but his marriage was in shambles because, despite loving his wife, he fooled around with other women.

“Our mantra was we don’t fall in love, we stand in love, because in case something goes wrong you can always just walk out,” says Orlando Patterson, describing his Jamaican heritage. “It was very common in the culture we live in, in this apartment complex to be living with your supposed wife and a couple of kids. And you have another woman a couple streets over and she has a couple of kids for you. And you have another woman in another apartment complex and she has a couple of kids for you. That is business as usual.”

So when a U.S. Navy officer asked Orlando about his eternal destination, he responded: “I’m pretty confident I’d probably go to hell.”

As a young man in Jamaica Orlando knew nothing about God and fidelity because he grew up with his non-Christian parents fighting over custody. He was born in Kingston, Jamaica, into high-society.

At age five, Orlando’s father took him away from his mother to Queens, New York, in order to give Orlando a good education and more opportunities. But the young man grew up “a square peg in a round hole.” By the time his mother was able to find him, the damage was done.

“I had drawn certain conclusions about life,” Orlando says on a podcast. “I was a problem child and felt horribly unwanted. No one really wanted me around. I never got rid of this feeling.”

He fell in with “miscreants.” His first arrest was for grand theft auto.

Throughout high school, he butted heads with his mother, but she eventually convinced him to join the military. He and his high school sweetheart, Vanessa, both joined the Navy, where Orlando became a jet engine mechanic.

Though they tried to stay together, the relationship was beset by troubles from the beginning due to Orlando’s infidelity. “My marriage was shot, you know, infidelity on my part, just foolishness that I had done,” he recognizes.

On his first tour on the Adriatic Sea on the U.S.S. Enterprise, he was pulling an overnight shift. There wasn’t much to do, so Orlando went for a walk and overheard a sailor evangelizing another man [telling him about the life and death of Jesus]. Though not directed at him, the



Orlando Patterson and his wife Vanessa in their younger days.

“If you were to die right now, would you go to heaven?”

conversation unsettled Orlando. He’d been raised Catholic, but faith had never factored into his life as being real or relevant. As an altar boy, he’d report hung over at 8:00 a.m. mass.

“I couldn’t shake what I just heard,” he recalls. He continued to wander the deck. When he reported for his midnight meal, he wound up eating next to an officer because the mess was unusually crowded.

The officer turned to Orlando and asked him point blank: “Young man, let me ask you a question. If you were to die right now, would you go to Heaven?”

“The whole world just stood still in that moment,” he recalls.

His innards were churning from what he’d previously heard about being born-again. On the one hand, he wanted to save his girlfriend. On the other hand, he wanted to save his marriage.

“If I start doing this church thing and my wife sees that, she would look at me different and I could probably salvage my marriage. She could see me as a different guy,” he thought.

So, Orlando opened his heart to Jesus through prayer and was born-again. A dramatic sensation filled the core of his being.

“That hazy grey boat never looked so good,” Orlando says. “I stood up. I was smiling. I was laughing. I never felt so good in my life.”

One of the first things God dealt with was whether being a Jamaican or being a Christian would be what defined Orlando’s identity.

I want to be known as a Christian, Orlando decided.

“That was a big, big, big deal,” he remembers. “I stopped listening to reggae music because reggae is not just music for us, it is our identity. It is who we are, I mean, this is serious business.”

Then God dealt with his issues of infidelity, revolutionising the cultural norms. Orlando had to learn monogamy. Where his father had abandoned his mother, he needed to learn to be present — and tender to his wife.

“It was never a question that I loved my wife,” he says. “I just didn’t know how to love her.”

Vanessa didn’t immediately accept Jesus. Instead, she watched Orlando. When the cashier gave him back too much change, Vanessa was surprised when Orlando acted honestly and went back into the store to make things right.

“She would see that I was serious about this stuff,” Orlando recalls. Vanessa got saved the next year, and they formalized their marriage.

Today, Orlando is pastor of a church in Jacksonville, Florida. •



Orlando and Vanessa Patterson



Anton du Preez (middle) marching in the 30 year Service Medal parade in November 2018.

