

TAAQA MAGAZINE

INSPIRE • ENGAGE

ENCOURAGE

MARCH 2020



THE CHRISTIAN WARDROBE

Does God Really Care What We Wear?

POSITIVE THOUGHT

Harnessing The Power Of The Mind.

A SURVIVORS' GUIDE

Being 30 Something & Single in 2020

THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

WAS IT REALLY WORTH IT?

Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy

~Psalms 47 : 1~



The *Lord* is the portion of my Inheritance
and my cup; you support my lot.

~Psalm 16 Verse 5~

Editor: Lynnette Ndhlovu
lynnett@taqamagazine.online

Assistant Editor: Alvin Mlambo
alvin@taqamagazine.online

Advisory Council:
Joshua Ndhlovu and Yolanda Ndhlovu

Please mail correspondence to:
Taqa Magazine,
509 Walrus Court
West Street
Kempton Park
Gauteng

Design and Layout: Native Aliens Media
info@nativealiens.co.za

Website Design: Native Aliens Media
info@nativealiens.co.za

Purpose:

At TAQA magazine, we are a family of God loving Christians who are excited about sharing testimonies of how God is still speaking today. The conventional pulpit has since evolved over the years and we are the product of that evolution. The WORD is and will always be solid and the same.

We will tackle issues from parenting to schooling to relationships to the covenant of marriage and issues that affect the life of the contemporary Christian. Our aim is to welcome you to our family and to have conversations with you on the goodness of God and encourage you in your everyday life. We hope as we embark on this journey we will move from Glory to Glory in the Lord.

Welcome to the praise world of TAQA

We give glory to the "I am that I am"

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EDITOR'S *Note*

BY LYNNETT NDHLOVU

The purpose of life and our existence here on earth has been questioned, argued over, written about and probed by so many. “*Why am I here?*” It is easy for some to find purpose others not so much. We get caught up in the business of everyday life and passing through the purported “Rites of passage” of life we rarely stop to ask WHY? There is always school or work or relationships or one thing or the other that one chases to the point that the question of “Why” is seldom addressed. Others find comfort in achievements such as doing well in school or excelling in a chosen career or getting married or amassing a lot of worldly wealth. Upon reaching the level of what the academic Abraham Maslow coined as “*Self Actualisation*”, they feel that they have indeed fulfilled their purpose in life. Yet somehow, in the centre of all that fulfilment, there is still a deep yearning that aches to be fulfilled. Like the American theologian and religious leader Howard Thurman said in his 1978 book, “*Deep is the Hunger*”. But the hunger for what exactly?

As a believer in Jesus Christ, I believe one's purpose comes when you ask yourself “*What am I good at? What do I love? And how can I use it to help others?*” God showed love to the world that HE gave us His only son as a living sacrifice with the purpose of redeeming the relationship between man and the Creator. He gave what he valued to us, FOR us. He set the bar very high with regards to sacrifice and the act of giving and reminding us that we live to give and help each other. TAQA is our way of giving to you.

TAQA serves to have conversations between strangers in the hope that through our experiences and testimonies we encourage and uplift each other in the Lord. The orthodox pulpit has evolved over the years and in light of that, the delivery of the word of God should,

In turn, do the same. In the book of Acts when the Apostle Paul described his journeys, he wrote of how they took days to walk from one city to another and use the ships from city to city. Now we still spread the word and use all and any means available to minister the word of God.

We hope you enjoy this first of many editions to come.

We give glory to the “I am that I am”.

For *God* loved the world that he
gave his only begotten **Son** that
WHOEVER believes in him should
not perish but have
Everlasting Life

John 3:16

Just One Chance

When you are God conscious, God minded, you are governed by the first true and pure love. This love is without condition or emotion. It is love, that keeps on giving and LOVES YOU no matter what or who you are. No status, richness or colour can define this LOVE.

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him."

1 John 3:1, NIV

The day I gave myself to Christ.

