

BAD SPELL BROKEN

When police arrested Jenny Weaver she was relieved. She was homeless, pregnant to her drug-dealer boyfriend and hadn't eaten in five days. She knew in prison she would at least have a bed to sleep in and food to eat. In an interview with CBN, Jenny shares that she was born addicted to heroin as her mother was an addict.

Watching her daughter going through withdrawals caused her mother to turn her life around. After this, Jenny was raised in a Christian home.

But life was far from perfect.

"What I saw on Sunday was not what I saw all throughout the week," she says in an interview with Cornerstone Television Network. "When we would leave church and go home, there was a lot of abuse, there was a lot of name calling, adultery and things of that nature. It pushed me away from wanting to be in church and wanting to know the Lord." At 13, Jenny felt depressed and experienced suicidal thoughts. She self-harmed on a daily basis for years. At school she met a group of girls who were experimenting with the New Age.

"I remember watching a movie called *The Craft*. It was about four witches and they had power and they were able to command things."

Living in a home where she didn't have any control and didn't feel accepted and loved, what she saw in this movie appealed to her.

"[I thought], 'Wow, I want this! I'm going to be able to control the bullies at school and be able to have more stability in my life.' So I began to study Wiccan religion and became a practicing witch."

Jenny says this new path thrust her into a

dangerous world. She started experimenting with drugs and eventually found herself homeless. "At 17 years old, I was living on the streets by myself ... For nine years, I struggled with meth, I struggled with heroin and [I was] still in witchcraft. It was a dark place for me. I had a lot of bitterness, hatred and anger toward my family. I felt alone, abandoned, rejected."

Then Jenny fell pregnant to her drug-dealer boyfriend. She knew she needed to get off the drugs for the sake of her unborn child but didn't know how. She recalls the desperation she felt one night after she hadn't eaten or slept in days.

"I screamed at the top of my lungs one night, 'God help me!' and I just fell to my knees and just surrendered to God."

Jenny says she knew that if she cried out to God, He would hear her. And He did. "God got me out of that situation," she says. "Just a few days later, I was actually I was rescued... I was arrested."

In prison, Jenny was able to get pregnancy care and detox from drugs.

Her daughter was born the day she was released from prison – "Which is a miracle," Jenny attests. "I was supposed to have [my daughter] before I was released so the state would have taken her and I wouldn't have been able to have her... But the moment they called my name [to be released from prison], I went into labour."

Jenny says she has been pursuing God ever since. The boyfriend who was supplying Jenny with drugs also surrendered his life to God and is now her husband. Jenny leads worship at her church. She has written a book called *The Sound of Freedom* about her journey about being delivered from living on the streets, witchcraft, self-harm and drug addiction. •

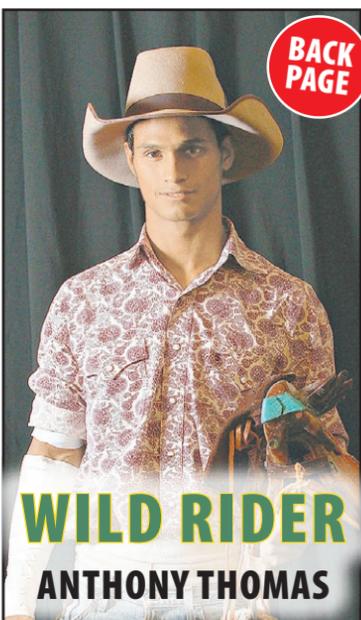


Jenny Weaver and her husband Stephen. INSET: Jenny Weaver's booking image from her arrest. Photos: www.facebook.com/Jennyweaverworships

I BECAME A PRACTICING WITCH



AFRIKAANS, ZULU, ENGLISH PAGE 6
story



WILD RIDER
ANTHONY THOMAS

Being totally sincere but totally wrong

BY NICO BOUGAS

CARBON monoxide, instead of oxygen, was once administered to a hospital patient who passed away almost instantly. The tragedy occurred while the patient was being prepared for a minor operation. A trained anaesthetist was administering a controlled mixture of oxygen and anaesthetic gas when the tank of oxygen was emptied and a new tank, labelled "Oxygen," was substituted. Almost immediately, according to the police report, the patient died. The attending surgeon and hospital officials suspected some type of accident and called the coroner.

An autopsy revealed carbon monoxide poisoning. Upon examination, the oxygen tank was found to contain carbon monoxide. The tank had been mislabelled before it had reached the hospital. The manufacturer was sincere, the hospital authorities were sincere, the anaesthetist was sincere, the surgeon was

sincere and certainly, the patient was sincere. No one wanted the tragedy to happen. But all were sincerely mistaken about the "Oxygen".

The incident demonstrates that sincerity is not enough. Sincerity must be coupled with certainty. There is a scripture that says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." - Proverbs 14:12. Too many people are saying, "As long as I am sincere, and my intentions are good, I'll come out alright in the end." But they are sincerely mistaken. One must be absolutely certain when it comes to your eternal destination. The Bible declares that we can be certain and have the assurance of eternal life. The Apostle John tells his readers: "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." - 1 John 5:13.

Too many things in our lives are mislabelled, "Forgiveness," "Salvation," "Life," "Peace," "Security,"

and "Satisfaction". How can one be absolutely certain in such all important matters? By taking the Lord Jesus Christ at His Word. No one is greater than He is and no one is truer than He is.

He said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me." - John 14:6. And He proved it by rising from the dead and appearing to over 500 people over a period of 40 days. He loved us to the point of dying for our sins on the Cross of Calvary. He now lives in the power of an endless life and saves all who come to God by Him. All who make Him their Lord and Saviour can say with the Apostle Peter, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39. Peter also said, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." - Acts 4:12. •

DRUG DEALER FINDS FORGIVENESS

Drug use that started in John Skipworth's teenage years became a full-blown addiction in a short amount of time and he began dealing drugs so he could afford to fund his habit. When a drug-deal turned into a fist-fight and someone nearly lost their life, John found himself behind bars.

In an interview with The 700 Club, John shared that his parents divorced when he was two years old.

His mother remarried and when that marriage fell apart, John decided to live with his stepfather, where he had the freedom to do anything he wanted.

"I went from drinking beer at 15, 16 years old, to smoking marijuana at 17," he explains.

"I ran into somebody that was doing cocaine and 90 days later you know I was an IV drug addict, sticking needles in my arm and shooting up drugs. I think it was an internal void in me – looking for somewhere to belong."

John soon turned to dealing drugs to keep up with his addiction.

One day, he and some associates met some drug dealers in a hotel room.

"A fist fight broke out and several people were hurt but one man, named JP, was brutally beaten and left unconscious," John shares in an interview with Lifetoday.tv. John



John Skipworth
Photo: facebook.com/skipworth.john

and his friends panicked and they wrapped JP in a sheet and took him to the woods. Then JP regained consciousness and tried to fight again.

"I struck the young man with a big billy club and knocked him down," John admits. Through his drug stupor, John told his friend to cut JP's throat.

"Before I knew it, a friend of mine pulled out his knife and cut his throat."

The next morning a pastor was working behind his church, setting up chairs for a sunrise Easter Sunday service.

He heard JP gurgling and moaning. He called the authorities and not long after that, John and his friends were arrested. JP survived, although the knife was mere centimetres away from slicing his jugular vein.

"I lied – I said I was innocent and had no part in it," John admits.

His parents believed him and helped fight for his release.

"Seventy-three days later I was walking free and feeling like I was invincible."