DODGING DEATH

Anton du Preez’ life was spared many times while he was in the old SADF, now the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) from 1994, but it was only when his marriage collapsed due to untreated PTSD that Anton really began to wonder why he had been divinely protected.

Anton grew up in a Christian home and regularly attended Sunday school.

“I knew, by looking at nature and the human race, that there must be truth in the fact that there is a higher power and that God is the creator of all living beings. I believed that the Bible is the book that reveals and confirms these truths to us. I became a Sunday school teacher during my last two years at school,” he says.

After matriculating, he was called up to national service in the SADF and joined the permanent forces in 1980. Up until then, his life had been pretty straight forward.

“I cannot recall a particular WOW moment in my faith journey,” he muses.

Whilst serving on the Angolan/South West African (now Namibia) border from 1981 onwards, Anton was involved in skirmishes with enemy forces and took part in many big military operations across the borders. Several times he narrowly avoided death or serious injury.

“I remember one instance where we were relieving an Infantry company at Okalongo base, and we had to stay outside the base overnight as the camp could only hold a company of troops. We came under attack at about 0300 and whilst falling back to the safety of the basecamp walls, a mortar bomb hit the ground very close to me but failed to explode. This is extremely unusual and saved my life.

“More than once whilst on patrol I had what I first thought was a sixth sense to move position at specific times for what felt like no reason, but ended up avoiding enemy mortar attacks on the positions we had just moved from.

“Thinking back, it was not a sixth sense at all but God, through a prompting of the Holy Spirit that moved me out of harms way and protected me,” Anton admits. “I never thought about it this way back then.”

He was also involved in a number of vehicle accidents and never had any serious injuries.

“I remember one time, returning from the border one year, my brother begged to go with me when I had to check in on the troops at the base. He had already climbed into the car but something told me not to take him with me and he was very upset with me when I refused to take him with me. About a kilometre from the base, a bus overtook a vehicle on a solid white line and while I was turning into the lane the bus hit my car on the passenger side. If my brother was in the vehicle at that time, he would have been killed.”



Anton du Preez at the Army Battle School in Lohatla.

When Anton resigned from the SADF, he pursued a career in the security industry. Not wanting to believe in PTSD, he never went for treatment and this resulted in his marriage falling apart.

“This is when I started to ask God why He protected me from dangerous situations, what my purpose in life is and why I should continue to live. Although I started to think about how I could end my life, I could not go through with it because I knew it would be wrong,” Anton says.

In 2005 he volunteered to deploy to the DRC with 2SAI BN and was based in Shabunda at first and later in Bunia. They were involved in three military operations in full scale war against the militia in that area.

During this time, Anton found himself talking to God daily. “Out of the blue, thanking Him for my two boys at home, my friends, for granting me another day in His creation.

“God must have listened to me. On my return to South Africa I met my second wife, who is a strong faithful woman of God. We have been married for 14 years now and are so blessed. Our children blended together well from day one; there is no such thing as step brothers or sisters just brothers and sisters. My wife’s daughter also calls me dad. The love that Engela and I share is growing daily. Both of us can see God’s hand in our work and family lives.

“I am still talking to God every day, thanking Him, praising Him and asking Him for His blessing over my family.

“Even when things don’t work out the way we planned it,” Anton says, “I am at peace with what the future holds, because Jesus is my guide and will never leave nor forsake me.

“Looking back over my life, I can see God’s hand in every phase of my life, the people He placed on my path and that of my family, and this fills me with peace for what the future holds.

“To God be all the glory.” •

HEALING THE FATHER WOUND

BY ELIOT KERN

"MY father's father," Wayne Alcorn, author of *My Father's Son*, tells *Eternity* magazine, "was a World War I returned vet. The things men and women see on the battlefield scar them for life. Add to that the fact that my father's natural mother died soon after he was born. So my grandfather was dealing with that. He went through three marriages, divorce, pain, all the disappointments – layers upon layers – and I don't even have a clue what his father was like."