The Lord Jesus, was given to you and me, by a Father who loves us. A living sacrifice, bearing all our iniquities', so that we may have life and live in abundance. Imagine giving your child as a sacrifice? Or giving up something that you hold dearly? Are you willing to give up your flesh, to live in the spirit?

The year was 2013 all it took was one word, to change our lives forever. A kind of love word that is gentle and ignited my very purpose and reason of being. My then trials and tribulations were seemingly without course and direction and yet they were my greatest test of all my years of existence.

To give you a little history, in December 2009, hubby got retrenched when the company he was working for at the time moved offices to Durban. In April 2010, I got retrenched from my then employment. The life we once knew had evaporated in a space of 5 months. If you had told me before then that R30.00 can feed a family of 5 I would have laughed in your face. But it did feed my family and my experience during that period made appreciate the value of money and sacrifice.

Our youngest son was 8 months old at the time and still on the bottle. Fortunately for him we used it more like a silencing food. For a time anyway. I remember the crying sweetness in his voice when he asked me for his *nene* bottle after his formula had run out. Looking at him with eyes drowning in tears, I answered, "No *nene* bottle my baby". "Ma put tea, in my bottle then..." We didn't even have sugar for the tea either. At that very moment I wished the earth would open up and swallow me whole.

My husband developed kidney failure and it got so serious that whenever he went to the bathroom, he would pass blood in his stool. All he could do in the anguish and pain was to rub his sides and call out to me. At wit's end, I

would plug my ears with my fingers and hope to fall asleep quickly. I had no idea how to comfort him.

If you think you now know how deep the abyss of my life was, you are only getting started.

Our three sons, including the baby, and boys contracted a skin infection that looked much like chicken pox but wasn't. It itched and when they scratched as kids would, the infection spread. The infection was so severe that it ate through the epidermis of the skin, until the fatty layer underneath was exposed. Unfortunately, I too was infected through contact as my children's primary care giver. So the register of infection in my family stood as such: 1st son was infected from the corner of the eye to cheeks. 2nd son was infected from the inner ear to the neck and part of his face. Baby had it at the back of his legs at the knee joint. My husband was infected from the nose to the face. We all looked like a family of burn victims. We did not have money to go to the doctor, all I could think of was the myriad of methods I could use to end all of this and take my suffering children with me.

Where there is no faith, there is fear. Desperation will even let you eat sand...

When we had reached what I felt was the edge of the earth, all it took was one word from Pastor Victor, who came to our home with his very pregnant wife. It was late afternoon when they came to tell me GOD loves me, loves us. I will never forget that day. His exact words were: *"If you want change, give the Lord Jesus one chance, just one chance, but give Him your all."*

My family and I took the pastor's advice and gave the LORD JESUS just one chance, and have never looked back since. The poverty, the hunger, the infirmity, the desperation and general despair are nothing more than distant memories. I wish in this life for you, dear reader, that you give the Lord Jesus **Just One Chance** to change you and the world around you, like He did ours. And may the Holy Spirit that is my comforter, comfort you as well in your time of hopelessness.



SHERI is a TAQA Contributor, mother, accountant, motivational speaker and Christian evangelist. She is currently writing her first motivational book due to be published at the end of the year. When not absorbed in numbers and the bible Sheri enjoys cooking, knitting and light gardening. Very light. She lives in Johannesburg South Africa with her husband and three boys.

30 SOMETHING AND SINGLE IN 2020

It's not the end of the world.

There are many milestones that we look forward to as women – whether it is careers, marriage, or children. All of which help us feel as though we have a higher purpose. Sometimes these milestones can cloud our vision so much that we forget to experience the “*Here and now*”. But I have come to realize that being able to experience the “*now*”, will only happen after letting go of some pre-conceived notions. For example, the notion that God has **The Man** out there for me. Mr Tall, Dark, Handsome, Wealthy, Emotionally mature, Loves his mother but not too much, loves kids, travelling and dogs. That this unicorn is out there waiting to be directed towards me. Good luck finding this one in the Bible. There is plenty of stuff about God's will for his people, God wanting good things for you, and God's ultimate plan.

