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OUT TO FIND ANSWERS

Atheist's pages of questions about faith led to unexpected movie project.

When film director Michael Ray Lewis' wife, Kristina, started attending church, he challenged her with tough questions about Christianity in order to show her that her beliefs were unscientific. Eventually he compiled a three-page-long list of questions he had about God, suffering, evolution versus creation, and the Bible, and began to research the answers for



Michael Ray Lewis

himself. He's now making a documentary detailing what he discovered.

In an interview with Reasons to Believe, Michael shares that he previously identified as an atheist.

"I grew up as an unbeliever, never really thinking there was evidence for God and never even really caring to look because I would always see the Christians on the street corners with megaphones that would say, 'You're going to hell,'" Michael explains. "[That was] my perspective on Christians – what they believed was false because how can Christianity be compatible with science?"

But when Kristina, who attended Sunday School as a child, felt a pull to go back to church, he decided to go along with her – "just to be nice".

As he looked around at the congregation he understood why people attended church but he just didn't believe it could be true. Kristina pressed him on it, asking him why he didn't believe.

"I hit her with the difficult questions – really hard questions that she wasn't able to answer," Michael admits. He asked questions about evil and suffering, whether evolution was compatible with Christianity, whether the Bible could be trusted and if it was actually inspired by God, and how she knew Christianity was the one true religion.

Kristina wasn't able to answer all his questions and encouraged him to research the answers himself.

One day, Michael was watching videos on YouTube when he came across a video from a Christian astrophysicist.

"It was a video of him going over the creation days and his perspective on the creation days and ... I thought okay, this may have a little bit of merit behind it. From there on it was about a three-year journey from that point of me just studying and trying to find answers – trying more so to prove my wife wrong and in the process ended up proving her right."

Michael watched more of the Christian astrophysicist's videos and also read his and other Christian apologists' books. The deeper he dug, the more he found compelling evidence for Christianity and creationism.

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Meseret Cohen then and now. Photo: supplied

ORPHAN FINDS NEW HOME

Ethiopian Meseret Cohen was nine when she and her three siblings became orphans.

The death of her parents – her mother from tuberculosis and her father from malaria – were unexpected, sudden and happened within months of each other. The young children, who were living in Addis Ababa at the time, were thrown into chaos.

"My parents' death turned my life and my world upside down," says Meseret, or Messie as she likes to be known.

"I suddenly lost hope, security and belief in a future. I was the eldest and so, at the age of nine, I took on the role of motherhood."

In a YouTube video entitled 'The Walk' on the Gifted by Grace site, she says that being an orphan hit her hard. "My mother played

such a huge role in taking care of us, so there was this sense of hopelessness."

She also found she had some big questions for God. Messie had grown up in a practising Christian home – her father was a church leader and their family attended church regularly.

"But now I couldn't understand what kind of God would let these things happen to me and my siblings," she relates.

"I began questioning the moment my mom passed away and I said I would never step into a church – I said 'God I want to see You do something'."

The children were sent to an orphanage and lived there for four years, always hoping they would be adopted. But chances were slim; the orphanage preferred to

keep families together, and very few people would take on four children.

At the orphanage the children were required to attend church every day.

"I didn't want to go to church but I didn't have a choice," Messie shares. "After a while I started to talk to God again. Then the same questions came up again, why did God let this happen to us, to all the children in the orphanage, and to me?"

"God didn't seem to be answering my questions. But with no other choice, I decided to trust Him and prayed that He would bring a great family into my life again."

Four years later, her prayers were answered.

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OSCAR TSHIEBWE

ORPHAN FINDS NEW HOME

● From page 1

The Cohen family, who had a long history of missionary work in Ethiopia, met Messie and her siblings during a volunteer trip, fell in love with them and adopted all four. Fifteen months later, in June 2009, the children and their adoptive parents landed in Perth, Australia.

Messie was 14. “To me it was a miracle,” she says. “All praise to Jesus for pulling this off!”

They lived in a small town, where her adoptive parents led a church.

“One of the best things that God did was bring me to a Christian family again,” she beams. She struggled initially with assimilating into a new country — “people would stare at us because we were literally the only four African people in the town!” — but overcame those early challenges and has achieved much.

She graduated from Bible College with a Bachelor’s degree in Ministry and launched an organisation called “Life After Adoption.”

Inspired by mission trips, Messie has gone on to complete a Graduate Certificate in Social Change and Development.

Looking back, the 31-year-old says: “I don’t really know how I did it at the time, and my faith was up and down, but I can now say God was there every minute to provide good friends, an amazing Christian school, great parents and extended family, and a great country. “I know now that it was God who brought me to this place and through all the different things that have happened to me. He was looking after me and my siblings through it all.”

Messie remembers one church service in particular that restored her faith. “It was one of my most memorable experiences with God, the beginning of healing from some past hurts and fears. On that night I met God personally, one-on-one. It was a moment of revelation that He truly is a God of hope, faith and love. I now had a new hope and future, so I decided to pursue Him.

“I have a heart and a passion to go back to Ethiopia and share with others who God is and what He has done for me. I am still not sure where God is taking me,” Messie admits, “But I have started on this journey of following Him. I just want to say yes to Him and His work. God has a plan and a purpose for everyone. Don’t give up when you’re facing tough stuff.”