But after his release John's drug addiction spiralled out of control.

Over the next four years he was in and out of jail on drug and theft charges. Finally at the age of 23 he was involved in a high-speed police chase. "I was tired of running and I was tired of living that life," he explains. "I turned myself in because I was ready for a change."

It was John's third strike and he was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

It was then that he cried out to God. "I laid down on the floor and I

was crying. I was broken. "I started telling God how disappointed I was with myself, how disappointed I was with my life. [I said] I was sorry for hurting my mama, sorry for hurting my dad, I was sorry for all the shame, I'm sorry for hurting that guy in that hotel room, I was sorry for being a drug addict and a thief and a liar."

What seemed like moments later, there was a call for the prison church service. The pastor asked if anyone would like to share their story and John walked up to the front and said, "God just saved me and I'm gonna live the rest of my life for God even if I spend it in in prison cleaning showers."

John was permitted to enrol in a recovery support program called Overcomers. At Easter the group was allowed to attend church. While he was there, John spotted a familiar face. As he grew closer, he saw a visible scar on his neck.

"I immediately I realised it was JP. He walked up to me and he stuck out his hand and the weight of all of that responsibility just gripped at me – it was on me. It wasn't a time to be a tough guy and I just broke down and started crying."

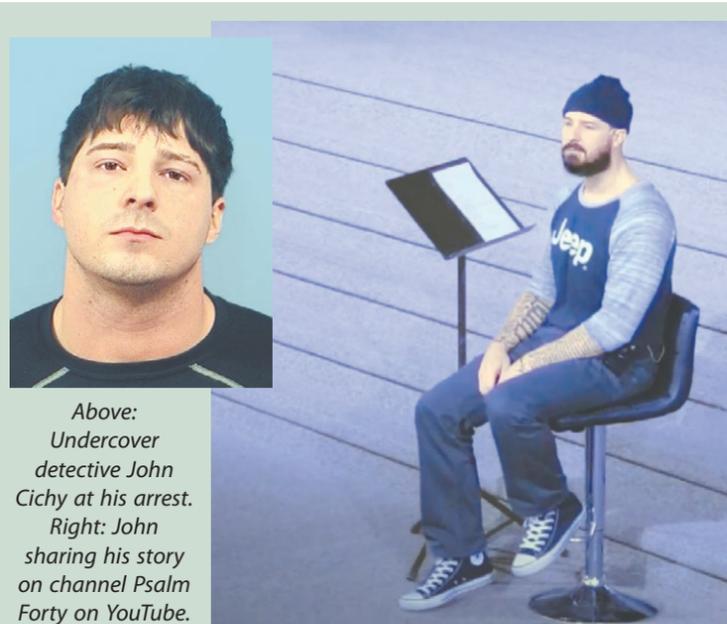
He said, "I forgive you John. I love you man, I'm glad you're here. God's about to change your life. God's gonna use you to do great things," and he grabbed me and he hugged me."

It was Easter Sunday, five years to the day that the JP was found by the pastor in the woods.

After completing the Overcomers program, the judge gave John seven years instead of the 20 that he was expecting. John is now married to Brooke and has three children.

He is the pastor of a church in Louisiana.

"The largest thing that's changed in me is my identity – who I am flows out of who I am in Christ and slowly year by year more and more of that is beginning to come out of me." •



Above: Undercover detective John Cichy at his arrest. Right: John sharing his story on channel Psalm Forty on YouTube.

Flying high to rock bottom

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

On the 17th day of solitary confinement in jail, cop John Cichy broke down and made a confession – not to the crime of which he was accused but to his need for Jesus Christ.

"I realised I needed help because there was no way I was getting out of this, there was no way I was getting through this," he says on a Psalm Forty video. "January 31st, 2013, right after midnight, I wholeheartedly called out to God. I saw everything that I was doing wrong that was displeasing to God that was harming me, and I realised I got myself into that mess. I said, 'God, I don't want to live that life no more.' I wholeheartedly repented of that life."

The former undercover detective who lived a high-flying life – with spinning rims, free drinks at bars and 19 girlfriends – was accused with two other detectives of re-selling part of the drugs they confiscated from busts. But while the two other cops accepted plea bargains for lesser sentences, John took his fledgling faith seriously. He had heard God say to not break down in fear of getting a longer sentence and to go to trial. He faced 18 counts which, if convicted, could result in a minimum of 24 years in prison, yet he refused every plea bargain they offered because God told him to.

"I was asking God what should I do," he says. "I woke up the next morning and turned on the radio, the very first song was Mandisa, 'Stay in the fight to the final round, you're not going under.'"

He didn't think much of it. But then he turned on the radio at midday, and the very first words were the same from Mandisa. Then at night when he went home and turned on the radio, again it was Mandisa. The coincidence seemed too much.

"It was impossible, you cannot recreate that," he remarks. "That was God speaking to me through that song, which translates to, 'Go to trial. You're not going to prison. I got you.'" That's why John flouted his lawyer's advice, his friends' advice, his family's advice, from his Christian brothers; everyone told him he didn't stand a chance in the trial and that the federal case was too strong. "It made no sense. Everything on paper, judges, lawyers, family, newspapers, Google, said I was going to prison 100%," he remembers.

During one agonizing day, God told him to check his daily Bible verse in the app on his phone. It was Proverbs 29:25: "The fear of man lays a snare, but those who trust in the Lord are safe." At 3:33am, God woke him up and quoted him Proverbs 29:25 almost audibly. At Bible study the next day, the leader cited Proverbs 29:25 as part of his message. Again, the coincidence was overwhelming.

"I had to leave the building and stand outside and cry because God had spoken three times in the same day with the same verse," he recounts.

"The deal was a trap. My fear of prison was a trap. I was dead set on going to trial in the midst of everyone telling me no."

As the pre-trial dicker protracted to years, John turned his church attendance into a ministry with the youth and camps at the Bartlett congregation.

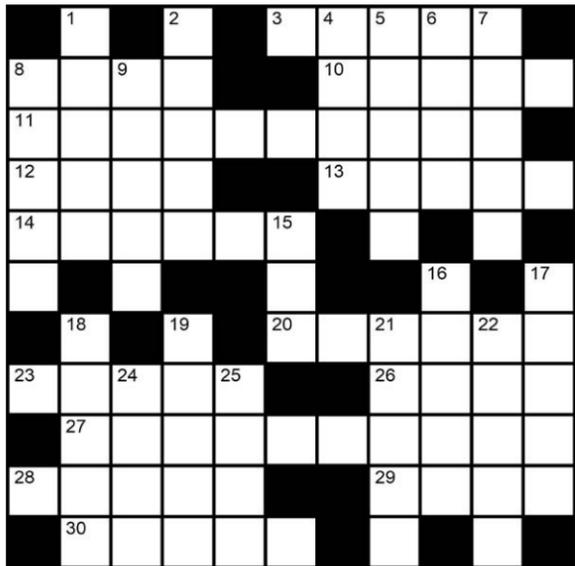
"In the midst of an actual trial facing 24 years in prison, I started preaching about hope in Christ. That's absurd. No one does that," he comments.

"No human being can speak of love and joy and peace in the midst of facing 24 years in prison. God gave me a promise, and I was telling everyone it. I'm so crazy that I'm telling everyone, 'God's going to deliver me from this.'" On several video recordings filmed prior to trial, John declared he would be freed. He had total peace, he said.