I believe Christians take a lot of comfort in the idea that God will do the heavy lifting when it comes to dating. God will tell them if a relationship is right, and God will end it if it's not. All they have to do is sit back and enjoy the ride. German theologian **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** stated that God joins the relationship between a man and a woman at the point of marriage.

Before that, the couple has to take the initiative.

As in all things, it's best to ask for God's guidance. The Bible promises he will provide that whenever we ask. Rely on God's love, wisdom, and sustaining presence while you're dating. Though God won't do all the work for you, he'll be with you every step of the way.

There were courtship rituals in place, but nothing that looks like what we consider dating today. And we have now found ourselves in a grey area.

Another misconception is that God will reveal to you the man you are going to marry the minute you meet them. Now I'm not saying that he doesn't. When it comes to God, I'm pretty careful about saying what He does or doesn't do. But I do know this, sometimes the flesh speaks pretty loud. It will tell you what you want to hear. I know a few people who have been led down the wrong path because of this. So now you ask, "How do we know then?" Frankly...we don't. We go before God and say this is the person I have chosen, Father. Help us on this journey.

The last misconception I will speak about is this notion we have that there's a certain way we need to date within Christianity. And no I am not referring to the physical, the Bible is very clear on that point, **NO SEX BEFORE MARRIAGE**. Yes I said it. I am actually referring to the guidelines that seem to have been set. Now if we think about this, when the Bible was written, a person basically had one of three options: remaining single, an immoral life with multiple partners or prostitutes, or an arranged marriage. There were courtship

rituals in place, but nothing that looks like what we consider dating today. And we have now found ourselves in a grey area. It has spawned a whole range of opinions and advice on how to handle dating. This leaves a lot of room for error.

There are biblical principles, like **Galatians 5:19-23**, But there are things that the Bible does not address. For example, can you hold hands, hug each other, give each other a close-lipped kisses? Should you expect him to pay for dinner every time? My feminist side says, uhm heck no. But the traditionalist in me says...yes he should. Especially after I've ordered dessert 4 times! You see this requires more decision making on our parts. We don't have scriptural manuals that tell us how to behave in every situation.

It's up to you to be in prayer and conversation with your Christian community about these things. We are going to have to think, talk, pray, and be ready to make some mistakes.



MISS DEE is a contributing writer for Taqa Magazine. She has a genuine relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Believes faith in God and in Christ makes all the difference. She is not afraid of delving into the messiness of life, which she does with humour and wisdom.



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THE CHRISTIAN WARDROBE

Does God Really Care What We Wear?

Growing up we were always taught that our “street clothes” were not good enough to go and worship in.

My parents made sure that every Christmas, (it was an unwritten law that was the only time we received new clothes) we would receive our sets of street clothes, school uniforms and church attire. Each Sunday, my brother and I would be dressed in our flawlessly ironed 2 pleated polyester pants with crinkle free button-up shirts usually topped with bow ties on really special occasions. And not to forget the white socks and shiny reflective dress shoes we would’ve spent the previous night polishing. It was strictly prohibited by blood written law for us to wear our Sunday best on any other occasion apart from church and violation of said law was punishable by death. Well that is a slight exaggeration but having

been on the receiving end of a couple of my mother’s disciplinary processes, a level close to death is an apt description.

All through to early adulthood, I was of the firm belief that how we dressed when we entered and worshipped in the house of the Lord was inextricably linked to whether our prayers and devotions would receive favourable responses. When I moved cities for college, I not only joined a different church but a different denomination. Much to my chagrin, my traditional beliefs on “Godly” apparel did not apply. T shirts, jeans, skimpy skirts and cartoonish sweaters were commonplace. Shorts, which I had never seen being worn outside of Sunday school were in style with not a single filthy look or judgemental murmur passed. Through liaisons and fellowship with the members of my new family, I realised that apart from our divergent views on what we

considered to be pious clothing there was no difference in our dedication to the Christian faith. So then I had to ask myself, does God really care what you wear?

