

CONVICTED BY

GRACE

Thirty years ago, Anthony Rogers sat behind bars, convicted of stealing a car.

His cellmate, a self-proclaimed devil worshipper, had an axe to grind against the Bible and convinced Anthony to get them a copy, not for study, but for ridicule.

"I had all this time on my hands so I started reading it," Anthony shares on a Jews for Jesus video.

While chatting to other prisoners, Anthony heard many excuses about why they had committed the crimes they had.

"They didn't necessarily say their crimes were okay but they were trying to explain in a way that pacified their consciences or something and I would listen to these things looking for my own excuse."

Anthony realised the common reasons didn't apply to him and he had no excuses.

"It was just the desire to sin [break God's laws] and so that bothered me... I'm thinking, 'What hope do I have that I can be forgiven?'"

"I was terrified because I knew I was a sinner. I was in jail for a reason. I had no excuse – I knew that I chose these things without any justification for them."

But as Anthony kept reading, "I read not only of a God who's holy and angry with the wicked but who's boundless in His grace and His loving kindness."

"It was overwhelming to me that God had forgiven my sins [through Jesus' death on the cross] and that He did so at His own cost and I

thought, 'What love is this? And how do I properly respond to it?'"

Anthony says he, "turned to Him in faith and everything changed for me right there... it was wondrous and I was overjoyed and still am overjoyed 30 years later!"

After his release from prison, Anthony got a job at a restaurant where he met a Jewish woman who would ultimately become his wife.

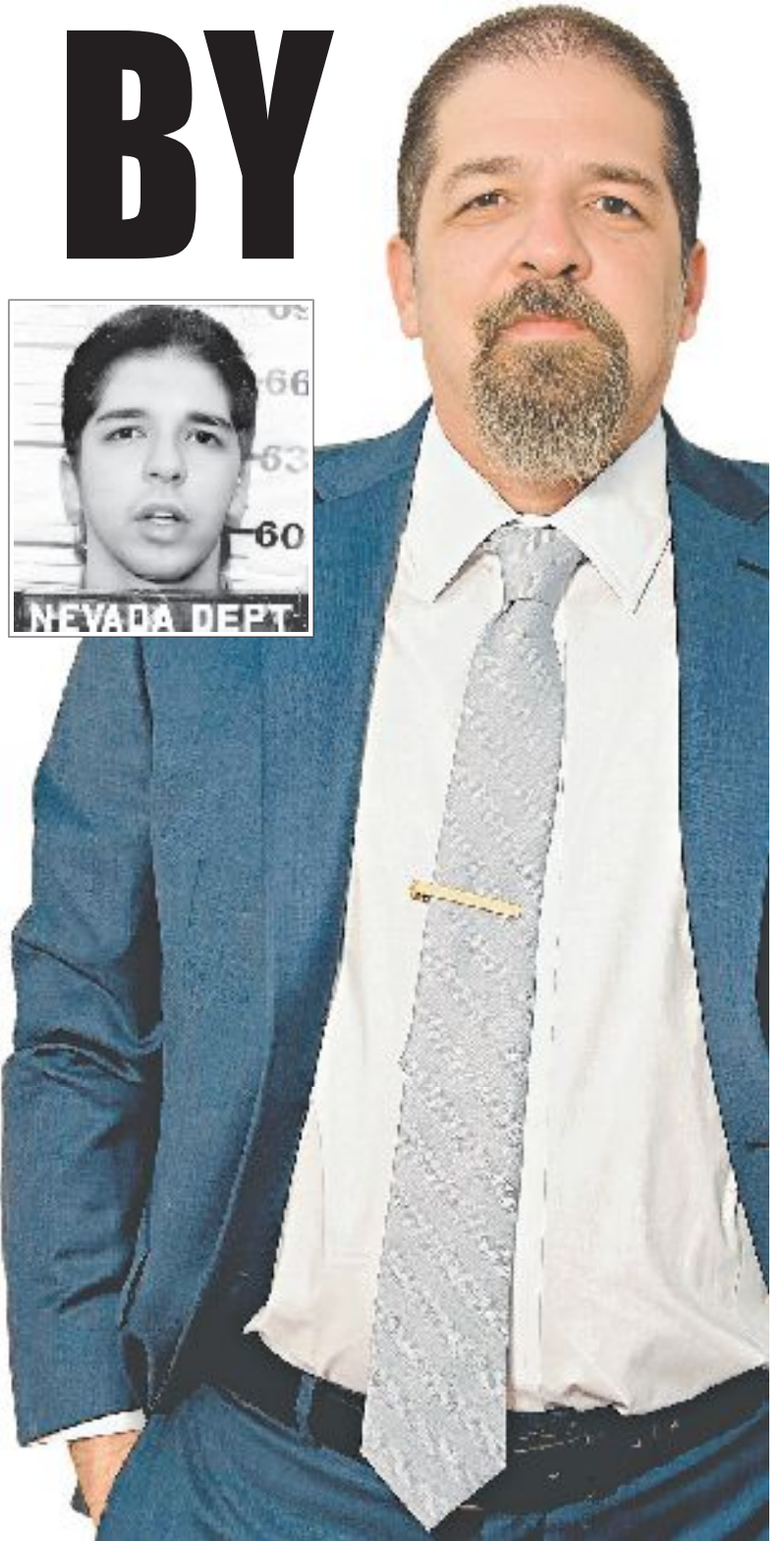
She kept asking Anthony questions about Christianity and eventually put her faith in Jesus too.

After they married and had children, he went to theological seminary and is now an ordained minister.

He is also involved in prison ministry, saying, "Since I was converted in that context I had nothing but a desire to go back in and see who else would respond to the call."

RIGHT: Anthony Rogers today – 30 years after turning his life around and finding a new path.

INSET: A mugshot from his car theft conviction, taken just before an unexpected change in direction.



A return to his roots

There was nothing in his childhood to suggest that one day, Vivian Martin Smith would be in prison serving a 20-year sentence for murder and armed robbery.

The 37-year-old South African, who served six years of his term, tells *Challenge News* his childhood "was just as normal as can be".

In fact, both his parents were Christians. Both Vivian and his sister grew up attending church regularly. It was there he learned about Jesus Christ and the Gospel – the good news that Christ came to Earth to die for mankind's sins.

"But things started changing when my father left my mother, sister and me," he shares. "That's when my life took a turn."

"I started stealing, using drugs. I was filled with anger."

But things have changed in Vivian's life.

He tells *Challenge* that he has returned to his childhood faith.

"I was a Christian all along; I just made some bad decisions," he adds.

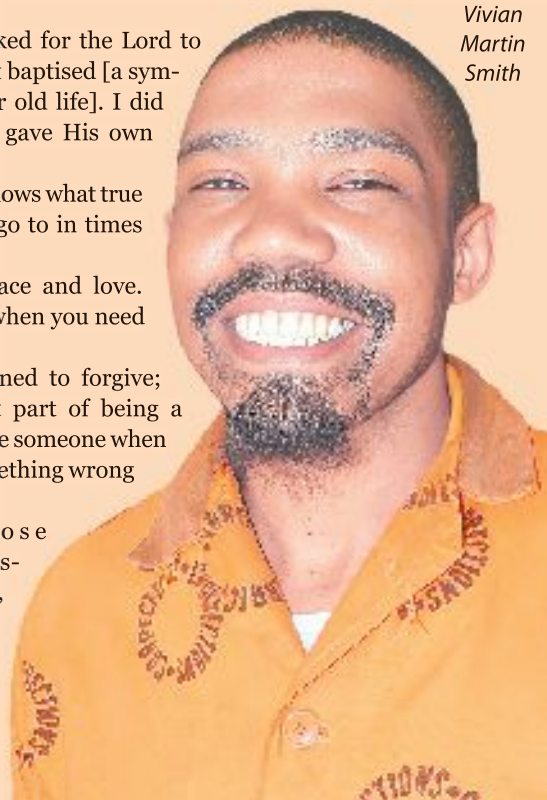
"I prayed and asked for the Lord to forgive me and I got baptised [a symbol of dying to your old life]. I did that because Jesus gave His own life for me to live."