The result was a man who worked hard to put food on the table, but showed no affection to his son. As Alex Alcorn later told Wayne, he felt like an unwanted inconvenience.

Alex's father died young, leaving behind a 19-year-old son – a chronic alcoholic who regularly spent time in jail, desperate to numb the pain of a deep father wound.

When people long for the love of a father, says Wayne, they'll try almost anything to fill the gap.

"The number of people I know with addictions of all kinds, simply as an attempt to numb the pain, it's off the charts."

For some, the father wound becomes a longing for attention, often resulting in juvenile crime. In decades of work with youth discipleship organisation Youth Alive, Alcorn says, "I never went to court with a young man or woman who was in trouble with the law that had a good relationship with their father."

Others pursue affirmation by climbing the ladder or achieving notoriety. But all these efforts to numb the pain are bandaids. In fact, far from healing the father wound, they often perpetuate a generational cycle.

"The simple adage is, 'hurt people hurt people,'" Wayne says, before quoting a line from the book: "We learn to be a father through being a son." He continues, "Schools have kids 30-something hours a week; the rest of the week – the 130-something hours – is in the home. Where are most things learned in life? In the family home. Things we see; things that were never said to us, but we caught it. More is caught than taught."

What Alex Alcorn caught hadn't set him up well. Chronic alcoholic: tick. Juvenile crime: tick. He seemed destined to repeat what he'd experienced as a child.

"But one day in a little country town," Wayne marvels, "he heard a preacher preach a simple text: 'Whom the Son sets free is free indeed' (John 8:36), and a choir began to sing a simple old song: 'Come home, all who are weary.'"

Barefoot, shirtless and drunk, Alex had been released from jail earlier that day. As he walked forward, the crowd thought he was going to cause trouble, says Wayne, "but they didn't know what was happening in his heart."

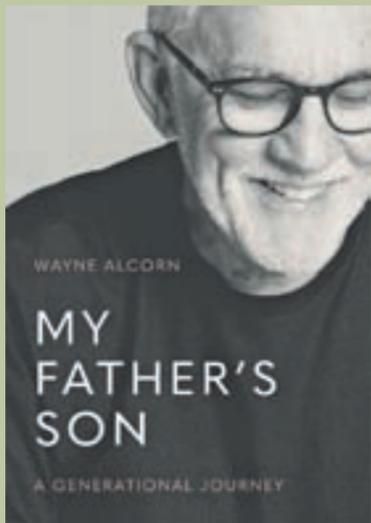
"He knelt down, literally in the gutter, in a little street up on the Darling Downs, in a town called Dalby. That's now 72 or more years ago; he made a decision to become a follower of Jesus. And because his life was changed, the generations that followed have been changed.

"I tell people all the time, if you're not happy with your family tree, plant a new one in the most fertile soil of all: the love of God. In one decision, our whole family line was changed forever," Wayne says.

What can break the cycle? What can fill the void? What can heal the father wound?

"I say over and over," Wayne insists, "nothing and no one can fill that, until you discover the love of a God who says, 'Call me Dad.'"

This is an extract from a longer article in *Eternity* magazine.



From left, U.S. Army Chap. (Maj.) John Scott, 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard); Victor Marx, former Marine, author and filmmaker; and U.S. Army Sgt. David Dwight, chaplain assistant for The Old Guard.

(Photo Credit: U.S. Army). Background added.

Victim becomes the victor

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

By the time his family found him locked in an outdoor freezer on a Mississippi farm, Victor Marx was unconscious, clutched up in a ball, where his molester had left him to die because he realized the five-year-old wouldn't keep quiet about the rape.

When his family found him in the freezer and learnt of the attack, they administered "country justice."

"They kicked down the neighbor's door and beat him in front of his family," Victor relates. "They took him outside and hogtied him to the tractor and they dragged him outside the house. They ... put fear in him."

However, that did nothing to free Victor from the PTSD. Nor did it free him further trauma.