To better understand the practice, I decided to delve into the history. The phenomenon of the Sunday Best or the practice of dressing up for church can be traced back to the late-eighteenth century and mid-nineteenth century.

In the eyes of God, cross-dressing was thought as an insult to the difference between the sexes as stated in Genesis 1:27

Traditionally, fancy attire was reserved for social events only amongst the aristocracy of that day simply because only they had the means to afford it. As the wheels of progress and invention turned, along came the bulk manufacturing of fabrics. Commoners were now able to match the elegance once reserved for the upper crust of society. They too were now able to dress up for special occasions and church fell into this category.

However not all Christian groups were as thrilled and embracing of the nouveau middle class' ostentation when it came to church garb. John Wesley, the leader revival movement within the Church of England and father of the Methodist church, opposed the idea of special outfits. He wrote to believers, "*Let your dress be cheap, as well as plain,*" John Wesley frequently spoke out against fine beautification, saying that gold and expensive apparel were sinful. In line with his teachings

that Christians "*ought to dress plainly, neatly, and simply.*" Methodists turned people away for wearing expensive clothing in some instances. However with the increasing affluence of the middle class came a need for larger, more elaborate worship centres with extravagant decorations. As a result of this progression, the more elegant and formal worship houses began to attract the prominent members of society. In an effort to remain relevant, so to speak, congregations such as the Methodists had to improve their own facilities. In 1843, Horace Bushnell an influential American congregational minister and theologian, wrote an essay called "*Taste and Refinement*" about how sophistication and refinement were attributes of God and that Christians should imitate them. Due to his mass influence, soon dressing up for church became synonymous with the veneration of God. Till today masses of Christians all over the world continue to dress up for church.

So what does the bible say about dressing as a Christian?

Though I had concentrated on the origins of the "Sunday Best" or dressing up for church, the same question can be posed to apply beyond Sunday to a Christian's everyday clothing. So what are God's rules and regulations with regards to what we should and shouldn't wear? The best place for us to start looking is the bible. In the Old Testament, the book of Deuteronomy disallows dressing in clothing of the opposite sex. "*A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this.*" - **NIV, Deuteronomy 22:5** Like many decrees at the time, this regulation may have been required due to the pagan customs in the neighbouring nations. The Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary prepared by Robert Jamieson, Andrew Robert Fausset and David Brown states that "*Disguises were assumed at*

certain times in pagan temples.” “... a man attired in a coloured female dress, in honour of Venus, Ashtaroath, or Astarte, and a woman equipped in armour, worshipped at the shrine of the statue of Mars...” In the eyes of God, cross-dressing was thought as an insult to the difference between the sexes as stated in Genesis 1:27. In contemporary society however, some have argued that the world keeps evolving, so there might be the need to re-evaluate certain principles. Concerning trousers or pants specifically. Women's trousers are designed differently from those of men, so it cannot be said women are putting on men's clothing.

Another prohibition that exists is found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. This prohibition is against wearing clothes woven of mixed fabrics. *“Do not wear clothes of wool and linen woven together.”* (NIV, Deuteronomy 22:11) This restriction however, has no ostensible application in modern times mainly because most Christians do not make their own textiles today. Unless of course they happen to be in that industry as a profession. Besides for those who are in the industry or clothes manufacturers for that matter, none mix these two fabrics today anyway. The New International version of **Leviticus 19:19** says *“Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.”*

However, the **“New Covenant”** introduced by Jesus frees us from stringent compliance of Old Testament statutes. Two passages in the New Testament speak on appropriate attire for women though. *“I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.”* (NIV, 1 Timothy 2:9-10)

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. (NIV, 1 Peter 3:2-5) Both of these inserts make emphasise that a Christian's true beauty derives from the inner person and is appropriately conveyed by virtuous activities. Simply put, dressing modestly and tastefully is the way to go.