On the day of his trial, February 13, 2018, prosecutors stunned everyone when they suddenly dropped charges, citing the recent emergence of new evidence which threw doubt on their case. John walked free, declaring it was "part of God's plan." "God is absolutely real," he says. "How can someone say what's going to happen before it happens, unless he has a Source who reveals that to him? God is 100% real, 100% active, 100% personal, and you can 100% experience him every day." •

Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

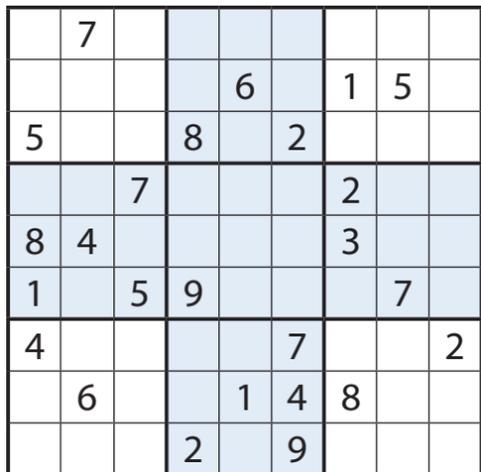
- ACROSS**
- 3 Double babies
 - 8 Retail business
 - 10 Standard
 - 11 Far-flung
 - 12 Steel ingredient
 - 13 Premature
 - 14 TV-filming room
 - 20 Utensil
 - 23 Barrier Reef
 - 26 Covering
 - 27 Approval
 - 28 Burnt log remains
 - 29 Fruit
 - 30 Sends via snail mail
- DOWN**
- 1 Garment
 - 2 Go on a buying spree
 - 4 Metal strand
 - 5 Brainstorms
 - 6 Close
 - 7 Sorrowfully
 - 8 Federer's nationality
 - 9 Smell
 - 15 Furniture wood
 - 16 Rock
 - 17 Direct for information
 - 18 Grip or understand
 - 19 Dashes or sprints
 - 21 Snares
 - 22 Nearby
 - 24 Repeating sound in a canyon
 - 25 Trial; examination



SOLUTIONS PAGE 7



"We are communicating better, but we are still not out of the woods."



FROM PRISONER TO DIRECTOR

BY ZOE ERLER

The first day Darryl Brooks entered the Prison Fellowship Academy at the Carol Vance Unit in Richmond, Texas, he was wearing the standard DOC-issued white scrubs. Today, when he walks through the doors, he wears khakis and a dress shirt because he's now director of the program.

Crosby, Texas (a town of just a few thousand) wasn't exactly a hotbed of excitement, so Darryl and his buddies learned to create their own. At 10, he started using marijuana, selling it to others by junior high. His dad wasn't around, so his mum worked two jobs to support her 12 children. Darryl was the youngest.

"I was practically raised by my siblings," he explains.

He graduated from high school in 1987, but with no one to help him plan for his future, it was up to him to create it – or try to destroy it.

Darryl still remembers the first time he tried crack cocaine. He and his best friend were cruising the streets of their tiny town, drinking, and his friend handed him his first smoke.

"Anything that was going to take me up, up there, I was gonna try," Darryl admits. After that, he descended deeper into the drug scene, and eventually found himself in court. He was 23 the first time he went to prison, in 1991. Even before that, Darryl had resigned himself to failure.

"I would tell my mom, 'Just let me die in the streets.' But as it turned out, prison is what saved my life."

The first couple of times he got locked up were for short sentences, punctuated by more drug dealing and street life.

The third time he was arrested, the law wasn't as kind. Darryl received a 50-year sentence.

He accepted his fate and continued on with the status quo. He even found a way to get his hands on drugs behind bars.

"I lived in prison the way I lived on the streets," he admits.

Meanwhile, his cellmate was pestering him about going to church. "I don't want none of that Jesus stuff," he told him, often ridiculing the man for his faith.

Then one day, five years into his sentence, he woke up.

"I had this epiphany: 'Hey, you're doin' the same things in prison that you was doin' on the outside. Ain't nothin' changed.'"

He decided to go to attend a church service. About a week later, he found himself at a discipleship class. It was there that, "God wrecked my life and I ain't been the same since."

"Instantly, I started walking the compound and telling people about Jesus Christ."

Darryl stopped dealing drugs and started going to church, even though his old associates



Darryl Brooks

told him he was crazy.

"After I got saved, I started living my life for the Lord, but I was still struggling to figure out how to live life the way God designed me to live."

In 2000, he was transferred to the Carol Vance Unit, so he could participate in the Prison Fellowship Academy. The Prison Fellowship Academy is a holistic life transformation and pre-release program.

It was here, through life skills classes, intensive Bible study, and counselling that the pieces started falling together.

"This program really instilled in me the tools I needed to operate back in society," Darryl says.

For one thing, he discovered what it meant to be a real father.

When he went to prison, he had a three-year-old daughter.

She was growing up while he was in prison, and Darryl hadn't done much to foster the relationship. But through the help of a parenting class, he began reaching out to his daughter through letters. One year his daughter even came to the prison for a party sponsored by Angel Tree.

"I always had the desire to be a dad," Darryl explains.

"This program gave me the tools I needed to be a parent." He also learned the importance of creating limits and boundaries for his relationships and habits – something that many incarcerated people struggle with.

But perhaps the most significant thing the academy gave Darryl were healthy relationships.

"I saw so many volunteers come through the gate and begin to express the love that I never felt growing up. And that really put the icing on the cake – just those [people] coming in, wrapping their arms around me and saying, 'Hey man, there's a better way to live.'"

One of those volunteers, a man named Jim Oliver, became his mentor. Jim met Darryl for the first time at a worship service at Carol Vance, and was stunned when he heard Darryl stand up and pray.

Not long afterward, the two men were matched for a mentoring relationship.

When Darryl was released from prison in 2002 (serving less than 11 years on his 50-year sentence), Jim was the one who picked him up and drove him to the parole office.

Darryl followed Jim to his church in Sugarland, Texas. And then Jim was a groomsman in Darryl's wedding when Darryl married Rosalind, a woman he had met through another prison volunteer.

The couple later asked Jim to be a godparent to their youngest daughter.

"I don't know too many people better than

Darryl," says Jim. "He talks the talk and he walks the walk."

After Darryl paroled to Houston, he got a job emptying grease trays for a cleaning company for another one of the volunteers he met through the academy.

A year and a half later, he began work as a janitor. In 2004, two years after he was released, he decided to return to Carol Vance – this time as a volunteer.

"Coming back in as a volunteer, coming back through that gate, it was an emotion that I cannot really explain," he says.

"Coming back and giving back – it was always a reminder that [being in prison] was what I [didn't] want."

Darryl served as a volunteer for seven years, ministering to and sharing Christ with men who looked a lot like he did a few years earlier.

This experience prepared him to come on staff with Prison Fellowship as a program counsellor in 2011.

And then five years later, in the summer of 2016, Darryl was asked to take the position of director of the entire program. It was an honour he could never have imagined receiving.

Had you told the former drug user and convicted dealer 20 years ago that he would head the very organisation that helped him turn his life around, he would have said, "No, not me."

But who better to lead the program than one who walked the same corridors, wore the same uniform, and ate the same prison food as those he was serving?

Darryl's is a full-circle story, one that centres around a very faithful God who is using something called Prison Fellowship Academy to rebuild broken lives from the bottom up. ●

Story from Prison Fellowship

On the streets as a baby

My name is Mez. My mother ran away with the best man in my parent's wedding. My father was an alcoholic and a gambler who abandoned me and my disabled sister. I was left to the streets at age two, and then left to foster and children's homes until my teens.