He says he now knows what true love is and who to go to in times of need.

"Jesus is joy, peace and love. He is always there when you need Him."

"I have also learned to forgive; that is the hardest part of being a Christian – to forgive someone when they have done something wrong towards me."

Vivian, whose favourite Bible passage is Psalm 23, says he wants to tell everyone "you can never go wrong with Jesus. Always stay on your knees." •



Vivian Martin Smith

SOMEWHERE TO BELONG

SOME OF US grew up with strong fathers – men who were steady, present, and gave us a sense of direction. But for many, that wasn't the case. Maybe your dad was never around. Maybe he was there, but distant, angry, or broken himself. Or maybe you've never really known what a healthy father relationship looks like.

That kind of emptiness can stick with a person. It can shape how we see ourselves, how we handle pain, and how we trust others – or don't.

But there's a deeper truth: every human heart longs for something more. Not just for approval or guidance, but for real belonging – to be fully known, deeply loved, and never abandoned.

Jesus once told a story about a young man who made a mess of his life. He demanded his inheritance, left home, and threw it all away. When he was at his lowest – broke, ashamed,



Stock photo

and alone – he decided to return home, not expecting mercy. Just hoping to survive.

But what happened next shocked everyone. Before the young man even reached the door, his father saw him, ran to him, and embraced him. No lecture. No punishment. Just open arms.

Jesus told that story to show what God is like – a

Father who doesn't wait for you to fix yourself before welcoming you back. A Father who runs toward you, not away.

The Bible says that God is "a Father to the fatherless" and "near to the broken-hearted." He's not like people who walk out, let you down, or hold your past against you. He knows everything you've done – and still wants you to come home.

He meets you right where you are, with all your baggage, shame, and

regrets. But here's the powerful part: He loves you as you are, but He loves you too much to leave you that way.

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PUZZLE PAGE
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BACK PAGE

FIGHTING FOR HOPE
MARK PRINCE

Ask Y: Peter Meadows answers your questions about God

QUESTION: IF JESUS WAS SUCH A GOOD PERSON HOW COME HE ENDED UP BEING EXECUTED?



YOU ARE RIGHT – no one could ever say Jesus was anything other than ‘good’. And that has to be the greatest understatement of all time.

So how come He died strung up like a common criminal?

The answer – amazing as it must sound – is that this was God’s plan from the start.

The significance of Jesus’ death is ultimately wrapped up in who He was and what He came to do.

You see Jesus didn’t stumble onto the stage of history.

The script had already been written – with Him as the central character.

Jesus was to be the kingpin of God’s rescue plan. The one who would deliver us all from the mess we’ve created.

The Jewish scriptures had been promising such a deliverer for hundreds of years.

They made clear statements – prophecies – recorded centuries before Jesus was ever born.

This included specific details about the One who would come as the deliverer, such as –

- He would be born in Bethlehem and of a virgin
- He would be betrayed by a friend and sold for 30 pieces of silver
- He would be struck and spat on
- His hands and feet would be pierced – and so would His side
- The soldiers would throw dice for His clothes but would not break even a bone of his body
- He would be buried in a rich man’s grave – and would rise again from the dead

Imagine the odds for any one person living a life that matched

even a few of these prophecies. Yet Jesus fulfilled them all. Without doubt He was THE One.

And God took all that trouble because of what the death of Jesus was designed to accomplish.

He was to die as a sacrifice to pay the debt all of us owe to God for failing to live His way.

The picture becomes clear when you take account of what happened at the time Jesus died.

The record shows that at midday the sky went black – as black as midnight.

Again this had been foretold.

Over 800 years before a Jewish prophet, Amos, wrote, *“In that day, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight.”* (Amos 8:9)

That darkness points to the magnitude of what was taking place.

It was a picture of the way Jesus had been abandoned due to our sin – and for the first time separated from his Father as He called out *“My God, My God why have You forsaken Me?”*

As Jesus became the curse of the world he drowned in our sin on a midnight afternoon.

And it was all for us – to make our forgiveness possible and so we can be clean and comfortable in God’s presence.

But, of course, that calls for a response from us – one that calls for us to trust God with our life.

Peter Meadows is the co-author with Joseph Steinberg of *The Book of Y* the basis for the eight week Y Course that explores life’s biggest questions.

MY HATE KEPT ME WARM

At 54, Western Australian David Utting is all set for PRISON – and he’s never been happier or more excited.

PRISON stands for Post-Release Incarceration Support Organisation Network, an organisation dedicated to helping former inmates get back on track on the outside.

David is himself an ex-prisoner; in fact, he has spent a collective 28 years of his life in jail so he knows first-hand how much an organisation such as this can help.

From habitual prisoner to prison reformer – to say David is astonished at the direction his life has taken is an understatement. Chatting with him as he chugs down a cappuccino, you’d never know that two years ago, he was in a maximum security prison for crimes of such violence that just talking about it today brings him to tears.

“I’ve been a career criminal all my life,” he tells *Challenge News*.

“I worked for gangs as an enforcer, a ‘punisher’. I was hired specifically for my extreme violence.”

Ironically, David’s father was a policeman. He says he was a “normal, happy kid” until his parents divorced when he was 12. The separation hit him hard.

His mother had a good job but worked long hours, resulting in David becoming a latchkey kid who fell into alcohol, drugs and violent crime.

“I have used and abused every substance known to man,” he says. “I was a teenage alcoholic, a dope smoker, a solvent sniffer, a heroin addict, a speed freak, a pill junkie and a meth head.”

“I was constantly on drugs – every second of every day. The moment I woke up I had to have a needle in my arm.”

At 13, he was sent to a boys’ correctional facility. At 14 he was made a ward of the state. Between 13 and 15 he lived on the streets.

At 18 he stabbed a man so savagely he disembowelled him. This crime landed him in maximum security – he was sentenced to 12 years and spent the first three in the brutal conditions of Fremantle Prison.

Weeks spent in solitary confinement and the kill-or-be-killed life there left him traumatized and filled with hate – which he relished: “my hate kept me warm” he says.

His life was a revolving door of jail time – for multiple armed robberies, unlawful woundings, grievous bodily harm, attempted murder, weapons violations, drug charges and burglaries. He himself has been stabbed seven times and shot twice.

In 2017 David became involved in the occult and worshipped “a dark goddess”.