We also need to be wary that our activities are not simply conforming to man's customs.

So does what we wear really matter as contemporary Christians?

With deeper understanding of the Bible we realise that the New Testament, when compared to the Old Testament, it is striking how somewhat apathetic it is with regards to issues pertaining to worship attire and rituals. In the Old Testament, much emphasis was placed on the development of offerings, festivals, and related practices. In the New Testament, however, Jesus presented Himself as the focus of worship as *“... the way, the truth, and the life...”* - **John 14:6**. The New Testament also began a new covenant in which Jesus came as a fulfilment of the Law and Jesus offered forgiveness and eternal life to all who believed in Him. So in the absence of explicit instruction specifically

pertaining to worship and Christian attire we must at least endeavour to satisfy the following when dressing:

1. Christians must dress modestly

“...Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire” - **1 Timothy 2:9**. Christians here are commanded to wear clothes that are *aidōs*, or discrete/restrained.

2. Christians must dress so as not to offend

“Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” - **1 Peter 5:5**. While this verse is using clothing metaphorically, the principle is applicable to our actual clothing—we must dress in a way that is in step with the Christians around us.

3. Let's Make Worship More Meaningful

There is a remarkable de-emphasis in the New Testament on attire in the worship gathering. “If a man wearing [...] fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a man [...] in shabby clothing also comes in,” you are not to make “distinctions” between the two. To do so would be “evil” - **James 2:2-4**. For some this means clothing is not an issue for us today. I for one fall into this category.

The biggest snare we must avoid falling into as Christians is using our clothing as masks to hide our authentic natures. Sometimes we use clothes and outward appearances to portray a godly image to the outside world while God looks in a totally different direction. In **1 Samuel 16:7**, the word says, “*For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*” We also need to be wary that our activities are not simply conforming to man’s customs. **Mark 7:13** says “*Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.*” Though this word was spoken to the Pharisees it applies to the modern Christian. The warning Jesus was presenting was for them, and by extension us, not to replace the word of God with our own time honoured traditions. **Romans 12:2 ESV** says “*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect*”. In conclusion, whether we believe in the concept of the “Sunday Best” or fine seemingly Godly clothing every other day, our attention need constantly be on God. In **John 4:24** we are told “*For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.*” Instead of concentrating on the outward worldly appearance of righteousness, we as Christians must instead endeavour to don the whole armour of God as described in **Ephesians 6:10-18**



ALVIN MLAMBO calls himself a baby Christian who is currently on the road to re-establish his relationship with Jesus Christ. He and his wife Lynnett (Lee M) run The Todah Group of Companies and he currently Authors the “30 Paces and Counting” blog. Where he discusses issues of faith, manhood, parenting and contemporary Christianity. Alvin is a training facilitator, conference speaker and assistant editor of TAQA Magazine.

THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

Was it really worth it?

What's your favourite Christian Holiday? Some like Christmas with all the glitz and glamour of the lights and others love Easter for the Easter egg hunts and all those hot cross buns which are very tasty delights indeed. However for me I like to stick to the basics, Christmas the birth of Christ and the fulfilment of the promise and Easter the death of Christ and our Salvation and Restoration of the covenant between man and his God. Easter is most definitely my most beloved. Why you ask? Let me take you on a little personal journey.

About 10 years ago, my husband and I were blessed with a baby boy. The pregnancy was not difficult at all. I developed a deep love for fruits and they constituted a good 90% of my diet. Meat, not so much. I didn't even have back aches and enjoyed walking and exercising a lot. Our son decided to make his grand entrance into the world 2 months early. I kid you not, neither one of us was ready for the joys of parenthood. I don't remember most of the first few weeks because I was so ill that my husband had to bath and feed me and take care of our son too.

It was only when he was six to seven weeks that I slowly began to gain my lucidity and ease into being a mother. However, God had other plans. The weekend after our son's six weeks check-up, he passed away.