His stepfather – Mr. K. – beat him mercilessly with a belt. A raging drunk and former military, Mr. K threatened seven-year-old Victor with a gun.

"He was a crazy, mean alcoholic who would beat the hell out of you. Growing up with Mr. K., it was a terror," Victor relates. One day because the electric bill was too high, Mr. K. blew out all the lights with his pistol in a drunken rage and threatened Victor and his mother.

But Victor's mom cried out to God for protection, and Mr. K. was struck with temporary blindness and confusion. They waited until he passed out under the effects of liquor. Then they snuck out the window and ran for their lives.

That was Victor's childhood – 14 schools, 17 different houses and six different stepdads through Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

When he got older, he joined the Marines. He became a sharpshooter with the M-16. He learned martial arts in his spare time.

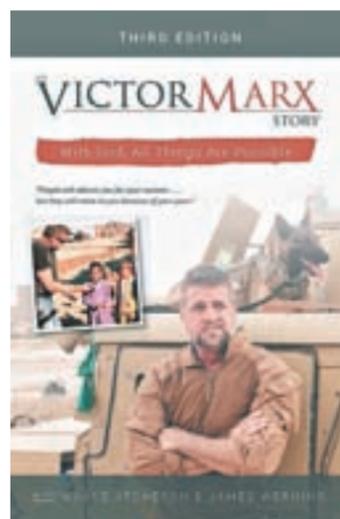
"I was driven," he recalls. "Ain't nobody gonna touch me ever again." Years later, Victor received a very strange letter from his biological father, who had finally given up his life of wickedness and come to Jesus. Victor's parents had divorced shortly after he was conceived and his father had never acknowledged him.

Now he called Victor "son" for the first time.

He told him that previously he had been crazy but now was crazy for Jesus.

He invited Victor to come down and visit. When he did, Victor attended church with his father.

For the first time in his life, Victor realized he was



Victor's Book based on his life.

a sinner. He had done bad things. But God loved him despite those bad things.

Victor went up to the altar and cried to God for forgiveness. He tried to hide his tears behind a Bible because tough guys, he thought, don't cry. It was June 22, 1986.

"I surrendered that day," he says. "I stopped blaming other people for my sin. I asked God to forgive me, and I felt His love washing me from the inside out."

When Victor got married, he suffered flash backs, panic attacks and bursts of anger. Eventually, Eileen insisted he seek therapy. At age 40, Victor made 100 visits in nine months to his therapist.

The therapy peeled back layers of hurt and helped Victor to become more reasonable with his children and wife. The next step was to go find Mr. K., he says. "I needed to forgive this guy, otherwise I would stay hard and mean."

He found him dying in a trailer next to a river, reduced to nothing after years of abuse and prison.

"It was very uncomfortable," Victor says. "When I found him, I actually had to wrap him in a blanket and carry him to the hospital. ... He was in so much pain."

"I had to die to myself because part of me thought, 'you're finally getting what you deserve'. Yet God was saying, I care for him, I died for him."

Victor read Mr. K. the Bible daily in his last days in the hospital and prayed and wept for him.

One day, Mr. K. confided in his nurse. "Hey nurse, this is my son. I'm proud of him. He became a preacher man. He's been worrying about my eternity. Tell him not to worry anymore. I made it right with God last night."

Victor was thunderstruck. "It was such a holy moment."

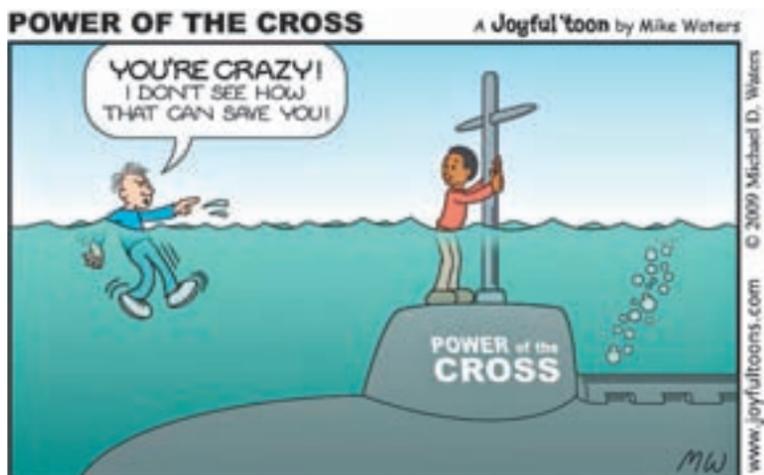
"Very clearly the Lord said, 'Tell him you love him,'" Victor recalls. "I told him, 'Dad, I love you.' For the first time ever, he said, 'Boy, I love you too.'"