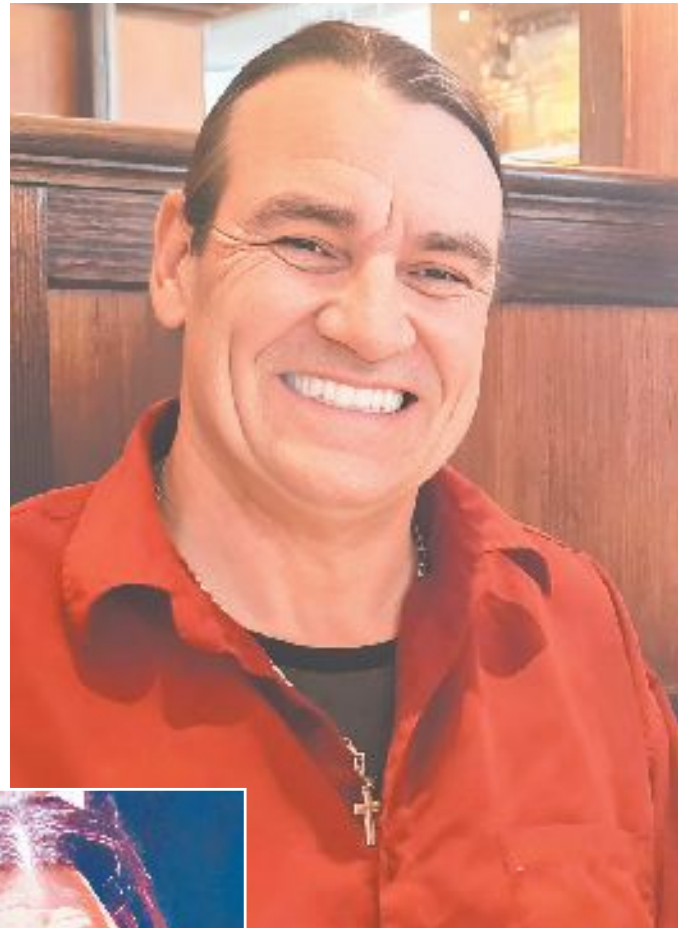
“If I thought my life was violent before then it was nothing compared to what I did under the influence of that darkness. I gave myself over to being excessively violent,” he says.

“I was thrown into the most chaotic emotional turmoil and that I’ve experienced; that was when I knew true despair.”

He knew he had to get out of his meaningless life but he felt trapped, hopeless and clueless.

Prior to this, David had read the Bible several times, but thought it best if he and God just didn’t bother each other.

“However, the occult showed me the spirit realm was very real, and because I had been raised in the Church of England, I wanted to know about the other side; I wanted to know about God.”



TOP: David Utting now, enjoying his freedom. INSET: David at 38 after being arrested for armed robbery and grievous bodily harm with intent to kill.

In 2020, while serving one of his prison sentences, David asked for a Bible and began reading it daily.

He remembers Psalm 51, in which King David confesses to God about committing murder, had a profound effect on him.

“I read that King David cried out to God to take away his iniquity and I suddenly realized that God was the only One who could forgive me, and if He forgave me I could have a new life.”

“Right there in the prison garden I burst into tears and dropped to my knees and committed my life to God. I was on my knees for at least 15 minutes – I couldn’t stand up because His Presence around me was so strong.”

When David finally got to his feet, he says he felt “surrounded by joy”.

To his amazement, his life changed immediately, miraculously. “That morning I craved drugs; by that afternoon I was clean, I no longer had any craving – and this is 40 years of addiction I’m talking about.”

“God really made me a new person. I can hardly believe it myself. I am at peace now, I sleep well, my spirit is whole again.”

“I used to seek vengeance for every little thing but now I am all about forgiveness. There are still days when I just drop on my

knees, crying and thanking Him.

“After what He’s done for me I can’t do anything else but His work, and I believe that work is the support group.”

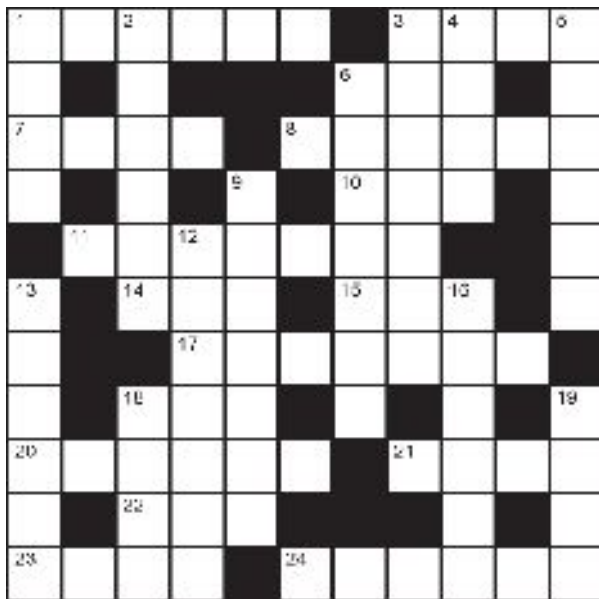
“It was by God’s Word that I was saved, and I received His Word through the dedicated workers from Prison Fellowship Australia.

“The work they do for the most outcast of society is life-saving, bringing them to Christ.”

Coffee Break CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

- 1 Use very sparingly
- 3 Get out of there quick
- 6 Baled farm product
- 7 Like a busybody
- 8 Decimal system
- 10 Tennis blast
- 11 Latte maker
- 14 Type of light bulb
- 15 “___ in the bag!”
- 17 Court lawyer
- 18 Ship’s front
- 20 A dozen minus one
- 21 Cast wearer’s problem
- 22 Always, poetically
- 23 Cold war initials
- 24 Administer by syringe

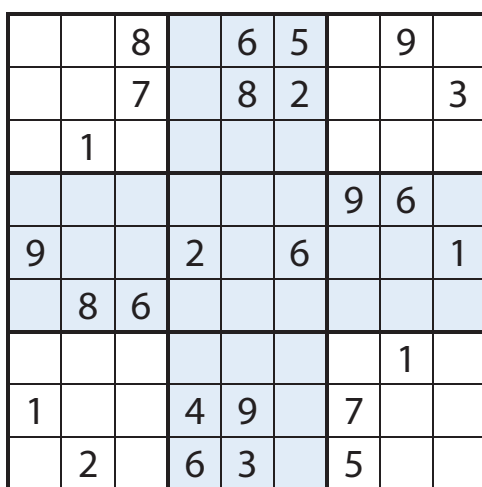


DOWN

- 1 Went down, as a ship
- 2 Mischievous one
- 3 Tycoons (3,4)

- 4 Harp’s cousin
- 5 Concert finale
- 6 Making warmer
- 9 A bereaved husband
- 12 Regain one’s health
- 13 French cake
- 16 Agree out of court
- 18 Hive dwellers
- 19 Cosy talk

[SOLUTIONS PAGE 7](#)



“To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretence, jumbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.” - Timothy Keller

SOMEWHERE TO BELONG

• From page 1

When we turn to Him, He doesn’t just forgive us – He changes us. Over time, His love reshapes how we think, how we treat people, and how we see ourselves. The things that once controlled us – bitterness, addiction, violence, fear – start to lose their grip. We don’t become perfect overnight, but we do become new.

God doesn’t just clean the outside; He rebuilds us from the inside out.

Through Jesus, we’re not just offered a clean slate – we’re offered a new identity. Not as inmates, not as failures, but as sons and daughters of God.

You don’t have to have it all together. You don’t have to prove you’re worthy. You just have to be willing to turn and trust.

If you’ve ever felt like you don’t belong – not in your family, not in the system, not even in your own skin – know this: God made you, sees you, and still wants you. He offers the kind of love no one else can give – the kind that transforms you, one step at a time.

His arms are open. The choice to come home is yours. For more information, see the box entitled **How do I Become a Christian** on page 7. •

I found my hope in solitary confinement

BY LEXI AGGEN (ABRIDGED)

Like many children growing up in rural Georgia, Melisha's young life revolved around church. She attended Sunday services, sang in the church choir, and participated in the children's and youth ministries. Though she knew about God, it would be years before Melisha would claim a personal relationship with Him.

Striving for love

Melisha's life changed dramatically when she was 10 years old; her parents divorced, and her father moved out of the house. Melisha internalized her father's absence as evidence that she was unlovable.

"I felt like my daddy didn't love me because he left the home. I felt like I had to do things to get my father back in the house," she says.

As a result, Melisha thought she had to earn people's affection. She started stealing money from her mom's pocketbook to purchase gifts for other children, hoping to buy their love and friendship.