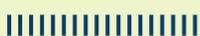
I was back on the streets when I was 16 and in prison at 21, and I was a drug addict for six years.

A group of young men from a local church presented me with the gospel (the good news about Jesus Christ) when I was living on the streets. They started playing football in our area and told us about the Lord.

At the time I was dealing drugs outside the community centre. They talked about God's love, but also my rebellion and God's wrath. I kicked against it. Later, men came to see me

in prison. Once out of prison, they gave me a place to live. Their witness was crucial, but the moment of conversion came when reading a Matthew Henry commentary.

FOR THE FIRST TIME I BELIEVED



I realised I had to take responsibility for my own rebellion against God and not blame it on my terrible childhood. For the first time I believed.

By God's grace, I went back to school and Bible College, and am now married with children. I planted a church for street children and prostitutes.

I recently finished my second church plant and am now looking to train other men to do likewise.

Praise God for those men who brought the good news of Jesus Christ to me. Don't underestimate the power of the gospel!

Used with permission from Alpha Prison Ministries. Originally published in June 2016. ●

World Hope Ministries Mzansi

"Making known Jesus - The Hope of the world"

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

Physical Address:
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Tel: 011 837 3437
Fax: 011 837 9104

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP 1

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

THE JESUS FILM

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

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP 2

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

GODS ANSWER TO AIDS

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

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

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

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

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

Post to: PO Box 96176, Brixton 2019

Steve takes granddad's advice

When Steve Hopper was 17 years old he was involved in fight at a party. Three days later, the sheriff showed up at his parents' home in Tampa, Florida, with a warrant for his arrest and he sent to prison. A year into his prison time, he experienced the darkest night of his life and he contemplated suicide. But then he remembered some advice his grandfather gave him as a child.

Sharing his story on the 100huntley YouTube channel, Steve explains that one of the teens he hit during the fight had slipped into a coma.

"My father turned me in and I sat in jail for three months my senior year of high school, waiting to find out if this young man was going to live or if he was going to die – waiting to find out if they were going to charge me with murder or attempted murder."

The young man came out of the coma and Steve was overjoyed. But that didn't mean his prison time was over.

"When you make bad choices in life there are almost always bad consequences that come along with those and for me those consequences were going to be great."

Steve was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

"There had been a lot of that fighting and stuff going on in Tampa at the time and I became the example [the cops wanted to set]," he shares. "I got sent to one of the worst prisons in Florida. The gang violence was daily, riots were weekly. I fought for my life on numerous occasions, watched people get stabbed to death, beat to death right in front of me."

One year into his incarceration, Steve had a powerful experience that changed the rest of his time in prison.

"That particular night the weight of the world just came crashing in on me all at once," he recalls. "I felt every emotion you could imagine – hopelessness, helplessness, regret and fear. I was one year into a 10-year sentence. I didn't know how I was going to survive the next nine."

Steve remembers crying in the corner of his cell and for the first time in his life, thoughts of suicide crossed his mind.

"I felt like my life had no meaning and it had no purpose and in that moment I remembered something."

Steve remembered something his grandfather had told him when he was 10 years old.

"He said, 'If you're ever at your darkest moment in life and your back's against the wall and you don't feel like you have any way out, just promise me you'll drop to your knees immediately and cry out for Jesus.'" Steve had forgotten about it until that



Steve Hopper was imprisoned as a teenager. Photo: YouTube/100huntley.

moment. "I took his advice and I laid my face on that cold, hard, dirty concrete prison floor and I cried like I've never cried before in my life. And when I called out His name in an instant everything changed. All of the feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and fear subsided in that moment and I had this overwhelming feeling of peace ... When I went to sleep that night I slept like a baby for the first time in a year. I woke up the next morning and I had a new lease on life."

This encounter started Steve on a new journey – a relationship with God. He began to read the Bible as well as some self-development books.

"I even started doing some teaching and training when I was in prison with some of the other inmates, so it was pretty exciting."

Ten years later, Steve was released from prison. It is a tough transition for many people but Steve had support, and opportunities

opened up for him to succeed.

"God opened some amazing doors and I walked through them and I started having success."

But Steve's relationship with God was deteriorating.

"I got to a point where I started to lean on my own understanding of things again," he admits. "I started to feel like I was in control of my own destiny and I got caught back up in the world... Because I started to pull away, I wasn't reading the Word, I wasn't praying like I should be, I wasn't going to church. I was slowly but surely just kind of pulling away and God's voice got further away from me."

In a matter of a few months, Steve lost his six-figure-a-year corporate job and he went through a heartbreaking divorce.

"I began to lose everything and that situation was more emotionally devastating for me than prison was. I found myself there again at a crossroads in my life, on my knees crying out."

Once again Steve cried out to God. This time he prayed to God: "Take me back."

"Immediately the answer I received was, 'I never let you go. But it's time for you to get off the bench and get in the game.'"

Steve embarked on a mission to discover what God wanted him to do with his life. One day he was walking through the mall and a woman passed by him and as she did, she handed him a piece of paper. "I opened up that piece of paper and on the inside it said, 'Be still and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10). It was a message that impacted me powerfully because I knew that I needed to take a step back ... I took the message literally. I got up every morning, had a cup of coffee and sat on the porch and prayed and I listened."

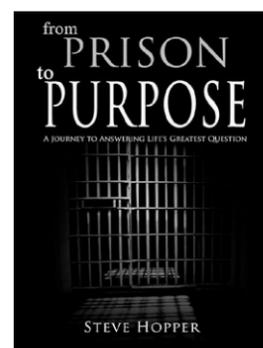
Steve realised as he looked back over his life and his experiences in prison and in the corporate world, that speaking was the common thread. When he was first released from prison he was under the impression that telling his story would hurt him and prevent opportunities in his life. But he found that when he did share his story it had the opposite effect on his life.

Steve recalls one of his first speaking engagements when he shared his story with 500 high school students.

"At the end I offered them an opportunity to accept Christ and 250 kids stood up in that gymnasium that day and made that decision," he says with tears in his eyes.

Steve is now a motivational speaker and has written a book about his journey called *From Prison to Purpose: A Journey to Answering Life's Greatest Question*.

Right: Steve's book about his journey: From Prison to Purpose.



WHEN YOU MAKE BAD CHOICES THERE ARE ALMOST ALWAYS BAD CONSEQUENCES



Life of chaos transforms into life of hope

BY EMILY ANDREWS

"I was 6 feet tall at 12 years old," says Kevin Bruno. "I had a grown man's body and a child's mind, and that led me to be persecuted in school, beyond belief. By the time that I got to high school I wanted to be somebody who didn't get persecuted." So he started spending time with a tougher crowd, mimicking their behaviours and hoping never to feel vulnerable again.

Kevin pulled off his first robbery at a savings and loan association in Texas. He lay in the back of the getaway vehicle, enthralled by the bag of \$42,000 beside him. While his partners weren't looking, he shoved some of the cash in his shoes. Later they divvied up what was left in the bag.

In the moment, stealing felt good. "I was hooked," says Kevin.

That robbery led to his arrest and a 25-year sentence. He served eight years and four months, returned to the streets, and landed back in prison. This time, Kevin faced 60 years. He wouldn't be eligible for parole until he'd served 15. Kevin says, "That's when my life changed – in prison."

For years, Kevin had only known

turmoil. Then he got to see the worst of prison life. Violence and hateful speech abounded. Officers often contributed to the chaos rather than curbing it.