"It felt good on the inside. I felt redemption ... after all the abuse," Victor says. "That's what a lot of people don't understand. Kids always want to connect with their parents no matter how bad they may be. Guess who got free? Me. Bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping it will hurt somebody else."

Today, Victor ministers to kids in juvenile hall. He's a seventh-degree black belt in martial arts and trains cops and military. He ministers in war zones in what he calls "high risk mission work."

"The closer we are to danger, the more we're helping people," he says on his podcast.

"I minister to these kids because I know where many of them have been. I know where God wants to take them. That which was meant for evil in my life has actually turned for good."



For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. – 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18 NIV



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.

Turk spreads hope where he can't go

Gökhan Talas always thought he was a wise man. "I was proud to be a socialist and an atheist. Nevertheless, I was curious about God," he admits. "I grew up in the Alevi sect of Islam but felt dissatisfied and empty. I wanted to understand my existence. Why are we here? Where are we going?" he asked himself.

"I encountered Jesus for the first time while doing my military service. I found a Bible in an Islamic centre and read from Genesis to Revelation.



It was logical. I saw that Jesus is real. He is alive and eager for us to have a relationship with him. God's love changed my heart.

"However, in Turkey sharing the good news about Jesus is considered a greater threat than terrorism. When I started to believe in Jesus, my commanders burned my Bible. Many of my friends abandoned me. Christians are persecuted daily. Many have to leave their families when they convert. When I try to share the good news about Jesus on the street the authorities beat me."

After completing his military service, Gökhan started going to church. He met and

married his wife and began training to share his knowledge of and love for Jesus with others. "I worked in a radio station preparing programs with the intention to evangelise."

When he and his wife moved to Malatya, they were there only eight months before five fanatics entered their office building, held them captive and killed three colleagues, including their pastor. "We suffered great grief and trauma. We have lost many brothers and sisters to persecution," he grieves.

Gökhan then moved his family to Istanbul, trained in graphic design and started a Christian magazine. "Miras (Inheritance) magazine is easy to read, easy to hide and reaches people who have no other access to the good news about Jesus. We explain how a Turk can become a Christian. This is a strong message in such an anti-Christian culture."

WITH KARL FAASE

Being good enough

THE great English preacher, Dr Martin Lloyd Jones, would regularly ask people if they were ready to call themselves Christians. If they responded with the words "I do not feel I am good enough" he knew there was an issue. Here is how he responded to those words - "At once I know that...they are still thinking in terms of themselves; their idea is still that they have to make themselves good enough to be a Christian... It sounds very modest but...it is a denial of the faith...you will never be good enough; nobody has ever been good enough. The essence of Christian salvation is to say that He is good enough and that I am in Him."

So do you feel you are ready to call yourself a Christian? Remember, not feeling like you are good enough is to miss the point.

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SAMCF - AT EASE RADIO PROGRAM

Please be advised of a new Military Radio Program - AT EASE, presented by the South African Military Christian Fellowship (SAMCF) and hosted by the Durban-based Good News Community Radio (GNCR) located in La Merci, KwaZulu Natal. The 30 min **AT EASE** program is aired every Tuesday evening @ 18:00 / 6pm on the KZN radio frequency 93.6FM.

For those not living in the Durban area who cannot tune in to listen live, the broadcast is live streamed on the GNCR website (www.gncr.org.za). The program can also be listened to or downloaded any time from the GNCR Podcast found on their website under Podcast, Local Program and under **AT EASE**.