“**Don’t give up when you’re facing tough stuff.**”

The greatest miracle

Malawians Webster Winga and Stelia Bernard were married in December 2016, they had a church wedding and after 2 years their son Kelvin was born.

In appearance all looked well for this young family. Stelia takes up their story of destructive lives and what happened just one year ago.

“We had been living a very troubled life. We never respected each other. There was no real love between us. Our marriage was blessed in a church, but there was no indication of such blessing! Each of us just loved the world. We just lived like goats, living selfishly.”

“On my part, I loved to play Juga (card gambling), lying, quarrelling, and fighting with my husband Webster.”

Stelia began using a chat group on her mobile phone, this led to much wrong. Sin will take you further than you ever meant to go! Sin will make you pay more than you ever wanted to give. This is what Stelia soon discovered.

Webster soon found out the truth of his wife’s hidden lifestyle. After a failed marriage counselling attempt, he sent his wife packing to her home village. Stelia says, “There was no sign of us coming together again as a family.”

God had other plans for this family. Into Webster’s village a man came preaching the gospel about forgiveness and life in Jesus Christ. On asking how Webster’s family was, and discovering all was far from being good, this man asked to visit Webster privately in his home. There Webster was told how God sent His Son into this world to die for him, so that his soul could be saved from the punishment of sin, and that he could have a real relationship with God. Further, with God’s help he could be restored to his wife again as a married couple. Forgiveness is possible and brings results.

“My husband was told about Jesus restoring a woman’s life after she was caught in the very act of adultery in John chapter 8. My husband was touched by this and convicted of his own sin. This led him to surrender his life to Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour. This was in July 2021,” Stelia relates.

The visiting Christian man then sent money to Stelia so that she could travel back to Webster’s home to meet with him and her husband together.

“I vehemently declined the invitation ... but my mother convinced me to go and meet this pastor. I despised him in my heart — saying that he would not be able to pray for me.” Stelia continues, “He asked me to share my side of the story, but he told me I had not shared everything. I was afraid.”

“The man began to pray, I started feeling hot, like a fire in my whole body. I tried to move away, but the pastor touch me on my head, I just collapsed to the ground. Evil spirits began speaking through me. They were cast out of me. It was a terrible experience for me.”

Later, when Stelia was calm and recovered, the gospel (good news) of forgiveness and life in Jesus Christ was explain to her. It was made clear to her that she needed to ask God for forgiveness and put her trust in Jesus for that forgiveness.

Stelia surrendered her life to Jesus Christ right away so that he would be her Lord and her Saviour. Says Stelia, “I did this by God’s enabling grace! Now all the bad desires are gone, we are happy as a family, content with the little we have, we love each other deeply, respecting each other, and the peace of Christ reigns in our hearts.”

“God’s Word in the Bible especially comforts us, in Romans 8:35-37: ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.’”

Looking back on her life Stelia sees a purpose, for she adds, “I am pleading with you all who read this, run to God for your salvation. He is able to help in family issues, but above all, salvation is the greatest miracle. All that we passed through, the Lord allowed these troubles for us to see his goodness and greatness. We thank God for the servant of Christ in God used for us, so that we should be saved and be reconciled to God and to have her marriage restored.”

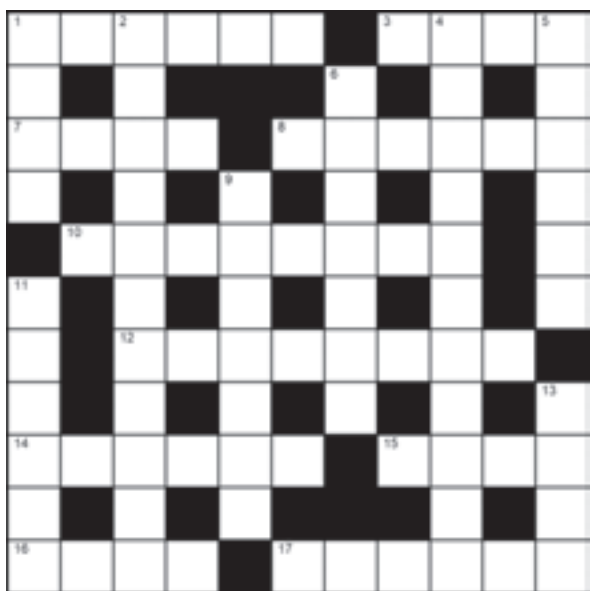
Finally, Webster and Stelia say, “We are encouraged by 1st Peter 2:1-3, and to live for him (Jesus Christ) and grow spiritually, for the verses say, “So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it (the Bible) you may grow up to salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.”



Stelia and Webster with their young child.

Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

- ACROSS**
- 1 Internet access devices
 - 3 Not many (1,3)
 - 7 Errand, job
 - 8 To make amends for
 - 10 Blood infection
 - 12 Toy with rail track (5,3)
 - 14 Solitary
 - 15 Mix, as ingredients
 - 16 Coral formation
 - 17 At fault
- DOWN**
- 1 Silent
 - 2 Stop, cease
 - 4 A primary principle
 - 5 Any tech thingy
 - 6 Staying power
 - 9 Moral allegory
 - 11 School financial officer
 - 13 Site of a fabled gift horse



Out to find answers

● From page 1

Kristina introduced Michael to a theologian (an expert in the study of God).