"It was violent. It was racist," Kevin says.

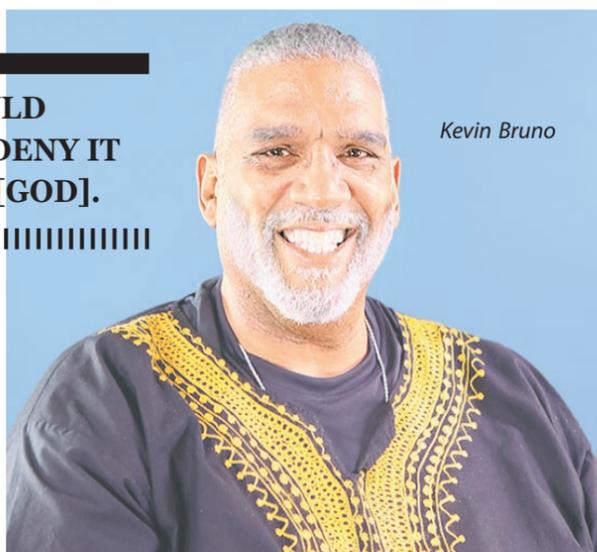
Once, he stepped in another prisoner's pool of blood in the hallway.

"That was probably the worst day that I had in prison," he admits.

Change came when Kevin received the opportunity to join Prison Fellowship Academy at the Carol S Vance Unit. Although he was not a Christian at the time, he decided he was willing to engage with a curriculum based on Christian teaching, if it would help him prepare for life on the outside.

Kevin wasn't thrilled to be in the program at first, and he struggled with the reasons behind his resentment. He finally begged God to show him some purpose.

I COULD NOT DENY IT WAS [GOD].



Kevin Bruno

"God, what is this?" he prayed. "What is this you're trying to tell me?"

Although he didn't share their Christian faith, Kevin developed a sense of belonging in the Academy. Staff, volunteers, and fellow participants made him feel welcome and worthy. He knew the classroom was a safe place to bring questions and doubts. Surrounded by love and support, he discovered his own dignity – the one thing, he says, that prison can strip from anyone. And along the way, he decided he

wanted to open up to Jesus for himself. "When God revealed Himself to me, it was in a way that I could not deny that it was Him," says Kevin. "I could not deny that He had changed the course of my life."

Despite a state-issued ID number. Despite a lengthy rap sheet. Kevin's life wasn't over yet.

"The Prison Fellowship Academy, through the teachings of Jesus Christ, shows each person that encounters it that you're still worthy," he says. "Doesn't matter what you've done. Doesn't matter who [others] say you are. You're still worthy because Christ died so that you would be worthy."

Kevin began to understand his rocky relationship with his earthly father. He realized how the relationship had shaded his view of his Heavenly Father. In a class called Embracing the Father, Kevin saw that he'd never forgiven his dad for past hurts. Volunteers guided him to understand what healthy forgiveness – and the inner peace that follows – can look like. Kevin realised he

needed to be forgiven, too.

Soon, Kevin was sitting across from his parents in the prison visitation room, and he'd made up his mind. They talked about forgiveness and extended grace to one another. It was a moment of profound healing.

That became one of his fondest memories in prison. Best of all, Kevin says, was the day he found Christ: "It may be cliché, but it's the truth."

Kevin is still making memories in prison today, as a free man. He serves as a Prison Fellowship re-entry specialist for the same academy site where his life changed forever.

The men Kevin mentors remind him of his past self, in many ways. He guides them to take ownership of their transformation and embrace core values like community, integrity, and productivity. And he shows them the way to deepen their sense of self – or, as he puts it, "a deeper sense of their ability to get out there and succeed."

"It gives them a sense of, 'If he can do this, I can do this,'" Kevin adds.

It's a responsibility he doesn't take lightly. He wouldn't have it any other way.

Story from Prison Fellowship

'Bewitched' by mistress's love potion

Pastor Chikumba was involved in an outreach in Zomba, Malawi when he met a man named Michael who seemed to be in distress.

The pastor struck up a conversation with Michael and discovered the source of his distress, according to a report by African Enterprise.

Michael was a married man but had been having an affair with a woman who was causing him great psychological and financial distress.

His mistress was demanding more money from him, but he was broke. He knew his duplicity was hurting his family. He wanted to end the affair but felt powerless to do so.

Michael's conclusion was that his mistress had bewitched him with a love potion, making him unable to quit even when he wanted to.

"Do you know a witch doctor who could break the spell that is controlling me?" Michael asked.

Grateful for the opportunity, Pastor Chikumba shared the Gospel with Michael and introduced him to the Lord Jesus Christ — the One who has the power to break every bondage.

Michael gave his life to Christ and prayed for deliverance from his bondage to sin. Praise be to God! Michael was delivered from his bondage.

Michael's wife is grateful for the miracle God performed. "I had no hope for our marriage," she recounted. "He would stay out late at night until eventually he stopped coming home altogether. He stopped supporting the family and cut contact with us. I had to sustain my family by farming and doing small businesses.

"I moved from church to church in a search for solutions but my husband was nowhere to be seen. After a while, he would occasionally come back home but was very impolite to the point that we used to fight a lot. All his clothes were at the mistress' place.

"Since he gave his life to Christ and we began praying and being counselled together, I have seen tremendous change in his behaviour. His eating habits have improved, he sleeps better, we pray together and he is providing for his family again. I thank God for leading the Pastor to meet and share the gospel with him. We have now committed to be members of his church so that as a family we may be rooted and grow in Christ."

From African Enterprise, from godreports.org

Chipo chikuru

Zulu translation

Patricia Marachiel aiva nemakore gumi nemashanu okuberekwa paakatanga kutsvaga ndokuzwana chipo chikuru panyika.

Anotaura nezvemakore akazomusvitsa pachitiko ichi. "Pandaiva mwana mudiki, ndainyanya kushupikana nekutsamwa nekusaregerera. Ndaikasika kutsamwa uye zvaisava nyore kuti ndiregerere vaindita-dzira. Ndaiva mutadzi mukuru!"

Patricia anoti aiva asina kumbobvira anzwa nezvekunamata kunyangwe chiKirisitu mukukura kwake. Zvaiva zvitsva kwaari.

Paakasvitsa makore gumi nemashanu okuberekwa, akaenda kumusangano wenyika yose wema Kirisitu ndokunonzwa "shoko rakanaka" raJesu Kirisitu, kuti aiva mwananakomana waMwari akauya pano panyika kuzofira zvitadzo zvedu.

Ava nemakore makumi maviri nepfumbamwe okuberekwa Patricia akanzwa zvekare shoko raakanzwa zuva riya anemakore gumi nemashanu. "Ndinorangarira kuti ndakadziziswa kunaka kwaKirisitu nekuva mukirisitu. Ndakanzwa mumoyo mangu kuti ndinofanirwa kupu hupenyu

hwangu kunaJesu Kirisitu nekunamatira kuti ndive mukirisitu wechokwadi.

Patricia akasarudza kutsvagisisa zvimwe pamusoro pekutenda kwake kutsva ndokutanga kutsvaga kuda kuziva Mwari zvizere.