He was 7 weeks, 3 days, 11 hours and 58 minutes old. It also happened to be my husband's first day at a job we had prayed for close to a year. Finally I was conscious and our first born son dies. I was singing him a lullaby and rocking my son to sleep without knowing I was actually ushering him to his eternal sleep. I remember my prayer at that time was "Please God take me and not my son. Anything but my son." I didn't have the power to give life back so I helplessly felt my son turn cold. At that precise moment, if I had been given the choice of either saving my son's life or watching the world burn I would have let it burn down to a smoking cinder in a



heartbeat. Losing a child is pain that no parent should ever have to endure.

Now imagine what was running through God's mind when He watched the humans, His much loved creations, whipping and lashing His only son. Spiting on him and humiliating him with what seemed to be no end and yet He is the Almighty and omnipotent God. When I watched the 2004 Mel Gibson helmed film "*The Passion of the Christ*", the sheer brutality and viciousness of the treatment Jesus Christ suffered, left me with a profound sense of guilt for my transgressions. Later I learned that I was not the only one that the depiction of Jesus' final hours had a powerful effect on. Back in January 2004, in the American state of Texas, Dan Leach strangled his then girlfriend Ashley Nicole Wilson, 19, because he did not want the child she was carrying. He then forged a suicide note and staged the scene to make it look like she had taken her own life. Police believed the ruse and ruled it a suicide. After watching "*The Passion*" however, Dan confessed to her murder. The movie was visceral and heart breaking to watch and it made you question why God would allow this to happen. "*You are GOD just stop it.*" Yes you are right HE is GOD. He did it for you. If you cannot relate to the loss of a loved one you are blessed. Especially if it is a child you are truly blessed. Having experienced it I can safely say we underrate the sacrificial giving God did for us. The human dynamics of sacrificing a son are mind boggling and yet the "*I am that I am*" did it for us.

Now with all this happening 2000 plus years ago do you feel it was worth it? I will speak for myself and say **YES**. Why you may ask. My take is that humans were reconnected to our creator. We were given the gift of the "*Blood of Jesus Christ*" and to begin to live under God's Grace. – **John 1 verse 17**. We were

given all that, you find everything and all you need in terms of blessings on the Cross. That is why Christ was born flesh on earth and served as a sacrifice. But we as believers are continually sitting in a room full of food and going hungry. We don't take full advantage of the awesome gift given to us.

The Power of the Sacrifice does not and will never diminish with time. It is the same today, tomorrow, forever and it is the weapon given to believers to use to fight "*The Accuser*". The fact that One chooses not to use it does not make it less of a sacrifice or irrelevant. With today's trying times I feel it is even more relevant as people are facing various troubles in different aspects of their life. They can use it to defeat the source of their troubles, *The Devil*.

Looking back, my husband and I have a growing happy bunch of kids who keep us blessed and busy. It wasn't easy having to let go of the loss of our son, but because I began to value and appreciate what God had done for us, we were able to allow our hearts to heal and receive more blessings from God.

In conclusion I feel relevance of the sacrifice of the cross is between the believer and His maker. I will testify that it was extremely worth it.

LET LOVE LEAD



LEE M is the Taqa Magazine editor and a contributing writer. She is the CEO of Lee M Lifestyle, a Christian apparel brand and authors for

"**Adventures of a Mompreneur**", a lifestyle and human interest blog for Christian mothers trying to navigate the business world. She believes in putting God first in every facet of her life and has devoted her life to Christian evangelism.



We are quintessentially a Christian Apparel company that believes in wearing our hearts on our sleeves, literally. We put emphasis on bespoke design, creation and printing of Christian lifestyle fashion. The Lee M brand is a range of lifestyle clothing, accessories and decor products with a religious twist. Please Don't Hesitate to contact us for a quotation on your custom requirements.



+27 81 592 7626

lynnett@leemlifestyle.com

www.leemlifestyle.com



THE UNSEEN BATTLES



When you are in an environment where people hate you for no reason or are in a relationship where constant accusations and arguments are the order of the day, you may look at it with corporeal eyes and chalk it up to personality clashes.