One night, armed with three pages of questions about Christianity, Michael sat down with the theologian and listened as he answered every one of them.

“I got to the end of the page and he looks at me and he’s like, ‘Do you believe it?’ I said, ‘I think I do.’”

On the car ride home, Michael prayed to God: “I’m giving my life to You. I’m going to put my trust in You. I do believe this is true.”

Michael refers to his conversion from atheism to Christianity as not “blind faith” but the result of “a lot of research and a lot of work actually investigating the truth of Christianity.”

“The moment that I gave my life to Christ, I was no longer looking for the evidence to just prove that Christianity was true, but I got excited and I actually wanted

to know more about God.

“So I studied and studied and studied and I would take apologetic courses online and anything I could do to just get as much information in my head as I could because I wanted to know God.

“I wanted to know attributes of Him and I wanted to know everything that I could.”

He also had a desire to share with people what he had discovered. Michael is currently directing a documentary called *Universe Designed*, which will explore some of the evidences for God’s existence.

He says most Christians and unbelievers do not know the arguments and evidences for the God of the Bible and the film will help summarise this and offer resources for further study and exploration.

For the film, Michael has interviewed Christian theologians, apologists and scientists, including the astrophysicist who played such an instrumental role in Michael’s conversion to Christianity.

SOLUTIONS PAGE 7



“Ah ha, here’s your problem! You’re trying to make a living as a farmer.”

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	7		9				8	3
	3	5						
6			1		3			7

Children's Bible touches Hindu swami

BY HANNAH HUGHES

Swarmed with doubts about his family's Hinduism, Rahil Patel, a respected Swami priest in London, thumbed through a children's Bible in a bookstore.

"I opened it and started reading and I felt a connection so quickly, so easily I then had to shut the book immediately," Rahil says in a Billy Graham Organization video. "I had to shut it quickly. It represented something completely opposite to what I represented."

He was raised in England in a Hindu family and hungered for whoever God was.

"Hinduism is a canvas of hundreds of religions with different doctrines and ideas and philosophies," Rahil says. "I was so desperate to

search for God."

His drive to find God led him to travel to India, his parents' homeland.

"I trained to become a Hindu priest," he says.

After only one month, however, a small voice spoke in his left ear: "Have you made the right choice?" It was the first seed of doubt.

But he didn't immediately renounce Hinduism. He kept an open mind and continued his studies. After all, his parents had brought him up that way and millions of people worldwide adhere to Hinduism. He ought to give it a fair shake, he thought.

His branch of Hinduism affirmed that the guru was god. Rahil began to show promise, and the guru took a special interest in him.

"When the guru speaks, it is god speaking," he says. "To be chosen as one of his favourite priests is the most incredible dream coming true."

While he was pleased with the approval he got from his leaders, he was troubled by the doubts surging in his mind.

"The more I studied, the more questions I had," he relates. "I asked tough questions to the scholars in India, and they weren't liking it."

One scholar told him: "Submit to what we are teaching you. You have decided to wear these clothes. This is forever."

When he said that, "I knew there was a problem," Rahil says.

He really only wanted to ask sincere questions. He thought having the confidence of the guru allowed

him to try to get his real questions answered. The blunt shutdown only turned Rahil off.

"I feel that I'm being brain-washed," he responded to the guru.

"There was a dead silence in the room," Rahil remembers.

"You think too much," the guru replied. "Just get on with it, and as time goes on, your questions will be answered."

Rahil returned to London where he continued as a swami priest and teacher of Hindu immigrants.

Eventually, he spotted the children's Bible at the bookstore. As he read passages, he realized that the message of grace (undeserved kindness of God) was totally the opposite of Hinduism's works mentality. The idea of Christ's sacrifice for sin was completely foreign.

He slammed the Bible shut, alarmed that he was being drawn to an opposite form of teaching from the one of his family, the one of his study, the one of his priestly profession.

"Fear kept me distant from the Bible," he admits.

But still, this "secret" encounter with Jesus — and others — were something that he treasured.

He began to talk sincerely, if somewhat tentatively, about these searchings in his talks at the Hindu temple.

"People were liking that," he says. "I could sense on people's faces that there being fed with something they really do need, by a God they didn't know."

"Thousands of people were cheer-



Rahil Patel. Photo: rahilpatel.org

India once again. His guru challenged him.

"I don't want to be a swami anymore," Rahil blurted out.

After 20 years of being a swami, he dropped it all. At the time, he walked away from all religion and forgot about his brushes with Jesus.

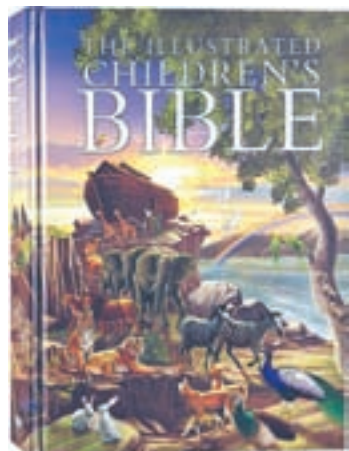
Sometime later, he walked into a church because smiling, welcoming people out front met him and encouraged him to step in.

"As soon as I walked through the doors, the presence of God just fell on me," he says. "I felt this incredible peace. This very silent whisper again in my left ear said, 'You're home.'"