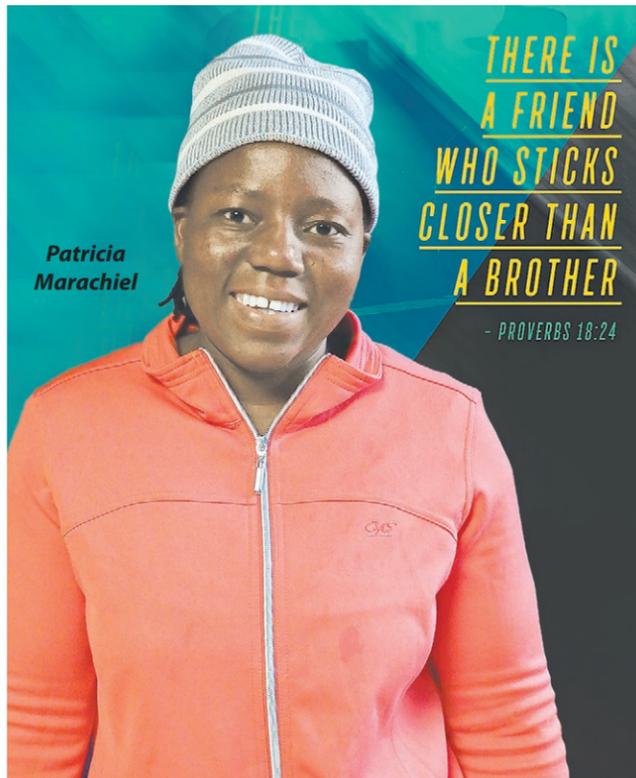
Kuwana chipo chikuru uku kwaPatricia kwakaitika makore matanhatu apfuura asi rufaro nerusununguko rwune muchengeti wekuZimbabwe anemakore makumi matatu nemashanu kwaakawana musi iwowo kuchiri kutsva sezvaainzwa pama-zuva akapfuura.

"Pane shanduko huru muupenyu hwangu zvino zvandava muKirisitu," anopupura. "Ndava kunonoka kutsamwa. Ndava kukwanisawo kuregerera. Ndinokwanisa zvekare kuparidza shoko raMwari kune vamwe uye kuvadzizisa nezvekunaka kwaMwari. Chazvakanakira ndechekuti unorarama upenyu uchiziva kuti kuna Mwari, Baba vanokupa zvose zvaunoshuwira."

Marachiel ane moyo kune vose vasati vaziva Jesu. "Ndinoda kuvaudza kuti vatsvage Mwari uye vanamate kuti ave muponesi wavo."

Ku vatendi vangave vachinsekana mukufamba kwavonaIshe, anovakurudzira kuti "rambai muchinamata! Musamira. Mwari Baba vokudenga ndivo vane masimba pamusoro pezvinhu zvose."

Shoko raanofarira kubva mubhaibheri rinobva kuna Zvirevo 18:24 – "Munhu aneshamwiri zhinji unoparadzwa, asi kune shamwari (Mwari) inonamatira kupfuura hama" Shoko iri rinomuyeuchidza kuti Mwari vanaye, kunyangwe paanosangana nenguva dzakaoma muupenyu hwake.



Patricia Marachiel

Afrikaans translation

DIE GROOTSTE SKAT

Patricia Marachiel was slegs 15 jaar oud toe sy begin soek het na – en uiteindelik die grootste skat op aarde gevind het.

Sy gesels oor die jare wat tot hierdie gebeurtenis gelei het. "Toe ek nog jonk was het ek spesifieke probleme gehad met woede en onvergewensgesindheid. Ek het vinnig kwaad geword want dit was nie maklik vir my om te vergewe nie. Ek was 'n groot sondaar!"

Patricia sê dat sy nog nooit iets oor gebed of Christenskap gehoor het toe sy groot geword het nie. Dit was 'n vreemde konsep vir haar.

Toe sy 15 geword het, het sy 'n Nasionale Christen Konferensie bygewoon, en het vir die eerste keer die 'goeie nuus' van Jesus Christus gehoor, dat Hy die Seun van God is, wat na die aarde toe gekom het om vir ons sondes te sterf.

Op die ouderdom van 29 was Patricia weereens geraak deur die boodskap wat sy gehoor het toe sy 15 jaar oud was. "Ek onthou ek was van die goedheid van God geleer, en oor hoe om 'n Christen te wees. Ek het net binne in my hart gevoel dat ek my lewe aan Jesus moet oorgee en bid om 'n ware Christen te word."

Sy het besluit dat sy meer oor haar nuwe geloof moet uitvind, en het toe begin soek om God regtig te leer ken.

Die bevinding van hierdie groot skat het meer as ses jaar gelede gebeur, maar die vreugde en vryheid wat hierdie 35 jaar oue versorger van Zimbabwe ervaar het, is nog net so vars soos wat dit toe was.

"Daar is 'n groot verandering in my lewe nou dat ek 'n Christen is," getuig sy. "Ek word nie meer so vinnig kwaad nie. Ek kan vergewe. Ek kan ook die Woord van God met ander deel en vir hulle van die goedheid van God leer. Die beste deel is dat jy jou lewe lei, wetend dat daar 'n God is, 'n Vader wat vir jou met alles wat jy nodig het voorsien."

Marachiel het 'n hart vir ander wat nog nie vir Jesus ken nie. "Ek wil vir almal vertel dat hulle moet soekend na God wees en Hom vra om hulle Saligmaker te wees."

Vir Christene wat in hulle wandel met God struikel, moedig sy hulle aan om "aan te hou bid! Moenie ophou nie. God die Vader is in beheer van alles."

Haar gunsteling Bybelvers is Spreuke 18:24 "n Man met baie vriende word geruïneer, maar daar is 'n vriend wat sterker aanhang as 'n broer.' Dit herinner haar dat God altyd by haar is, selfs as sy deur moeilike tye gaan.

THE GREATEST TREASURE

Patricia Marachiel was only 15 when she started to search for – and eventually found the greatest treasure on earth.

She talks about the years leading up to this event. "When I was young, I specifically struggled with anger and unforgiveness. I was quick to get angry as it was not easy for me to forgive. I was a great sinner!"

Patricia says she never heard anything about prayer or Christianity when she was growing up. It was completely foreign to her.

Then, when she turned 15, she attended a national Christian conference and for the first time heard 'the good news' of Jesus Christ, that He was the Son of God who came to earth to die for our sins.

At the age of 29 Patricia was moved once again by the message she heard that day at the age of 15. "I remember I was taught about the goodness of Christ and of being a Christian. I just felt inside my heart that I should commit my life to Jesus Christ and pray to become a true Christian."

She decided she should find out more about her new faith, and thus began her search to really know God.

Finding that great treasure happened over six years ago now, but the joy and freedom the 35-year-old care-giver from Zimbabwe, experienced that day, is as fresh today as it was then.