Soon, her mother decided Melisha was too much to handle on her own and sent Melisha to live with her grandparents. Later she went to live with her dad, who had remarried, but felt more like a stepchild than his actual daughter. After graduation, she moved one more time to live with her uncle.

Putting on a face

Melisha's uncle lived in Connecticut, where he pastored a local church.

"I knew [God] existed," says Melisha. "I knew lots of Bible stories. I could quote the Scriptures in the Bible... But I really didn't have a relationship with God other than when I needed Him."

While living with her uncle, Melisha became pregnant by a married man in the church. Hoping to spare her uncle from difficulties, she moved back to Georgia.

Now a single mother living on her own, Melisha struggled to make ends meet. She continued to attend church services but also engaged in sexual activity, hoping to receive the love that she was desperately craving.

Eventually, as Melisha got older and continued making poor choices, she prayed for change, but it never felt like change was possible for her. She eventually lost faith in God.

At home, Melisha's financial struggles continued. Determined not to ask her family for help – or let them know she was in trouble – she wrote her first bad check. When she didn't get caught for writing a check for more money than she had in her bank account, she wrote more. Next she started writing checks from check books that weren't hers and even committed credit card fraud. But eventually, her criminal activities were discovered, and she was sent to jail. Over the next few years, Melisha cycled in and out of jail. With each release, she would return to church, but also to her financial crimes. One

day, while out of jail, Melisha was warned of a warrant for her arrest. She knew this warrant would likely result in a prison sentence. But Melisha was desperate not to go to prison. Instead, she fled the state.

Not the way

Melisha ran to New York and planned to fake her death before leaving the country. She hoped that if she faked her

death, she would no longer bring shame on her family. She wanted them to move on. While on the run, Melisha called her pastor. She knew he wouldn't encourage her actions, but she wanted to call him anyway. Each time, he would tell her to turn herself in, even offering to go with her. Melisha finally agreed, but before going to jail, she suffered a mental health crisis and attempted suicide. She felt hopeless, distraught, and unable to see a point to her life. When she woke up, she was lying in a hospital bed, her pastor standing over her.

"Daughter, this is not the way," Melisha recalls him saying. "Tell the truth, and leave the rest to God."

She went to jail heavily medicated and suffering from depression. This time, she didn't want to participate in religious services or have anything to do with God, because she believed she couldn't be saved. Melisha was eventually convicted and sentenced to 12 years in prison. It wasn't until she was sent to administrative segregation because of a dispute with another woman that she would begin to understand who God was and who she was through Him.

A changed heart

While in solitary, Melisha felt like God gave her a vision of Jesus on the cross, bearing every sin she had ever committed. The love she had been trying to earn throughout her life was on display for her, written on the cross. In that moment, she gave her



From running and regret to redemption and reentry, Melisha's journey shows how healing can begin even in the darkest places.

life fully to Christ. During this time, Melisha started reading the Bible.

"It was just like me and Jesus, and He was talking, and I could understand [Him]. I didn't have to try to figure it out."

For Melisha, her time in solitary became a time of surrender. She consumed the Word of God and spent time in prayer. She even prayed that God would not release her – from solitary or from prison – until she was ready.

An advocate for others

When Melisha was released from prison, the first thing she did was call her son.

She describes her life since release as an uphill journey. Upon release, she found work in a warehouse and within two years, she received four promotions. Melisha also became a Justice Ambassador with Prison

Fellowship. Justice Ambassadors are a nationwide network of Christians who advocate for an approach to criminal justice that recognizes the value and potential of every person. Through the program, Melisha is able to meet with other believers from around the nation who are fighting for justice that restores.

Melisha also started a podcast called *Jesus Is the Key to Reentry*, where she encourages churches to be more involved in prison ministry. Looking back over her life, Melisha now understands she doesn't have to chase love. All the love she could ever want is a free gift of God. She knows she is set free, no matter what her circumstances are, because Christ has set her free.

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

Breaking the cycle

Samkeliso Dubula knew he had a bad temper. The 28-year-old, who served a one-year sentence for theft in Devon Correctional Centre in 2023, tells *Challenge News* he sometimes lost control when he was in a rage.

Drugs fuelled the problem.

"Sometimes I didn't know who I was because of drugs and anger," he shares. "Even at home I couldn't co-operate with others, especially my girlfriend. I used to beat her for the smallest things."

Samkeliso had grown up in a Christian home so he knew about God but had never committed his life to Him. When he was 25 an aunt brought him to a church service. He says that was where he first heard the Gospel (the good news that Jesus Christ came to Earth to die for our sins). But it wasn't until he attended the chapel services in prison that Samkeliso finally made the decision to commit his life to Christ.

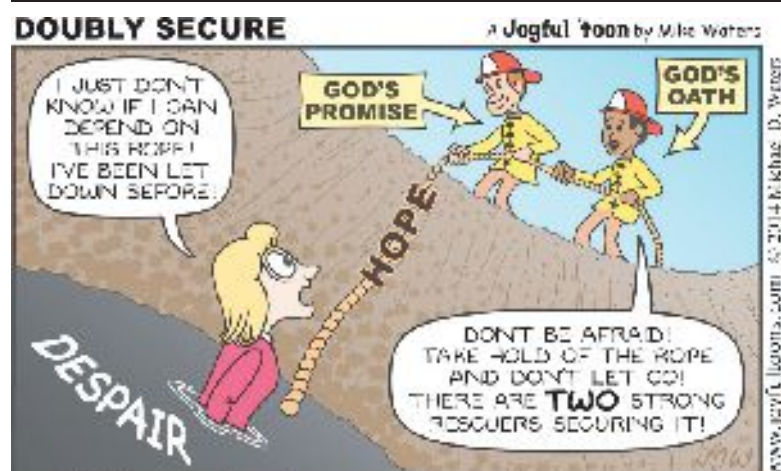
"I became a Christian because I saw the way that I live was not good for my health or life. I thought it was a good thing to become a Christian because it would change my life."

He says his life now "is good. I live nice in my soul."

He says God is his "shield" and treasures this verse especially – "and if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)



“Daughter, this is not the way.”



God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. - Hebrews 6:18-19

About Crossroads

The Crossroads Prison Ministries mentorship program connects you with mentors who help you study the Bible.

Mentors write to you, answer your questions, share stories from their own lives, help you see how God is speaking to you through His Word and encourage you to continue to grow in your faith.

Through the mentorship program, Crossroads offers more than one dozen different correspondence Bible study courses that each contain up to 14 lessons.

Each course is designed to help you learn more about God and how to follow Him.

If you are interested in joining the program, please fill out the attached application form and mail it to us today!



Name: _____
First Last

ID #: _____

Date of Birth: ____/____/____
MM DD YYYY

Earliest Release Date: ____/____/____
MM DD YYYY

Gender: _____ Complete Mailing Address: _____

Referred by: **CHAL** Institution Housing _____

Prefiero el curso en español.

Street or PO Box _____

City State ZIP _____

STUDENT COMMITMENT

I will finish each lesson I receive in a timely manner and, with the help of my mentors, I will complete each course that I start. I agree that Crossroads may use anything I submit, such as my picture, testimony, writings or artwork, for promotional purposes or to further its mission.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

When you have completed this form, please return it to:
Crossroads Prison Ministries | PO Box 900 | Grand Rapids, MI 49509-0900
Crossroads Prison Ministries Canada | PO Box 6037 | Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8

Miserable life made new

“

My life before Jesus was miserable because I didn't know how special it is to be with Christ in your life. One day I heard that God is our Saviour and I became a Christian. I was 13.

I decided to become a Christian because if you don't have Christ you are nothing at all. I pray to Jesus so that I can have everlasting life.