However if you search deeper you, will discover it means a spiritual battle is going on between you and that person or environment. You have done nothing wrong and from nowhere arguments, accusation and counter accusations are flooded in your direction. Know for sure a spiritual battle is in progress. The HOLY SPIRIT will never fight another iteration of itself in another person. It's only the spirit of darkness that wages battle against the spirit of light because they can never occupy the same space.

When you find yourself compelled to sin, ask yourself which spirit is working within you. When you find yourself attacking or beating your wife or husband, ask yourself which spirit is working in you. That is why we go to church, to join forces with other spirits of light so that we can bring more light and peace to the world. Look at your friends and partners, are they bringing more light or darkness into your life? Is your wife or husband bringing more light or darkness into your life?

Witches and witchdoctors have confessed that they wait for an opportune time when the environment is conducive for their demons to enter.

If the spirit of anger wants to find entry into your life, situations are created that will make you angry. From a human point of view you have every reason to be angry. From a Spiritual point of view a demon is slithering its way into your life. That's why we are encouraged in the Bible not be in our flesh every time but to be spiritually alert that we don't get caught off guard.

Witches and witchdoctors have confessed that we wait for an opportune time when the environment is conducive for our demons to enter. How can we avoid this? It is by showing love even to those who hate us for no

apparent reason. Then you have no reason to be angry and you deny victory to those who are after your soul .Avoid people or places that can compromise your righteousness. If it's your husband or wife seek the face of the LORD, pray for them so that salvation can come into their lives. If you see yourself seeking the company of drunkards, prostitutes, thieves, adulterers, drug addicts

or you have that insatiable appetite to sin, it only means you are under the influence of the devil. Find a church in your neighbourhood that preaches about CHRIST so that you can be delivered and saved. Don't follow the way of the world but follow CHRIST.

#BeBlessed.



For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

-Ephesians 6 : 12-



JOSHUA NDHLOVU is the founder and CEO of ARK International Investments, multifaceted investment firm using biblical principles of business for all operations. Before devoting his life to evangelism, he was an expert Electrical Engineering consultant for various organisations



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+27 81 592 7626

lynnett@leemlifestyle.com

www.leemlifestyle.com

Ever heard of the statement “*The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world?*” Women have been delegated, by society, to be the caregivers nurturers with the responsibility to take care of the children.