Typically the following slots are aired during the 30 min program:

- Weekly Devotional.
- SA Navy Band music.
- Weekly Christian Testimony from the Challenge Newspaper.
- Interviews with SAMCF and AMCF (Association of Military Christian Fellowships) members and other AMCF Support Organisations.
- Presenter: Pastor Chris Meyer.

For further information please contact:

Capt (SAN) N. Howell - 083 701 3104
Capt (SAN Rtd) Peter Louwrens 083 786 3640
E-Mail: samcl3@gmail.com

GNCRAdmin
032 533 3215
www.gncr.org.za

"The Lord gave the word; Great was the company of those who proclaimed it" Psalms 68:11 NKJV

BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

Tina Turner and forgiveness

BY ROB FURLONG

As I write this, news of the death of Tina Turner, the “Queen of Rock and Roll”, broke. Reading through a tribute to her, I was interested to learn that she had converted to an Eastern religion. If you are familiar with her story, you will know that for many years she was physically and emotionally abused by her husband, Ike Turner, until she found the courage to leave and regain her life.

As with all women who have been abused, she was left with deep emotional scars and so she turned to the Eastern

religion to learn how to forgive her former husband. Despite her best intentions however, she admitted she was unable to come to the place of truly forgiving Ike.

I don't tell this story to condemn Tina Turner or any other person who has been abused in any way – forgiveness in situations like these is an incredibly difficult and complicated process and requires thoughtful, sensitive, counsel.

We know forgiveness is essential to the peace-making process, but we also know it is incredibly hard to extend.

Is it possible to truly forgive someone, especially the person who has deeply wounded us?

I believe it is.

Philip Yancey calls forgiveness an “unnatural act”, describing it as, “achingly difficult, and long after you've forgiven (the other person), the wound (they have inflicted on you) lives on in memory.”

As Yancey explains, we struggle to forgive because there is that part in us that also cries out for justice.

He quotes Helmut Thielicke, a German who lived through the Nazi years:

“We say, ‘Very well, if the other fellow is sorry and begs my pardon, then I'll give in.’ Then I watch like a hawk to see whether the other person (gives) some small hint which shows that he is sorry. I am always on the point of forgiving...but I never forgive. I am far too just.”

While acknowledging the challenge of forgiveness, Yancey cites several reasons why we should forgive, and the most compelling one for me is this – we forgive because God forgives us!

He puts it this way:

“By forgiving another, I am trusting that God is a better justice-maker than I am. By forgiving, I release my own right to get even and leave all issues of fairness to God to work out. I leave in God's hands the scales that must balance justice and mercy.

“Though the wrong does not disappear when I forgive, it loses its grip on me and is taken over by God, who knows what to do. Such a decision involves risk, of course: the risk that God may not deal with the person as I would want.

“I never find forgiveness easy, and rarely do I find it completely satisfying. Nagging injustices remain, and the wounds still cause pain. I have to approach God again and again, yielding to Him the residue of what I thought I had committed to Him long ago. I do so because the Gospels make clear the connection: God forgives my debts as I forgive



my debtors. The reverse is also true: Only by living in the stream of God's grace will I find the strength to respond with grace toward others.”

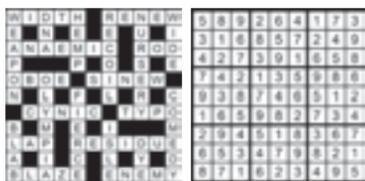
I have found Yancey's words and experience to be true in my own life. Someone hurts me deeply and I am inclined to rehearse what they did, rather than forgive. But as I process it in my heart, I am brought back again to the words of Jesus, who said, “Love your enemies,” and so I forgive.

And yes, there are times when I am reminded of the hurt, and it begins to surface again, and so I come to God, ask Him for His strength to forgive ... and I forgive again.

I can forgive because God has forgiven me ... and this can be true for you as well!