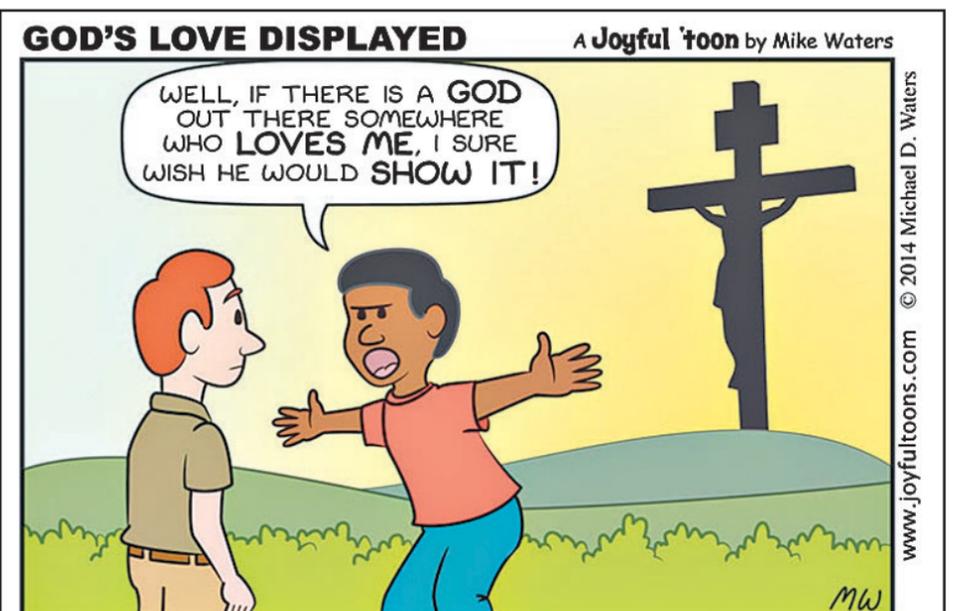
"There is a big change in my life now I am a Christian," she testifies. "I am slow to anger. I can forgive. I can also share the Word of God with others and teach them about the goodness of God. The best part is that you live life knowing there's a God, a Father who provides you with everything you need."

Marachiel has a heart for others who do not yet know Jesus. "I would like to tell them that they should seek God and pray for Him to be their Saviour."

To Christians who may be struggling in their walk with God, she encourages them to "keep praying! Never stop. God the Father is in control of everything."

Her favourite Bible verse is Proverbs 18:24 – "One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a Friend [God] who sticks closer than a brother." It reminds her that God is always with her, even when she goes through tough times.

English translation



But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. – ROMANS 5:8 NIV

WORDS FOR THE HEART

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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

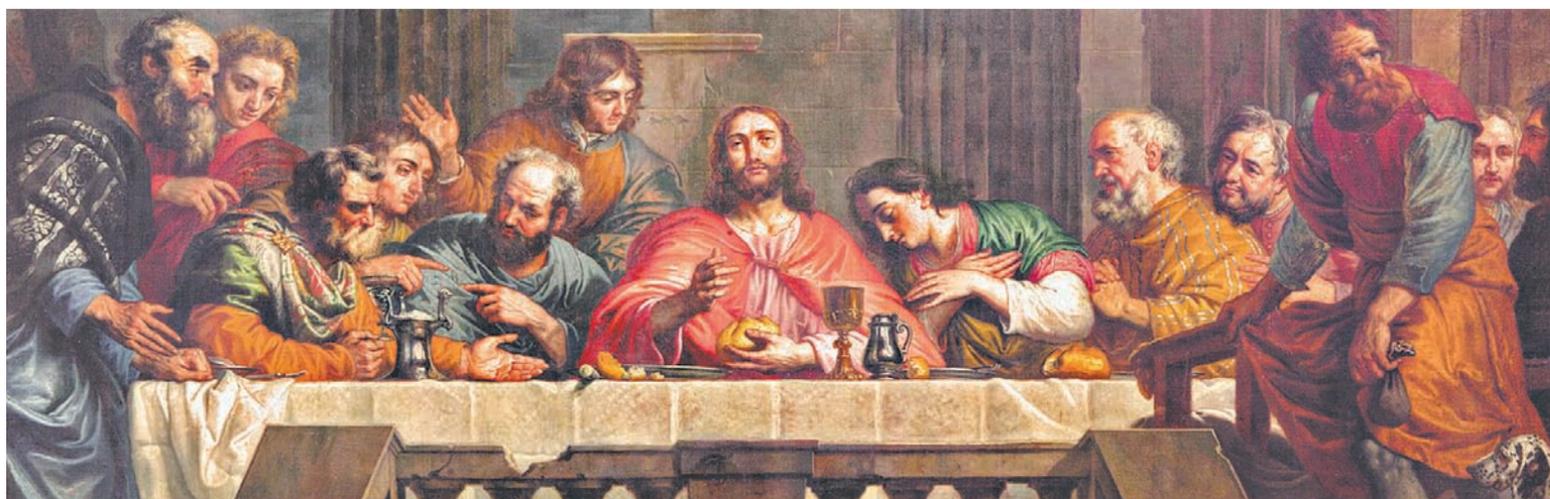
John 13:18-38

INTRODUCTION

WE have been looking at events in the last week of Jesus' life on earth. He is giving His disciples instruction and encouragement, preparing them for the time when He has gone away. The plot against His life is closing in and Jesus is aware of it. There are lessons here for all of us to learn.

Verses 17-19 Once you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfil the Scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.' I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.

Jesus knew who would betray



The Last Supper painted by Jan Erasmus Quellinus (1634-1715). Judas is on the right leaving the supper.

Him and He quotes a Psalm (41:9) which predicts that a close associate would do this treacherous act.

The disciples would soon see the fulfilment of what Jesus said beforehand, and this would confirm their belief in Him as the Son of God.

Verses 20-22 I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me. After He had said this, Jesus was deeply trou-

bled and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them He meant.

The first part of this statement may refer to the disciples coming ministry as messengers sent out with the Gospel. Then Jesus announces that His betrayer is one of the 12. We can imagine the scene. There is shock and wonder. Who could possibly do such a thing? Betraying their Master was an unthinkable thing.

Verses 23-26 One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to Him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask Him which one He means." Leaning back against Jesus, he asked Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.

"The disciple whom Jesus loved" was John, the writer of this Gospel. He refers to himself this way a number of times. There must have been a reason for this.

Jesus gives a straightforward answer to the question and Judas is pointed out. (The bread was dipped into a dish of herbs as was their custom. So it was an act of courtesy.)

Verses 27-30 As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him, but no-one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

It is clear that Judas had decided

to betray the Lord before this. So his attitude was formed and Satan took advantage of it.

We see from this that Satan had the desire to destroy Jesus if he could. Jesus, in a sense, sends Judas on his way to bring about the betrayal. Why the disciples didn't see this we don't know. Instead, they thought he was doing something that he was expected to do as the treasurer of the group.

The Feast referred to was the Passover. The words "It was night" have been seen as a fitting description of the soul of the betrayer. Just why Judas would do this has been much discussed over the years. Some say he was angry that Jesus was not going to bring about the overthrow of the Roman occupation. Others have said that he showed a love for money that gripped him so strongly that he couldn't resist the opportunity for financial gain. Whatever the reason, his choice was perverse and we cannot offer him sympathy.

Verses 31-33 When he was gone Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, then God will glorify the Son in Himself, and will glorify Him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: where I am going, you cannot come.

We have seen that the title "Son of Man" applies to Jesus. Notice that He is faced with betrayal and an agonizing death, yet He is able to speak now about glorification. This is all a part of God's great plan. Jesus will be brought low, even to the death of the cross, yet in it, through it, and after it, the glory of God is

revealed. Of course, where He is going is back to the Father. A way will be made for the disciples and other believers to enter the Father's presence in due time.

Verses 34, 35 "A new commandment I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

As we read the record of Christ's life in the Gospels, we can see that He had love for people and despite their failings, the Lord loved His followers. He now places this as a command to be obeyed. There had been rivalry and argument at different times among the 12 but now they are called to follow their Lord and learn to love. This remains as a mark of true Christianity. There is no other way of life that promotes love like this.

Verses 36-38 Simon Peter asked Him, "Lord where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later." Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."