He listened to the worship and sermon. "It made sense to me," he says. "I needed to turn away from my sins. I needed to ask for His forgiveness. I gave my life to Jesus. That released a huge burden off my shoulders, and that was a great comfort."

"God was there throughout my life, knocking on the door of my heart, attracting me, guiding me. He valued me so much, even though I was seeking another religion. I've never felt so much rest in my soul. It's a peace that surpasses all understanding. It's mind-blowing."

This article first appeared in godreports.org and is used with kind permission.



An example of a Children's Bible but not the actual one that influenced Rahil Patel.

GIRL MAKES COSTLY CHOICE

Nyala, who is from Eritrea, first heard about Jesus from a teacher at her school.

"I was born in and grew up in a strictly Islamic family. My father was a Qur'an teacher and a man of high reputation. As a little girl I memorized large parts of the Qur'an in Arabic. I was an inquisitive child and had many questions about our religion."

"When I was 11, shortly after we moved to a nearby country, I had my first contact with the Gospel (the good news about Jesus) through my school teacher. I would ask her lots of questions about her faith and one day she explained the Gospel to me."

"I began to ask my father more questions too, like: 'What happens to Christians after death?' He said: 'They are going to hell!' 'What happens to us Muslims after death?' He said: 'Only Allah knows.' 'Well how can it be that the Qur'an leaves us Muslims in the dark about our fate: is it worthwhile being Muslim...?' Eventually my questions were met with: 'As a Muslim you shall not ask such questions, only the unbelievers do so.'"

"However, I couldn't stop asking my father about the faith of the Christians: 'What do they believe? What is so bad about it?' Finally he got tired of this and when I was 14 decided to marry me off, hoping this would silence me. I refused to be married though, as I really wanted to finish school — so I hid myself away for days, until eventually my father dropped his plans."

"Still I could not stop asking questions. My father probably suspected that I had contact with Christians (as I was secretly attending a church) and another attempt to marry me off was made, which again I managed to avoid."

"When I was 17 I openly told my family that I follow Jesus. This brought great shame on them, especially my father, who beat me and called me an infidel, and again sought marriage as a solution. I agreed to the wedding



as I was promised that I could finish school. I was glad to leave my family and my husband took good care of me. The first few years of marriage went well. My husband was a successful businessman and allowed me to start up my own business, and we had a couple of children.

"I still had many questions though and would ask these of my husband, especially concerning the crucifixion, and why the Qur'an denies Jesus was crucified. But he was a devout Muslim and became wary of my curiosity."

"One day our housemaid found my Bible and my husband questioned me — I became fearful and denied reading it. But my lie gave me no peace and a few days later I confessed to him that I follow Jesus. My husband had to respond to save his 'honour', and even tried to stab me."

"My father also demanded that I be punished. Finally my husband divorced me and sent me back to my father with my children. My father was very ashamed of me, saying: 'You were rich. You had a good husband. You had a successful business. You have lost everything because of your faith. You are a shame.' Eventually, after several violent arguments, he turned me and my children out onto the street."

Here Nyala interrupts her story and bursts into tears. Finally, she says: "My way was arduous and following Jesus brought much suffering. But God is faithful! He has given me children who give me much pleasure, and He has given me a task. I'm called to tell the good news of Jesus to Muslims."

Nyala's home is now with the local church, and she is supported by ReachAcross (a ministry that helps Muslims follow Jesus). She shares the good news of Jesus with other women.

Visit the online home of ReachAcross. www.reachacross.net

From no direction to finding her way

Linet tells *Challenge* that her childhood was complicated, her family life was hard and she struggled with many personal issues.

"My family never had peace," she says. "My childhood was without direction and was full of struggles. I was a prisoner to jealousy, anger, unbelief and unforgiveness."

During primary school, Linet heard about God for the first time. "I attended a youth conference and I heard about Jesus Christ. As I listened to the Gospel [the good news about Jesus saving us] throughout the week of the conference, I got interested in knowing Christ and I decided to become a Christian."

Linet was led in a prayer of repentance [turning away from her old life] by a pastor.

"I gave my life to God," she says with a smile. "I had never known Christ as my provider but now I experience peace."

Linet speaks of the miraculous change in her life.

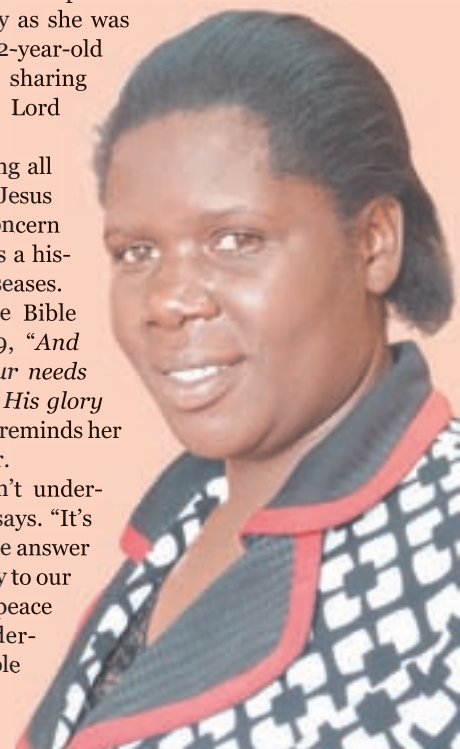
"I started forgiving people, something I never used to do before. My prayers have been answered and I have experienced blessings from God and from His people. I enjoy the Lord's kindness, joy, grace [undeserved love] and protection."