Since knowing about Christ my life has changed a lot.

It's not hard to pray to Jesus. Nobody loves you more than God.

”

- Enos Zwang



NO TURNING BACK

A man once deeply entrenched in addiction and brokenness, Brandon Meyers' story is one of radical transformation – a life once on the edge, now firmly planted in faith.

Born and raised in the south of Johannesburg – Eldorado Park Extension Two, Sneeuweg Street, also known as B-Section – Brandon grew up in a bachelor flat with four older siblings and a single mother who did her best to raise them.

Their home doubled as a shebeen – Brandon's mom sold alcohol to make ends meet.

Despite occasionally attending church as a child, Brandon admitted, “I never read a Bible, only prayed to God when I needed help or was in trouble. I had no relationship with God.”

After finishing school in 1979, Brandon trained as an assistant chef and later worked as a bank teller.

At just 21, he bought a house, but things soon unravelled. After losing his job, he sold his home and left South Africa for the United Kingdom.

“It was [in the UK] in 2005 that I was first introduced to drugs,” he recalled.

Upon returning to South Africa two years later, Brandon worked in call centres and quickly climbed the ranks to project coordinator and acting assistant call centre manager.

However, his growing drug addiction caught up with him. “I lost this job after about 10 years – because of drugs.”

Brandon's life became a cycle of temporary recovery and relapse. He entered a government rehab facility in 2015 but was expelled for inappropriate behaviour.

Though he managed to run a small business afterward, he continued using CAT (a street drug) occasionally.

But “when COVID hit, I found no joy in CAT

and moved to the strong stuff – crystal meth. I became a daily user.”

By May 2022, Brandon had hit rock bottom. “Meth changed my entire being. I became unrecognisable, as if I became possessed by something... I moved into a garage – just palisades and a roof. I enclosed with cloth and kept warm by making a fire inside,” he shared.

“It was in that garage that I lost touch with reality – and finally came to my senses.

“I had one smelly pair of shoes and one jacket because I sold the rest. I had no friends, no-one who could help me because I'd pushed everyone away... I called out to God and asked Him to take my life. I wanted to die that day, I couldn't see myself in the future at all. I felt like my life was over.”

But in that moment of despair, something shifted.

“Looking back,

Brandon Meyers



God killed me that day. My life ended – the old me died and the new me was born.”

Brandon decided to seek help and tried to find a rehab centre.

Nineteen calls later, with no luck, a woman who knew his mother gave him the number of one last centre.

“It was the 20th call... by that Tuesday, I was at the rehab.”

He didn't realise until he arrived at the rehab that it was a spiritual rehab centre – something he was not interested in. But God had other plans.

Brandon avoided devotions at first, but he couldn't ignore what he heard.

“Three weeks in, I started reading the Bible that I received from the pastor. The next day, I burst into tears, uncontrollably. I felt filthy and convicted.”

Brandon decided to stop living his own way and committed to following Jesus.

A pivotal moment followed. “I told my friend, ‘I don't want to be a homosexual anymore.’”

He had lived a homosexual lifestyle for 21 years but now his desire to be with men vanished.

Brandon left the rehab early – but not without a transformation. At home, Brandon returned to the same garage where he'd once lived in despair.

“I tidied the place and prayed. I asked God, ‘Where to

from here?’”

He opened his Bible to Philippians 1:17 and read: “...knowing that I am set for the defense of the Gospel.”

Brandon knew he had found his purpose. “From that moment, I never stopped studying and reading the Word of God.”

Since then, Brandon has been discipled [mentored in how to live according to the teachings and example of Jesus], and is currently in his third year of theology, pursuing a two-year diploma in ministry through World Hope. He is also completing an evangelism training program (EE3).

Brandon now lives a celibate life, free from his former addictions.

“I no longer smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol, my weed addiction is gone, I no longer watch porn, I no longer lie, steal, fornicate, commit adultery and I no longer work for Satan. My life isn't perfect, and neither am I – but I know that ‘He who began a good work in me will bring it to completion (Philippians 1:6).’”

Today, Brandon travels with international missionary teams, ministering in rehab centres, prisons, and schools.

“Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and that's what He did for me,” Brandon said.

“Because of His death, burial, and resurrection, I have eternal life – and a life of purpose now.”

“Every morning when I wake up, I lay my life on the altar, I give it all up for my Saviour, the One who knows my tomorrows. I trusted in myself for 42 years and it brought me to a place of nothingness.

“I live my life with complete gratitude for my new life in Jesus Christ. He sustains me and I go to bed with peace and wake up with Joy, because He is true to His word. He says in Matthew 6:33: ‘Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.’

Even though Brandon has been unemployed for three years, God has provided.

“I lack nothing. God has put a desire in my heart for Him alone and I can't live without Him.”

Finding faith behind bars

Hyo-Jin Park was a senior prison officer at Seoul Detention Center in South Korea. He often treated inmates with violence. Over time, the weight of his sins dragged him into deep depression.

One day, a church member came to his home to pray with him.

That day, he broke down in tears and repented. More than anything, he confessed to God how harshly he had treated an inmate named Young-Ho.

He was a hardened, six-time offender. To keep him under control, Hyo-Jin had resorted to harsh violence.

The next morning, Hyo-Jin called Young-Ho into his office.

He knelt and asked for forgiveness. Young-Ho was touched – not just by the apology, but by the love of Christ Hyo-Jin demonstrated.

He forgave Hyo-Jin and the two wept together.

Young-Ho then carried the Gospel [the good news of how Jesus' death and resurrection reconciles us to God] to the 11 other inmates in his cell. In time, they too gave their hearts to Christ.

The following year, Hyo-Jin met a death row inmate named Doo-Young Yoo.

Hyo-Jin said, “You're not the only one on death row. Before God, we've all sinned and stand under the sentence of death. But Jesus Christ came to set us free so we could be forgiven and receive eternal life.”

Then and there, he prayed with Doo-Young for his salvation.

Doo-Young felt his genuine compassion. His heart opened to the Gospel.

That day, he accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

In December of that same year, Hyo-Jin was assigned to help with an execution. As he looked over the list, his heart sank – one of the names was Doo-Young.

Immediately, he called a prayer meeting



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with 11 other Christian staff members at the prison.

Together, they prayed for Doo-Young's final hours.

They also volunteered to escort the inmates to the execution chamber.

When the day came, Doo-Young stepped into the execution room. His first word was, “Hallelujah!”

Hyo-Jin prayed, “Lord, since the first execution chamber was built in this land, has there ever been praise to Your name in this place? Please help us today.”

Doo-Young returned to Hyo-Jin and held out his cuffed hands. Hyo-Jin took them and said, “Go well, brother. Go ahead of us.”

Doo-Young replied, “I'll see you in heaven.”

When the prison warden asked, “Would you like to leave a final word?”

Doo-Young answered, “My final wish is that you too would come to know Jesus.”

Soon after, a white hood was placed over his head.

His knees, ankles and heels were tied. The noose was tightened around his neck.

At that very moment, Doo-Young began to

sing: “The bright heavenly way before me lies clearly in my sight: And though sorrows sore beset me, and troubles black as night...”

But he never finished the verse. His body was lifted into the air and his soul rose into heaven.

That day, four other death row inmates who had come to know Christ also walked into the chamber. They died in peace.

But the three others – who had rejected the Gospel – died in agony.

Then came the final name, Yong-Pil. Just days earlier, after much urging from Hyo-

Jin, Yong-Pil had reluctantly agreed to believe in Jesus. But his words lacked conviction.

Hyo-Jin pleaded with the warden for more time with Yong-Pil. Then, with several other Christian officers, he began to pray urgently for God to save his soul.