Peter was inclined to rush in without thinking enough about his words. He couldn't see that Jesus was talking about going to the Father, so surely he would go with Jesus to any place. As always, the Lord knew his men so well, He knew what they were about to do. Not only was Peter going to fail in his loyalty and deny knowing Jesus, but the others were about to run away when the arrest of Jesus occurred. John was an exception.

CONCLUSION

Our readings show clearly the strength of the resolve of the Lord Jesus as He faces His coming sufferings. He has come into the world to do the Father's will and He knows this includes the cross.

His men are rather shaky in their resolve. Yes, they love the Lord but are still weak in their convictions. One falls into the hands of the Evil One, another denies knowing Jesus when the test comes. Once more, the Scriptures hold out a challenge to us. On what ground do we stand? Do we stand with loyal faith in Him no matter the cost? Are we weak in our convictions when we are opposed? May we give Him our whole hearts, trusting Him implicitly.

S	S	T	W	I	N	S	3	7	8	4	5	1	6	2	9			
S	H	O	P	I	D	E	A	L	9	2	4	7	6	3	1	5	8	
W	I	D	E	S	P	R	E	A	D	5	1	6	8	9	2	7	4	3
I	R	O	N	E	A	R	L	Y	6	9	7	3	4	5	2	8	1	
S	T	U	D	I	O	S	Y	6	9	7	3	4	5	2	8	1		
S	R	A	S	S	R	8	4	2	1	7	6	3	9	5				
G	R	K	E	T	T	L	E	1	3	5	9	2	8	4	7	6		
G	R	E	A	T	R	O	O	F	4	5	3	6	8	7	9	1	2	
A	C	C	E	P	T	A	N	C	E	2	6	9	5	1	4	8	3	7
A	S	H	E	S	P	E	A	R	7	8	1	2	3	9	5	6	4	
P	O	S	T	S	S	L	7	8	1	2	3	9	5	6	4			

HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

What? Salvation is an eternal relationship with God – now on Earth and, after we die, in Heaven.

The Lord Jesus says: "I tell you the truth. Everyone who believes in Me has eternal life." John 6:47

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33

Who? Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through Jesus Christ, regardless of how you have previously lived or what you have previously believed.

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

Why? Because sin separates us from a holy God. Sin is all the wrong things we do, say and think, as well as our desire to be our own boss.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Roman 3:23

How? The Bible says you become a Christian by confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Romans 10:8b-10

Ready to change your life forever? Here is a prayer you can pray, but you can also use your own words. The words are not as important as the heart attitude – which only God can see.

Almighty God, Creator of Heaven and Earth,

I acknowledge that I am a sinner. Please forgive me for all the ways I have disobeyed and defied You.

Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to live the perfect life I couldn't, and die on the cross for my sins. Thank You that His blood was sufficient to pay my debt to You, and His resurrection proves that there is life beyond death. I accept that His sacrifice is all I need to get right with You – I bring nothing I have done but I give you everything I am. Help me to live for You. Please be my Saviour and my Master. Amen.

What now?

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

AS A NEXT STEP:

I have prayed this prayer.

Please send me:

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

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

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

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

ESCAPE

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. - ACTS 13:38 NIV



Anthony Thomas of The Kimberly, Australia competes in the bareback riding at the Prescott Frontier Days "World's Oldest Rodeo" in 2016 in Prescott, Arizona. (Photo by Christian Petersen/Getty Images)

BELOW: Anthony Thomas poses for a photograph before competing in the Australian National Finals Rodeo Championships at the Gold Coast Convention Centre in 2011 on the Gold Coast, Australia. (Photo by Chris Hyde/Getty Images)

ON A WILD RIDE

If ever there was an illustration of a life full of ups and downs, rodeo riding would be it. Hanging on for dear life on 1000 kilograms of pure muscle as it bucks and heaves to dislodge you would be a fitting description for Australian rodeo rider Anthony Thomas' early life in Perth.

"I was a troubled kid that ran away from home," the 32-year-old professional rodeo cowboy and bareback rider says. "I had a pretty traumatic childhood. My parents had me doped up pretty bad on several different types of drugs.

"I knew that I was troubled and confused and I would've ended up in organised crime, or in jail, or dead if I had stayed there."

At 12, the indigenous Australian boarded at an agricultural college in the Kimberley region, 400km north of Perth.

During school breaks, Anthony worked at cattle stations — and felt an instant connection with the animals. "Being with the horses, the cows and the sheep, that's what gave me a sense of belonging. It felt like home from the first time I stepped out of the car onto a station."

Anthony continued breaking wild horses on cattle stations after graduation and was soon competing in local rodeos. "It was from the bush I got my grit and determination," he told the ABC News program

WA Country Hour. He did well in the arena and in 2011 was crowned the Australian Professional Rodeo Association bareback riding champion at the largest rodeo in the Southern Hemisphere.

By now, he was champing at the bit to break into the meat and bones of pro rodeo — the American and Canadian circuit, home to some of the toughest bucking horses and richest rodeos in the world.

"The American horses are some of the strongest, most well-bred bucking horses in the world," he explains. "You're getting on an 1100-kilo trained athlete."

So determined was he to make it to the top that even a life-threatening injury that left him with a shattered skull and a face full of steel from 16 major surgeries has not deterred him. He cannot imagine doing anything else.

"It's definitely an adrenaline rush when you're down in the chutes, look up in the arena and there's 60 to 100,000 people cheering you on," he admits.

However, success in such a macho sport comes with predictable diversions. As Anthony elaborates: "There's always a bar, there's always womanising and partying and making bad decisions.

"For probably a good 10 years of my life, I was as guilty as any man on earth, fighting and drinking and just all of the debauchery that

comes with being in a party scene all the time. I remember being down in the dumps, at the lowest of lows."

By 2018, Anthony was among the world's top 15 bareback riders. He was riding high professionally — but at an all-time low personally. Life felt meaningless, he confesses.

Then, on a second date with a woman named Amanda, who is today his wife, she asked if they could visit a church in Houston.

What happened at church made Anthony buck up — "I started crying. I don't know where it came from," he says in an interview with the 700 Club.

"Now I know it was the presence of the Holy Spirit. It just almost knocked me off my feet. God was just speaking to me and it was an undeniable sense of conviction (over my sin), hope and renewal, a transformation of my life."

He says he now realises it is possible to have a real relationship with Jesus Christ. "I can talk to Him as a friend. He's always going to be there for me. He's always going to provide for me."

He now lives in Humble, Texas and urges Christians: "Be loyal to God and show Him all the glory for everything He's done.

"God is true and God is real and He's a real saviour and He saved my life. And He's provided for me in every situation. Every one of us has

a platform right where they are to teach others about the love of Jesus. No matter what — there's a God that's always there for you. He has more for you than you could ever imagine.

"I should have been a statistic with the childhood I had. I should have been drunk, on drugs, or in jail or dead," says Anthony. He hopes his story will inspire other youth in the Kimberley, which has one of the highest indigenous youth suicide rates in the world.

He now has his sights set on the world champion bareback title and has qualified for the American Rodeo, and Rodeo Houston in March, two of the biggest and rich-

est rodeos in the world.

"They say bareback riding is taking control of a completely uncontrollable situation," Anthony says. "The horse bucks, jumps in the air, is wild, changes directions and we just have to react and respond.

"I really do believe this is what God put me on Earth to do. I think He prepared me to be a professional bareback rider because I need to trust the Lord and the Holy Spirit's plan 100 percent. Then it's not up to me what happens," he says, surrendering the reins of his life to God. ●



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