Her decision to follow Jesus may have happened well over 20 years ago but Linet is as dedicated and passionate about living for Him today as she was then. Now the married 32-year-old works as a prison officer, sharing the good news about her Lord whenever she can.

Linet has learned to bring all her worries and burdens to Jesus in prayer, including the concern she has that her family has a history of terminal genetic diseases.

One of Linet's favourite Bible verses is Philippians 4:19, "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus," because it reminds her that God is always with her.

"Sometimes, people don't understand why I believe," she says. "It's hard. But Jesus Christ is the answer to our prayers and is the key to our life. In Christ, there is a peace that exceeds human understanding. In Him, we are able to win all battles!"



Afrikaans translation

Ek het 'n Toevlug gevind

Bose geeste was 'n normale deel van Mahere Nelia se kinderdae, dit was ingenooi deur haar ouers, wie lede was van 'n kultus, en hulle het dikwels van bose magte gebruik gemaak om ryk te probeer word. "My ouers het toewenaars en toordokters gebruik om geld te kry," vertel die 62 jaar oue weduwee vir *Challenge News*.

"Dit het ons lewens so beïnvloed in die mate dat bose geeste in my lewe gespook het, en selfs tot nou toe sukkel ek soms met my verlede."

Haar opvoeding het ongewenste gedrag meegebring- Mahere sê sy was rebels en vyandig. Daar was buite-egtelike verhoudings en aborsies.

"Ek het mense se huwelike vernietig," sê die onderwyseres met groot hartseer.

Haar eie huwelik het in 2004 geëindig met die afsterwe van haar man.

Dit was die begin van verandering in Mahere se lewe. Dit het haar na 'n geestelike soeke van haar eie gelei.

"Ek het ernstig na God begin soek toe my man oorlede is, en Hy het my in 'n droom geantwoord," vertel sy.

"In die droom het ek myself sien bid, omring deur 'n ring van vuur, en ek het God hoor sê dat my sondes vergewe is."

Hierdie ondervinding 30 jaar terug het Mahere tot haar knieë gebring, en sy het haar lewe vir Jesus Christus gegee.

"Ek het gesien dat alles waardeur ek gegaan het was van geen voordeel nie, van geen nut nie.

Ek het myself en my geestelike lewe net seergemaak."

Sederdien is sy baie bewus van God se beskerming en genesing vir haar kinders, van wie drie ernstige gesondheidsprobleme gehad het.

Haar seun het in 'n koma vir twee weke gelê waar sy lange ophou funksioneer het. 'n Dogter het probeer selfmoord pleeg maar sy het oorleef. 'n Ander dogter het vyf agtereenvolgende operasies ondergaan.

"Maar almal van hulle het hulle siektes oorleef en ek prys die Here vir dit."

Mahere erken dat sy probleme ondervind het om sekere dele van haar ou lewe agter te laat, veral onwenslike seksuele gedrag.

Maar deur gebed en Bybelstudie sê sy, het sy vrede met haar verlede gemaak want sy weet dat Jesus haar vergewe en aanvaar het, vratte en al.

Sy word steeds seergemaak as sy misverstaan en gekritiseer word, maar sy hou vas aan haar gunsteling Bybelverse om haar te troos – Psalm 91 :3-4: "Want Hy is dit wat jou sal red uit die net van die voëlvanger, van die verderflike pes. Hy sal jou dek met sy vlerke, en onder sy vleuels sal jy skuil; Sy trou is 'n skild en pantser."

"God bestaan werklik," sê sy. Hy hoor ons gebede as jy hom ywerig soek en Hy versterk ons deur ons ergste tye.



Mahere Nelia

Zulu translation

Ngathola iNqaba

Imimoya emibi kwakuyinhlayenzeka empilweni ka Mahere Neila esakhula, yayamukelwe abazali bakhe, abangamalunga yenkoleloze eyayenza umlingo wengcebo.

"Abazali bami babesebenzisa umlingo nenyanga ukuzama imali," lomfelokazi ona 62 etshela I challenge news. "Impilo zethu zahlukunyezwa imimoya emibi kangangokuthi namanje ngisathinteka uma ngicabanga la ngibuya khona".

Ukukhula kwakhe kwazala impatho engathandeki-Mahere uthi wayengalawuleki enonya, wayephinga ekhipha nezisu.

"Ngamosha imishado yabantu",kusho lothisha kabuhlungu.

Owakhe umshado waphela ngo 2004 emva kokudlula kukaminyi wakhe. Lokho kwaphoqelela ushintsho empilweni yakhe.

Kwamholela ohambeni lwakhe lwoMoya.

"Ngaqala ukumfuna uNkulunkulu emveni kokushonelwa umyeni, Wangiphendula ngephupho",esitshela.

"Ephusheni ngazibona ngithandaza, ngizungezwe umlilo, ngezwa uNkulunkulu ethi izono zami zithethelelwe."

Lesosehlakalo eminyakeni ewu 30 edlule samusa emadolweni wamukela u Jesu Kristu. "Ngabona ukuthi konke kukho akunanzuzo,akusebenzi. Ngangikusebenzisa ukuzihlukumeza, nokuzwisa impilo yami kaMoya ubuhlungu".