Five minutes passed. Then 10. And then – Yong-Pil suddenly rose to his feet and slowly raised one hand.

“Lord... Lord...” he said. Then he lifted both hands toward heaven and cried out, “Lord, thank You for receiving this sinner! Thank You for forgiving me!”

Tears streamed down his face. Right there – on the edge of eternity – God had reached down and pulled one more soul into his arms.

As he stood at the execution stand, he began to sing a hymn he had never been taught: “Pass me not, O gentle Saviour... Hear my humble cry...”

He sang it over and over until his final breath.

This story was originally shared on Bible Enthusiast's Instagram page and is used with kind permission.

“Thank You for forgiving me!”

”

INCARCERATION LEADS TO NEW MISSION

BY AMY CAIN

Matthew slumped in his cell. He was on suicide watch, feeling the weight of everything his crime had cost him: family, possessions, career. He couldn't fathom how he had reached such a low point. Suddenly, he heard God speaking to him: "Do I have your attention now?"

"And He did," Matthew says.

When Matthew was a child, his family's public persona was vastly different from the reality of their private life.

"On the outside, we were a happy family with nothing wrong," he remembers. "Yet, behind closed doors, I had a workaholic, anger-driven, closet-drinking father, a mother who was bipolar, schizophrenic, depressed, and suicidal, and a sister who was a control freak, demanding, straight-A student. As for me, I was the pin cushion everyone poked at."

Matthew struggled in school and felt like he consistently failed his father. Their relationship was rocky and included physical and verbal abuse. He learned to hide in his closet for safety. "Living in a household that did not nurture good understanding of relationships assisted my desire to close off from the rest of the world," he recalls.

Church became another escape for Matthew. At church, "no one spoke of our problems or emotions and instead acted as if everything was amazing," he remembers. Although he busied himself with many church-related activities, his relationship with Christ was superficial.

In addition to the abuse from his father, he also endured sexual abuse from others, and when he was 12, he discovered his mother after her suicide attempt. All this trauma led to a lifelong struggle with depression and addictions to sex and alcohol.

At 20, still dealing with his addictions, he decided to enlist in the Marines.

"It is kind of ironic that I ran not to the [Heavenly] Father, who loved me and had great plans, but instead to a group of men who could be more harsh and demanding than my [earthly] father," Matthew admits.

Throughout his military career, Matthew's alcoholism held a steady grip on him, but he managed to keep it a secret. Then, he received an interesting assignment.

"Don't ever say God doesn't have a sense of humor, because He put an alcoholic as a substance abuse control officer (SACO) who worked in the adjoining office with the chaplain!" Matthew says.

"This turned into a year and a half of in-depth work with substance abuse counselors, and none of them knew I was an alcoholic. But I gave my heart to helping others overcome their struggles."

Despite this new opportunity, he was unable to address his own addiction.

"I saw the real mentality the military has towards any weakness," he explains.

"Anyone who was an alcoholic, depressed, suicidal, or suffering from anything or any addiction was a burden, a joke, worthless."

Nevertheless, Matthew's life appeared to be on the right track. His daughter, whose mother was a

Wiccan, showed interest in Christianity, so he began bringing her to church while he was home from his former station in Japan. He started taking college classes and excelled in them, planning to use his degree to become a chaplain.

"This is when my life should have changed its focus," he states. "It is the point in which everything could have changed."

But after heading back to Japan, his addictions overtook him, eventually leading to his crime.

Upon the discovery, he was asked to meet with the Naval Criminal Investigative Service.

"Instead of going, I began walking with all intentions of going to what is known as the Suicide Cliffs in Okinawa," Matthew says.

"The next thing I know, I am in a cell on suicide watch with one pair of drawers and a suicide blanket, and the guard hands me a Bible."

After detoxing from all the alcohol in his system, Matthew decided to begin reading the Bible.

"I had been running for so long," he says. "Yet, as the psalmist writes, 'Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your pres-

ence?' (Psalm 139:7). In that cell, when I read those words, I began to see how God had been trying to get my attention."

That day, Matthew gave his life to Christ and dedicated his time to serving Him by ministering to others.

"This new journey... is nothing like I expected, and He is using me in some unique ways," Matthew says. "Six months after I arrived [at this facility], I found myself appointed as the music director, and for five years, I have filled this position. It has been a true blessing."

Matthew decided to continue his college courses, working toward a master's degree in theological studies. In 2017, he signed up as a Crossroads student.

"Crossroads allows me the opportunity to reflect on the foundation of what it means to be a believer," he says. "If a new believer were to ask for a correspondence course or for a way to grow, then I want to point them to something trustworthy. This is something I have found within



Stock photo

“I had been running for so long.”

Crossroads. It is relational. It isn't just about your answers. It is about your thoughts, opinions, convictions, and heart. [Crossroads] gives hope to those who need it the most."

Matthew said he prays for Crossroads and its staff and volunteers often, grateful for the mentorship program and the Bible studies, which he uses to lead discussions with others around him.

"There are days where a simple question asked in a lesson can lead to a four-hour discussion among some of us here. These are not 'filler' conversations to pass the time but deep, thought-provoking discussions that

can take days to digest."

Most of all, Matthew is grateful to God for redeeming his life and giving him a new mission.

"This is the verse in which I try to live each and every day, by the grace of God: 'Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love' (1 Corinthians 16:13-14, ESV)," he shares.

Used with kind permission of Crossroad Prison Ministries (CPM).

CPM instructors from churches across the world guide students in their walks with Christ through correspondence Bible studies and letters of encouragement. For more information, visit cpministries.org.

Student starts nonprofit behind bars

BY PAIGE DEUR (ABRIDGED)

A Tennessee prison has been Michael Dotson's home for more than 25 years. Sentenced to life behind bars with no chance of parole until 2046, Michael has accumulated a long list of accomplishments: Tier 3 Crossroads Prison Ministries student, community college graduate, volunteer with a program for at-risk youth, and, most remarkably, founder of a nonprofit that aims to break the cycle of incarceration.

From behind bars, Michael established Break the Cycle Foundation, a public foundation that strives to help break the intergenerational cycle of incarceration. "My experiences have led me to develop a passion to make a profound difference by helping prevent other children from making the same mistakes [I made]," he shares.

Michael first encountered the power of giving back when he was allowed to volunteer with a program for at-risk youth in the community near his prison. The children were at risk partly because they had a parent behind bars.

"After having countless children run up and hug me, sobbing... over the absence of their fathers and the pain of their situation, the burden became overwhelming," he recalls. "In addition... I witnessed countless fathers at the altar, crying out in prayer, asking God to prevent their children from following them to prison."

Michael saw himself in those children. His journey toward incarceration began in his childhood.

He attended 15 different schools as his mother tried to keep Michael's father from knowing where they were. By the time Michael finally got to meet his father, he was too filled with anger, bitterness, and distrust to allow his father to get close to him.

He began hanging out with people who were making destructive choices. At 19, when many people his age were just beginning college, Michael was sentenced to life in prison.

"I truly believe that prison not only saved my life but has been the best thing, other than my personal salvation, that has ever happened to me. It has forced me to deal with the pain of my past and surrender it at the foot of the cross... I truly discovered there was a purpose in the pain and how God uses the pain of our past to help us guide and comfort others as they are experiencing many of the same things we once did."

“I truly discovered there was a purpose in the pain.”



Michael Dotson

Crossroads became part of Michael's life in 2015. He signed up to fulfill his desire to learn more about Scripture and possibly pursue a seminary degree.

"The Crossroads mentoring program has played a tremendous role in helping me draw closer to God," he says. "Reading and studying the Word of God, along with prayer, has allowed me to grow a more intimate relationship with my Lord, and the Crossroads Bible studies have played a pivotal role in helping me draw closer to Him."