Our greatest need and God's greatest gift are the same thing: forgiveness of sins. And to receive it we have only to ask and pass it on. But to ask for it we must first admit that we need it. Instinctively, we wriggle.

“Forgiveness [is] an ‘unnatural act ... achingly difficult’”



How can 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)

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

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.

AS A NEXT STEP :

If you prayed the above prayer, tick this box

I have prayed this prayer.

Please send me:

- Bible portion
- Some 'starting off' literature
- Information on a helpful church

If you have not prayed the prayer at this stage, tick this box

I would like to think about this.

Please send me:

- Bible portion
- More information as I am inquiring about being a Christian.
- I have a problem (see attached letter)

*** Please tick and write clearly ***

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Age and occupation (it helps) _____

Mail to: Capt (SAN Rtd) Peter Louwrens
PO Box 1545, Sun Valley, 7985
Cape Town, South Africa

WHATSAPP: 083 786 3640

Want to explore more?

Here are some **free**, helpful, online Christian resources:

Online Bible - Olive Tree app (we recommend that you start with an easy-to-read version like the ESV)	
Audio Bible - Bible.is app , or Youversion Bible app	
Christian radio station - CBN radio app (different channels for all genres of music)	
Christian podcasts and sermons - Edifi app	
Christian movies/TV shows - Good. app	
Daily thoughts and inspiration - Our Daily Bread app	
Advice on specific issues, Bible reading plans and studies for new believers - Youversion Bible app .	
The Bible explained with visual aides - the Bible Project on YouTube .	
Alpha Film Series on Youtube - an online introduction to Christianity.	
For kids - Superbook Kids Bible, videos and games app	
Comic book Bible online - goodandevilbook.com	
More inspiring faith stories - back issues of Challenge News at challengenews.online	

What does the Bible say about reincarnation?

GREAT question. The Bible never mentions reincarnation, and in fact states the contrary: “It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

If the Bible is correct, then why doesn't God allow for reincarnation? Reincarnation is the theory that with enough lives, a person can somehow finally get it right and then be allowed into paradise/nirvana. Many people think they are good enough already for heaven (they haven't robbed banks or killed anyone).

With reincarnation, the idea is very similar. The only difference is that it suggests that you'll be good enough ... eventually.

But such a scheme is flawed. It doesn't take into account the sinfulness of man. The Bible says that all people have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23), that all have turned from God and gone their own way (Isaiah 53:6), that there is not even one person who does good (Psalm 53:3), and that there is no one who doesn't sin (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

Therefore, what good would it do to come back to earth in a different body?

The degree of change would not be enough to make a difference. You live your first life as a sinner who has turned from God, then you come back as a different person who nonetheless is a sinner who turns from God. This endless cycle would give no benefit to anyone.

Since we are sinners, we need forgiveness. Since we all turn away from God, we need to turn back to Him (repentance). This is the consistent message of the Bible.

God tells us to turn to Him for forgiveness and seek Him in order to know Him. If we do that, then heaven begins in this life and can merely carry on into the next life. For He Himself — not a different place to live — is what it's really all about.

Even though the Bible refutes reincarnation, it does speak of a resurrection of all people...

“An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil to a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28-29).

Here is more Scripture regarding that judgment: “And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it.... And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened... and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.... And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15).

Want to know how to have your name written in the book of life? Sincerely ask God now for His forgiveness. Jesus died for your sins so that you could be forgiven. But to receive God's forgiveness means turning to Him in sincerity and with a commitment of your life. See how in the box on this page.

This article was first published on EveryStudent.com and is used with kind permission



Fanie van der Merwe of South Africa (centre) crosses the line to win gold ahead of silver medalist Charl du Toit of South Africa (left) in the Men's T37 100 metres final at Hampden Park during day five of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. (Photo by Cameron Spencer/Getty Images)

Fanie with the gold medal for the 100m T37 Mens event. (Photo by Julian Finney/Getty Images)

Despite disability

Very few people get to compete in one Olympics but South African Fanie van der Merwe has been to three. He won double gold at his debut at the Beijing Summer Paralympics in 2008, in the 100m and 200m sprint. And went on to win gold again at London in 2012 for the 100m and bronze at the 2016 Rio Games. He also won gold at the All-Africa Games in 2011 and 2015, and at the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Growing up, Fanie had tried all sorts of sports and had big expectations but found it difficult and disappointing with his cerebral palsy, so he realised that he probably would never excel. However, he decided he would compete because he loved it and not care too much if he didn't get anywhere.