Kusukela lapho usevikelwa uNkulunkulu futhi uphilisa abantwana bakhe, abathathu babo bebenezimo zempilo ezibucayi.

Indodana yakhe ihlale kucoma amaviki amabili amaphaphu engasebenzi.

Indodakazi yazama ukubulala kodwa yaphaphamiswa. Enye indodakazi seyihlinzwekahlanu uyaphila.

"Bonke baphunyukile ekuguleni kwabo, ngiyambonga uNkulunkulu ngalokho".

Mahere uyavuma ukuthi uhlupeke kakhulu ukuphuma empilweni yakudala, ikakhululazi ukuziphatha ngokocansi.

Kodwa ngomthandazo nokufunda izwi, wenze ukuthula nengemuva lakhe ngoba uyazi ukuthi uJesu umthethelele futhi

umamukele, nakho konke. Uyabuzwa ubuhlungu uma engaqondwa futhi egxekwa, bese ebambelela evesini alithandayo: Amahubo 91:3-4" Uyakusindisa ogibeni lomubi,akwemboze ngamaphiko akhe, ngaphansi kwamaphiko

akhe uyovikeleka, ukwethembeka kwakhe kuzoba ihawu kuwe". "UNkulunkulu ukhona ngempela". Kusho yena."Uyayizwa imikhuleko yethu uma simfuna ngempela asiqinise ezikhathini ezinzima".

In another dimension

IMAGINE there are two people on a flat piece of paper. These people are two-dimensional, having height and width but no depth; the paper is the extent of their world. Can they see you? No. They can see only what's on the paper (in their world). They have no depth perception. Now pretend you use your finger to touch the paper. Now can they see you? They cannot see all of you, but they can see the tip of your finger, the part that has entered their world.

That is an analogy to our situation with God. God exists outside our dimensions. He can exist outside of time and space as we know it. Therefore, it is difficult to "see" Him. We are like the flat people on the two-dimensional paper. We can't see what's in a third dimension. But in this case, we exist in four dimensions (height, width, depth, time), and God exists beyond that.

So how are we to know such a Being? Just as the "flat people" on the paper could not know about you unless you touched the paper, we cannot detect God unless He reveals Himself. He must "touch the paper" of our world. God has to step down in dimensions.

As we study human history, especially religious history, do we find any instances where God "touched the paper" of our world? Consider that God's "finger" has touched our world in a person known as Jesus Christ. Jesus claimed to be God (John 8:58, 17:3), said that to see Him was to see God (John 12:45, 14:9), said that He was the only person who had come directly from God to our world (John 3:13), and forgave people of their sins, which only God can do (Mark 2:5). Many other passages of the New Testament affirm Jesus' deity. He was God who "became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). He is the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15).

If we are the "flat people" it makes sense that the multi-dimensional Creator God entered our four-dimensional world by becoming a human being. He revealed himself to us. But why would God do that?

"For God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). He entered our world to live as an example and die as an atonement (payment) for our sin, in order that one day, if we commit to Him, we can come and live with Him in His multi-dimensional, perfect, timeless world for all eternity.

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

English translation

I FOUND A REFUGE

Evil spirits were part of the furniture in Mahere Nelia's childhood, welcomed by her parents, who were members of a cult and regularly used black magic to try to become wealthy.

"My parents used magicians and witch doctors to get money," the 62-year-old widow tells *Challenge News*.

"It affected our lives to the extent that evil spirits haunted my life and even up to now I sometimes struggle with my past."

Her upbringing brought out some very undesirable behaviours – Mahere says she was unruly and hostile. There were numerous adulterous relationships and abortions. "I destroyed people's marriages," the teacher says sadly.

Her own marriage ended with the death of her husband in 2004. This was the catalyst for change in Mahere's life. It led her to a spiritual quest of her own.

"I earnestly started looking for God when my husband died and He answered me in a dream," she shares.

"In the dream I saw myself praying, surrounded by a ring of fire and I heard God tell me my sins were forgiven."

That experience 30 years ago drove Mahere to her knees and she gave her life to Jesus Christ. "I saw that all I had gone through was of no benefit, no use. I was just hurting myself and my spiritual life."

Since then, she has been very aware of God's protection and healing for her children, three of whom had serious health issues.

Her son lay in a coma for two weeks when his lungs stopped functioning. A daughter tried to commit suicide but was revived. Another daughter endured five back-to-back surgeries.

"But all of them survived their illnesses and I praise God for that."

Mahere admits she struggled to leave certain aspects of her old life, especially her past sexual behaviour.

But through prayer and Bible study, she says she has made peace with her past because she knows that Jesus has forgiven and accepted her, warts and all.

She does get hurt when she is misunderstood or criticised, but says she holds firm to her favourite Bible verses to comfort her – Psalm 91:3-4: "He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart."

"God really exists," she says. "He hears our prayers if you seek Him diligently and He strengthens us through our worst times."

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My abusive dad transformed

As a child Tanner Williams always felt on edge.

"I had to be aware of how my father was and his emotions and as a result I could never come home and just relax," he shares in a Their Testimonies video on YouTube. "I was constantly on guard about where he was and whether he was going to explode on me for something I did."

He grew up in a big family and found it hard to stand out among his five siblings.