"Having a personal mentor is the linchpin to the success of this program. Not only do they hold me accountable to remain steadfast in my studies but they are always willing to pray, guide, and encourage me throughout my studies."

"My mentor is often the only positive bit of encouragement I, or many other Crossroads students, have during our incarceration."

In addition to his life experience, research into the effects of incarceration on children inspired Michael to create Break the Cycle Foundation from behind bars with the help of a local businessman. Michael also plans to complete a bachelor's degree and a master of business administration so he can run his foundation.

Used with kind permission of Crossroad Prison Ministries (CPM). CPM instructors from churches across the world guide students in their walks with Christ through correspondence Bible studies and letters of encouragement. For more information, visit cpministries.org.

Verses for encouragement

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." *Philippians 4:6-7*

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose." *Romans 8:28*

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." *Joshua 1:9*

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." *Proverbs 3:5-6*

"The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." *Deuteronomy 31:8*

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." *Psalms 23:4*

"The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth." *Psalms 145:18*

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." *Isaiah 41:10*

"Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free." *Psalms 118:5*

WORDS FOR THE HEART

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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

Mark 7:1-30

INTRODUCTION

THERE WERE CROWDS of people almost everywhere Jesus went. They wanted healing mainly, but many were also greatly impressed by His teaching. At the same time, critics opposed to Jesus kept coming to Him. They had a different attitude. They wanted to trip Him up in His words, find some fault and condemn Him. Often their accusations were about trivial matters but of course there was no fault in Him to be found. We will see more of this.

Mark 7:1-4 *The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of His disciples eating food with "unclean" – that is, ceremonially unwashed – hands. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the*

washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)

This was not a matter of hygiene as we would think of it. Their hands were not dirty; they simply didn't have the same habits as the Pharisees. But this was a point for their criticism of Jesus and the disciples.

Verses 5-8 *So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?" He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honour Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules made by men.' You have let go the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."*

The Lord had the answer for these men. He showed them that they were not quoting God's law but man's ideas. Further, instead of being sincere, they were being hypocritical. They were pretenders, speaking as if they were honouring God but Jesus was saying that they didn't even know God. Their hearts were not right. They were people-pleasers rather than God-pleasers.

Verses 9-13 *And He said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe*



God looks deeper than washed hands – He sees the heart. AI-generated image.

your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honour your father and your mother,' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus, you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

Jesus gives an example of their false dealing. They use the law of Moses just the way they want it to be. In this case, a man is excused from giving to his parents by saying that the gift was dedicated to God instead. This denies the law and allows for an excuse. The law is in fact being set aside.

Verses 14, 15 *Again Jesus called the crowd to Him and said, "Listen to Me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean."*

Jesus now sets about putting the matter straight. He refers to what the Pharisees were accusing Him and the disciples of. What a person eats doesn't make him unclean.

Verses 17-23 *After He had left the crowd and entered the house, His disciples asked Him about this parable. "Are you so dull?" He asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods 'clean.') He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean'. For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean'."*

Jesus' lesson was plain. Uncleanliness is not brought about by eating without ceremonial washing of hands. It is the heart of man that is the trouble. Here it gets serious. As we look at this list of evils, we are reminded that we are fallen creatures capable of things that are offensive to God and defiling for us. How much more important is this than observance of traditions. We can outwardly look acceptable, but within we can be bad.

Verses 24-26 *Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet He could not keep His presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about Him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by*

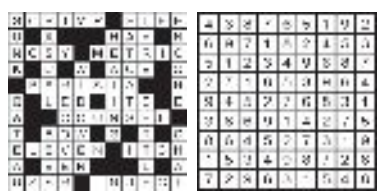
and toss it to their dogs." "Yes, Lord," she replied, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then He told her, "For such a reply you may go; the demon has left your daughter." She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

At first, this incident seems hard to understand. But Jesus was not being hard-hearted, He was testing the woman's faith and she passed the test very well.

Jesus was saying to her that His ministry was to the people of Israel and not to the heathen neighbours. But this was to try her faith. Her reply was humble, wise, and genuine. How wonderful was the power of the Lord to deliver the girl. We may wonder if the Lord had gone to Tyre especially to help this woman.

CONCLUSION

Much of the teaching of the Lord Jesus was the correction of wrong ideas. Yet we should notice that He is always patient, dealing with questions that help the ordinary person to know truth from God. Everywhere He went He had to meet untruth with truth. He is doing the same today. Our judgements are wrong about so many things, so it pays to listen to what He says. Especially is this true about the way of salvation. It is so important it must be carefully looked at. When we repent and believe the Gospel there is an open door to the mercy of God. What amazing grace that we should be forgiven and have eternal life as a gift! Reach out for it.



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

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

I have prayed the prayer [ABOVE]

** Please check and write clearly **

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

Send to: Challenge Literature Fellowship, 2634 Drake Road, Lebanon Ohio, 45036

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

Loved and transformed

YOU MAY HAVE heard that Jesus accepts you just the way you are. And that's true – He meets you right where you are, no matter your story, your past, or your struggles. He knows you are broken, and He loves you anyway.

But the deeper truth is this: He loves you far too much to leave you the way He found you.

Maybe it shows up in addiction, pride, jealousy, bitterness, or sexual brokenness – whatever it is for you, the Bible puts it plainly: "You were dead in your transgressions and sins." (Ephesians 2:1)

Not just sick. Dead. Spiritually lifeless because of our sin. Sin is anything we think, say, or do that goes against God's way. It separates us from Him and damages our relationships with others and ourselves. But thankfully, He sent Jesus to rescue us and reunite us with God.

"God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

He lived the perfect life we couldn't live. He died the death we deserved. And then He rose again – to offer you real life. Forgiven life. Changed life. Eternal life.

"If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

God doesn't just forgive sin – He changes hearts, making you a new creation. And this transformation happens through the work of the Holy Spirit – God's presence inside us, helping us grow, guiding us, and giving us strength to turn from wrongdoing and follow in Jesus' footsteps. He gives peace that lasts, joy that's real, and hope that doesn't fade.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

This isn't about being good enough. It's about a relationship with the One who made you, knows you, and gave everything to bring you back to Himself. He's not in the business of improving lives. He's in the business of raising the dead.

This new life is received by faith – not by trying harder or fixing yourself, but by trusting in what Jesus has done for you. You don't have to fix yourself before you come to Jesus. Just come.