"That was so crazy for me. When I had that attitude, God came and He turned what I thought of as my disability and something that is holding me back, God turned it around into a blessing," Fanie told Christians in Sport.

Of his cerebral palsy, Fanie says "I knew as a child that there was something wrong with me but I never saw it as a disability." He had always competed with able-bodied children up until grade 11 (aged 17), when he finally made the school's abled-bodied athletic team. Then his coach suggested that he compete in para athletics.

Fanie saw this new opportunity as a beautiful gift from God and from there a lot of doors opened

for him. He began competing in disabled sports in 2003, in 2004 he competed in his first national championships. Being considered for the 2004 Athens games inspired him to try harder. In 2006, he began studying at Stellenbosch University, where he began training in earnest to compete in Beijing in 2008.

There he won his first two gold medals. "I almost got anxiety just thinking about the race and then when I went out onto the track I had peace. God pushed the anxiety away and I could really relax," he says.

As a young boy, Fanie wanted to be a child of God but didn't know how to do that. He thought maybe if he could just live a good life God would accept him, but he kept failing in his own strength. He also had spiritual pride, he confesses, in that he would look at others and think "well at least I'm not that bad" or "at least I'm not doing that".

"Even when I had opportunities to give my life to the Lord, I was never sure [it had worked], until I was about 16-17, I remember, telling someone that I don't know why but I always feel like I need to commit my life to the Lord at every opportunity. He told me it is not about your works, it is about what Christ has done for you on the cross, and it is His blood that sets you free

and gives you salvation. And I knew then I don't have to ever [try to] earn my salvation again, it is what God has done for me.

"That was the first step of the salvation process but although I didn't doubt anymore, no one really showed me how to walk with Christ. Then when I went to university I got disciplined, where someone took the responsibility to mentor me and explain to me that God's love disciplines us.

“ I experienced God as very near to me. ”

"That changed a lot of my understanding about Christianity and God as a father," Fanie says. He said when people corrected him, he could not see it as loving behaviour. Now he realised that God's correcting discipline was an act of love,

wanting the best for him.

From the Bible passage in Hebrews 12:6 (... the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as His son) Fanie realised in fact that the discipline he was feeling was proof that he was in fact God's son, not evidence that he was far from God.

"After that I experienced God as very near to me. He would walk with me through the highs and the lows. He was never distancing Himself when times got tough, He was right there in the thick of it with me. I could really run to Him in those

times when I felt a lot of despair," Fanie relates.

Even right from the start at the 2008 Beijing Games, he remembers God intervening for him when, during the 200m, his legs started going into spasm, and God gave him the strength to carry on and get over the line first.

At the London Games in 2012, Fanie went into the 200m race very confident with a lot of expectation resting on him as the world record holder at the time. Up until the last 50 metres he was in front but then five people passed him before the finish line and it felt as if his whole world had imploded. "I went back to my room that night and I felt God say to me, 'Fanie, I love you because you are my son, and not because you can win medals. And I'm proud of you.' All my years I had tried to

perform to get acceptance and to be someone, and now I didn't have anything to give to give God except my worship. And I spent the next three days just worshipping Him and God really restored me through that."

On the final day, when Fanie ran the 100m, he successfully defended his title, knowing that his identity and God's love for him did not rest on the race's outcome.

"My first identity is as a son of God," he declares, "then is my identity as a sportsman. I start everything with Jesus."

Fanie and his brother Chris now run a Christian non-profit called Inspired 2 Become, focusing on alternative action sports and athletes with disabilities, and Fanie also coaches visually and intellectually impaired children. •

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