But despite this, he still seemed to draw attention from his father – and not in the way he wanted. "Something would upset him and he would end up beating me because of it," Tanner shares.

His family attended church together, and Tanner hated the way his father would act like a loving father but the next day, "I'd be woken up by him beating me because of something I did wrong ... I hated it because I saw my dad act like a two-faced person. I despised the church because every time I went to church it seemed so fake to me."

Tanner became more aggressive himself.

"I was never at rest or I never felt peace in my life and I was angry all the time."

He says he tried to numb his heartache by trying to do well in school, having a lot of friends and playing sports, but he admits it didn't work. Then something changed in Tanner's father.

"My dad actually started taking his relationship with God more seriously. He started working on himself and started going to anger management and he stopped abusing me. But I still had all of this baggage and all this resentment toward my dad so even though he started treating me really kindly I didn't really believe it or accept him or forgive him."

The following year, Tanner's parents "forced" him to volunteer at their church's summer camp, where he met Christians his own age.

"[They] really loved me and cared for me and throughout that entire summer they were just constantly showing God's love to me."

"Over time my heart started



Tanner Williams

[opening] to the Lord and I started to come to realize who Jesus is and what He did for me, that Jesus' sacrifice [on the cross] has covered everything. Even though I had gone through a lot of hardship growing up I knew throughout that summer that God's love overcomes all of that."

Then, before Tanner went into 10th grade, he went to a beach house retreat with his church youth group. It was a time to get away and read the Bible and worship God together.

"The Lord transformed my heart. I forgave my father for what he had done to me in the past and accepted Jesus for the way that He died for my sins on the cross for me."

After that Tanner's relationship with his father improved.

"I changed as an individual and

became less aggressive and less upset all the time," he attests.

"I'm grateful that I do have a loving father in my life now – we have a great relationship."

In college, Tanner didn't know what he wanted to major in and struggled in his classes.

By his second year he was in academic probation.

The following year, Tanner was forced to take the year off from college completely due to constant sickness. Instead of going to classes, he spent his days reading his Bible. At night when he couldn't sleep, he would read the Bible until he did.

"Instead of watching TV or being on my phone I was reading my Bible and using that as a way to get closer to the Lord ... over time my sleep schedule got better, my health got better and then I was able to finally recover from all my sickness."

By the start of his fourth year of college, he was able to attend classes again.

"I started doing really well in school. I was on the Dean's List (an award for academic excellence) ... there was a lot of suffering [but] I felt so strong by the end."

“When hardships do occur I know how to get through them.”

Tanner says he has learnt not to worry about his future but to rely on God.

"As a kid I was really angry and upset all the time, I never had any peace and now I'm much more chilled and relaxed and when things go

awry in my life I know that I can rely on God.

"When hardships do occur I know how to get through them."

"The biggest way the Lord has transformed me is not relying on the outside world for validation but relying on Him and who He is."

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)

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.

What now?

1. Tell someone - either a Christian that you know or email us at info@challengenews.org
2. Use the resources in the green box on this page to find a Bible to read and more information regarding Christianity.
3. Keep praying. Talk to God anywhere, about anything. He is always listening, and you don't need a formula.
4. Reach out to the ministry that distributed this paper (see back page) and/or find a Bible-teaching church to attend.

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 _____ Phone _____

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

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 .	
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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	



Baffling blood

BY CHARLES GARDNER

WHEN people attend university, often their eyes are opened to new ideas and concepts: for Aaron Eime it changed the direction of his life and continues to impact lives to this day.

Aaron studied psychology and social work in Brisbane where he heard a presentation by microbiologist Dr Michael Behe, which was part of a debate about the origins of the earth.

Dr Behe explained the amazing process of blood-clotting.

He said blood-clotting requires a sequential chain reaction of enzymes to bind up a wound when the skin is cut.

Each one has a special duty but, if just one is removed, healing will not work. And yet it clots only the wounded area, rather than the heart or brain, which would be fatal. Aaron was brought up in a Christian home believing God created the Earth in six days but those beliefs had been eroded by what he had been learning at university. However, after hearing Dr Behe's explanation, he realised then that there was no way the clotting process could have come about through evolution.

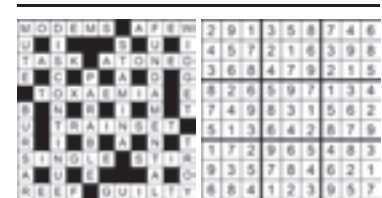
"Evolution is the gradual increase of genetic information over time," Aaron explains.

"But if all the enzymes are not present from day one, the blood cannot function and life cannot exist. Evolutionary theory provides no satisfactory evidence for how blood came about. It cannot possibly have evolved, so must have been created by a super-intelligent mind. This is why the Bible says that "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev 17:11).

"Behe's argument totally floored me, and that was the precise moment I knew God was real," Aaron said.

"I knew then that a super mind (i.e. God) had created the world, and that He was intimately involved, even at the microbiological level, with His creation. And ever since then, I have been a firm defender of the faith against the lie of evolution."