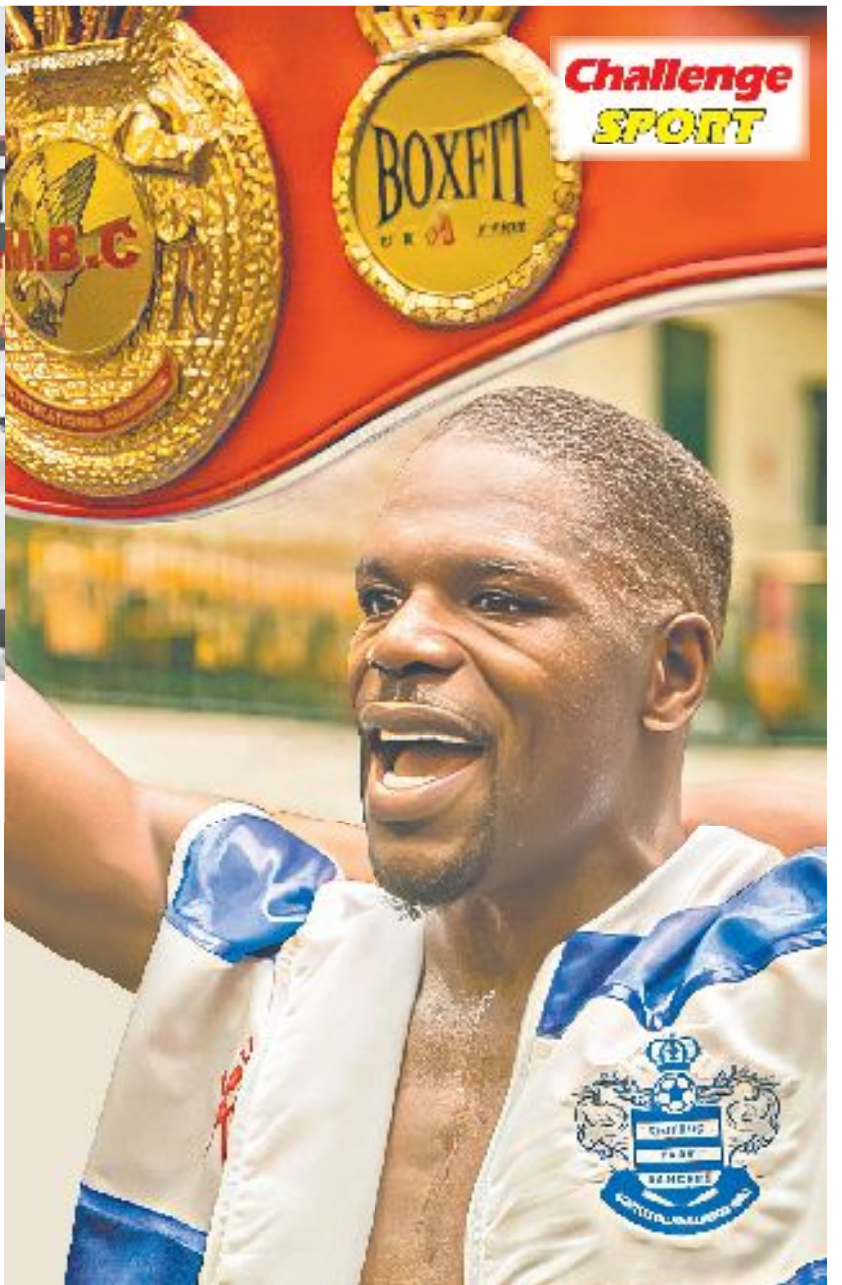
Talk to Him honestly. Ask Him to forgive you. Tell Him you want the new life He offers. You could pray something like this:

"Jesus, I know I've messed up. I've tried to live life my way, and it's left me empty. I believe You died for my sin and rose again. Please forgive me. Make me new. I want to follow You."

If you meant that, or even if you're still unsure but want to explore more – you've taken a first step. Keep going. Open a Bible. Find a church where you can grow, ask your questions, and discover what it means to follow Jesus together. Jesus isn't afraid of your doubts – He's big enough for all of them.



STOCK PHOTO



FIGHTING FOR HOPE

In May 2006, successful UK professional boxer Mark Prince's life fell apart at the seams.

His 15-year-old son Kiyán, a promising soccer player with Queens Park Rangers club, was stabbed to death while trying to stop a fight in London.

"It was my worst nightmare come true," he told YouTube channel TNT Sports Boxing.

"I think I lost my mind... I made some mad, crazy, screaming, crying noises... My heart was torn up."

Mark was no stranger to tough times. His father, he told Stephen Tomkins from Christian publication *Reform Magazine*, had been a harsh disciplinarian.

"This was the only thing that spoiled my childhood," Mark said.

"He beat us to the point of emotional damage. He beat my sister one time till she couldn't see out of one eye."

As a teenager, Mark ran away from home.

"I was on the streets at 15, bumming around, sleeping in cars, just surviving really."

"I was a hurting kid, wanting love and attention. I met new people; they introduced me to weed. All my problems seemed to go away when I was smoking and drinking."

"I got into the mindset of the streets: the only way to 'make it' and get the clothes and the cars was crime."

"I was doing fraud, robberies."

"More friends and more drugs came into the picture."

He lived like that for six years, and then suddenly woke up – both literally and figuratively – when he was 21.

"Something happened to me. I remember waking up, looking at my friends smoking a crack pipe, and just felt like a waste of life."

"I used to believe I was going to be somebody. I had this crazy thought: What can I do? Well, I can fight. Why don't I use what I've got? I wonder if I can transform my reputation from the streets into the ring as a professional."

Which was exactly what he did. Immersing himself in his chosen sport, he went on to win 20 out of 21 fights, including the World Boxing

Organisation intercontinental light-heavyweight title in 1997.

It was during that time that he also began to think more deeply about his upbringing.

"I'd been brought up to know God," he said.

"When I grew up we sang hymns and had Bible texts, we had that sense that there was a greater power, and you valued someone else's life."

"In 1997, I began to investigate what impact it had on my life, and I began to fall in love with God for myself."

"It made me a calmer person, more purposeful. I went through a lot of healing."

Then in 2006 came the phone call that changed his life forever. It was from his daughter Tannisa, who was screaming down the phone that his son, Kiyán, had been stabbed.

"I said a prayer to save my son from getting killed, but what I said was: 'Please help me to accept it if this does happen.'"

"I thought: 'Where do you even have the sense to come out with that?' But now I've gone through it, I look back and I know it is accepting what's happened in life that allows you to move on."

"Many people are still in the same place – in pain and in hurt and anger – because they can't accept what's happened."

At the hospital, he saw things that would "never leave [his] head and experienced pain unlike anything before." And then there was the rage – so intense that he smashed his fists into the hospital walls and left blood trails everywhere.

Then through the agonising fog, he heard God ask him: "Do you trust Me to bring something good out of something horrible like this?"



Boxer Mark Prince holds his OBE medal, awarded to him during an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace, on March 19, 2019 in London, England. (Photo by Dominic Lipinski - WPA Pool/Getty Images)

UK professional boxer Mark Prince won 20 out of 21 fights, including the World Boxing Organisation intercontinental light-heavyweight title in 1997. Photos: facebook.com/dmarkprinceobe.

"I told God I couldn't fight this anger, and felt like I had to kill this guy [Kiyán's killer], but I had to let go of that. I had to accept that God is still in charge."

"God gives and God takes away. I prayed that prayer and I cried like a baby, and said: 'Show me what You need me to do.'"

There was no bringing Kiyán back, but there was a way to forever honour his life.

After he died, Mark founded the Kiyán Prince Foundation, a charity in memory of his son.

"I began getting invitations to speak. I felt this was God working and I needed to say yes."

The foundation works to stop knife crime and youth violence. It organises seminars and provides mentoring and physical fitness programmes, all aimed at steering youth in the right direction.

Mark poured himself into this work so completely that he was awarded an OBE in 2019 for his role in battling knife crime.

That same year, the stadium where the Queens Park Rangers trained was officially renamed the

Kiyán Prince Foundation Stadium.

But Mark never forgot it was God who picked him up and breathed new life into him when he had no strength left. Receiving the Helen Rollason Award for outstanding achievement in the face of adversity in December, he said:

"I am proud that at a time when everything seemed like there was no hope, that I stayed believing and trusting that Jesus Christ my Saviour

was going to use me to do great things still in the name of my son. I'm proud of the fact that I didn't give into revenge."

"I was doing fraud, robberies."

"I didn't give into bitterness and anger and unforgiveness and all the things which try to hold onto us as

human beings. God has given us a choice, we can choose no matter what happens to us... we've got a power of choice. We can choose how we deal with it."

"We haven't got the choice of what happens, but we have the choice of how we deal with it."

Some material in this story was used with kind permission from *Reform Magazine*, along with information from other sources such as YouTube.

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