"My faith didn't remove the pain but it got me through the pain. Trusting God didn't diminish or vanquish the anguish, but it enabled me to endure it."
Robert Rogers



Oscar Tshiebwe #34 of the Kentucky Wildcats lays the ball in against Nae'Qwan Tomlin #35 of the Kansas State Wildcats during the first half in the second round of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament at The Fieldhouse at Greensboro Coliseum on March 19, 2023 in Greensboro, North Carolina. (Photo by Jared C. Tilton/Getty Images)



INSPIRED BY HIS DAD

When Oscar Tshiebwe moved to the USA from The Democratic Republic of the Congo to play basketball, his high school coach ridiculed him.

“You are the worst player we ever had,” he told him.

But Oscar had faith he would succeed. His coach laughed when he told him he would one day play for Kentucky. But he did from 2021, and last year he was the consensus National College Player of the year.

In two seasons he pulled down a jaw-dropping 1317 rebounds.

Oscar grew up in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he started out playing soccer. But due to his tall height, he was encouraged to play basketball. He attended a basketball camp led by Congolese National Basketball Association (NBA) player Bismack Biyombo and a new course was set for his life.

However, when he was 13 years old, tragedy struck Oscar's family when his father died after being poisoned. His killer was never brought to justice.

Oscar told CBN what he remembered about the day his father died: “Thirty minutes before he passed he said, ‘Grab a chair.’ I grab a chair and I sit right there and he started talking to me. He said, ‘Don’t ever forget about God no matter where you go. Don’t lose God because when you lose God, you lose your life. Always listen to what I’m tell-

ing you. You gotta take care of your family.”

Oscar had been raised in a Christian home but his father's death caused him to be angry at God. He cried out to God in anger, “Why did this have to happen?” But the more Oscar spent time with God, the more he realized he needed Him.

“I said, ‘No, maybe I need to give my heart to God. Maybe I need to pay attention,’ because my daddy always told me, ‘No matter what happens in your life, don’t let that thing affect your relationship with God, because God has great plans for your life and your dream.”

Oscar put his faith and trust in Jesus. He worked hard at basketball and at 15, he moved to the United States.

“I had no family, I could not speak any English,” Oscar told CBN. “We could not communicate with anybody. Most of the people think like I was going to fail; I was going to go back home. People making fun of me, I don’t even know what they say. My coach never wanted to play me in high school my first two years, he told me, ‘You are the worst player we ever had. Like good luck with that.’ I told him, ‘I will play for Kentucky one day.’ They laughed. They made a joke. But I went back in the scriptures, read, but the scripture told us anything is possible to those who work hard and believe in God. [Editor's note: The Bible in fact says “with God all things are possible”.] I say, ‘Why the

Bible says, anything is possible, but everybody here told me it's impossible for me to get there?’ I say, ‘I will stick with the Word of God. I don’t care what people say. I’m going to stick with the Word of God. If I’m going to fail, I’m going to fail with the Word of God.”

Oscar initially played college basketball for the West Virginia Mountaineers and in his second game he was named the Newcomer of the Week. At the end of the season he had averaged 11.2 points and 9.3 rebounds per game as a freshman while shooting 55% from the field and was named to the Second Team All-Big 12 and the All-Newcomer Team.

As a sophomore, he averaged 8.5 points and 7.8 rebounds through 10 games.

In 2021 Oscar transferred to the Kentucky Wildcats – his goal achieved. At 6’9” and 260 pounds (118 kilograms), Oscar is an imposing presence on the court. In his first game he tallied 17 points and 20 rebounds in a 79–71 loss to Duke. At the end of the season he was named the Sporting News National Player of the Year and the unanimous Southeastern Conference Player of the Year.

Then Oscar had a new goal – to play for the NBA.

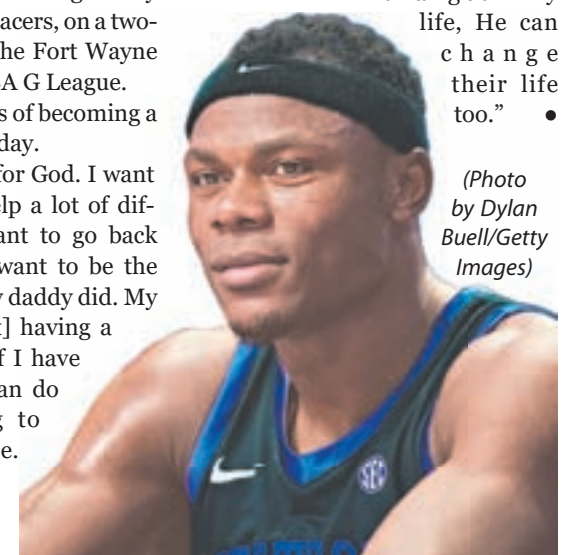
“I told [God], ‘I want to be an NBA player. I want to get there. I want to help other people and help my family. But I cannot get there by myself.”

Even this goal has already been achieved, when earlier this year the 23-year-old centre was signed by the NBA's Indiana Pacers, on a two-way contract with the Fort Wayne Mad Ants of the NBA G League.

Oscar also dreams of becoming a public speaker one day.

“I want to speak for God. I want to stand up and help a lot of different people. I want to go back home and help. I want to be the example of what my daddy did. My daddy did [without] having a lot of money, but if I have money, I think I can do better. I’m going to help somebody else. I’m going to try to change the world ... I want people

to know that God is everything. I want people to know that God has changed my life, He can change their life too.” •



(Photo by Dylan Buell/Getty Images)

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