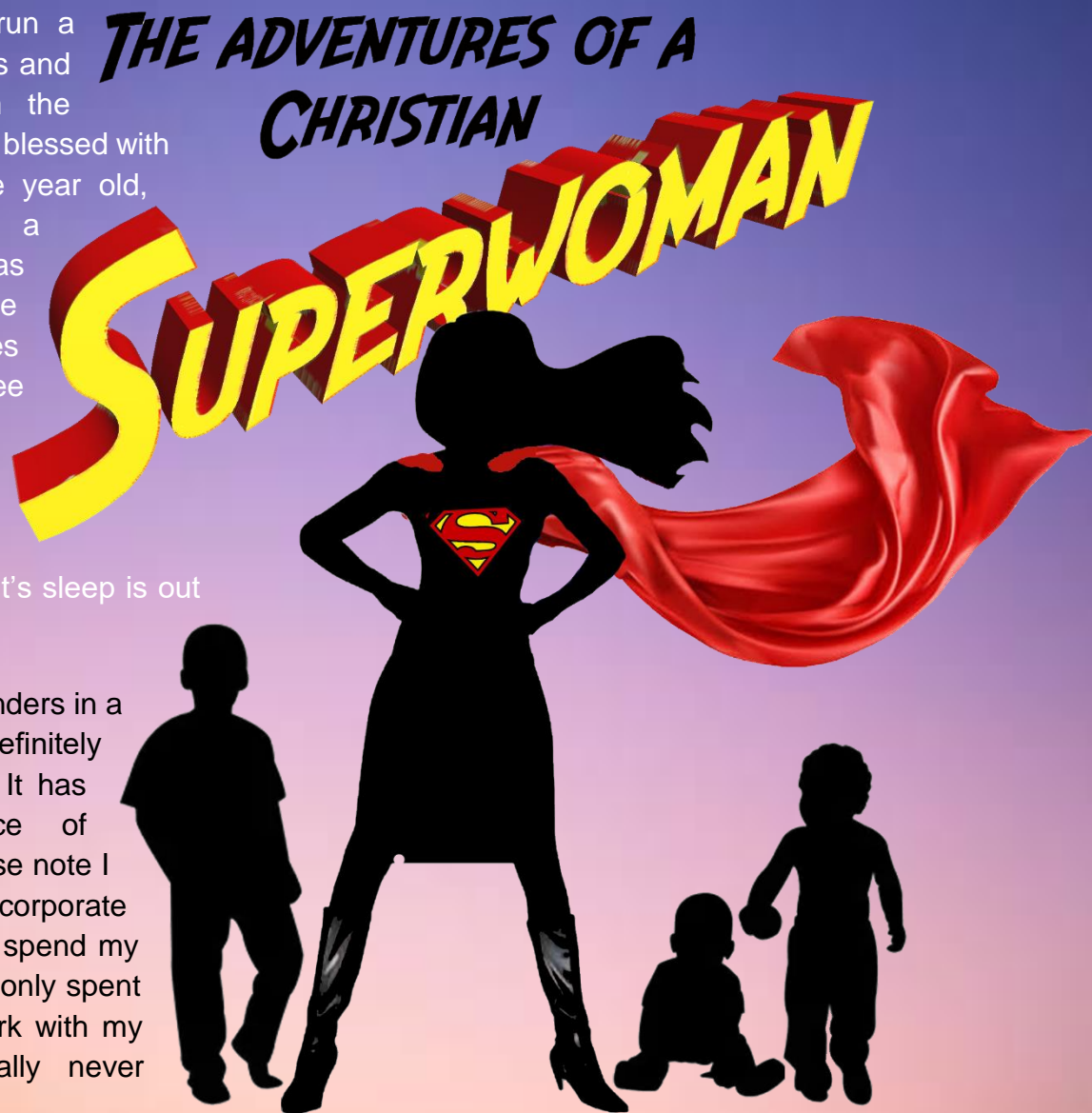
This role is vital as the early stages of a child's life shape how they view the world. Due to the wave of new age feminism, this child-minding role is generally frowned upon in some circles, but I beg to differ. Every job has its significance.

My husband and I run a number of businesses and I work mainly from the home office. We were blessed with three children, a five year old, three-year-old and a one-year-old. I was recently humbled at the amount of work it takes to cater to these three and the other children (the businesses). My body has been so sleep deprived that getting a full night's sleep is out of the ordinary.

I now look at child-minders in a whole new light, it's definitely no walk in the park. It has tested every ounce of patience I have. Please note I was coming from a corporate setting and I used to spend my days in an office and only spent a few hours after work with my first son. I personally never enjoyed that.

Now it's different. I make my own hours and at the same time be mummy. I have limited sleeping hours and I hardly sit down. I write and work on the go but I have this overwhelming sense of peace at the same time. The kind of peace that only Jesus Christ can give you.

My children ask me about everything, from names of colours to animal names and I am glad I have the luxury of being there to answer them. So to all those working Moms out there I salute you!



Having to build a career with hours you don't dictate and then come home to do homework, listen to school stories, make dinner, make sure dinner is eaten, deal with toddler pallets or teenage mood swings and still have time to smile. You are my heroes. Mums are special!

Those women that don't have children are no less special in any way. They just have different roles as compared to mine. I remember a time when it was just my husband and I, before all these blessings came to us. Our days were filled with lots of activity too. It was work, work and more work! Tiring none

the less. I worked because I had to. That's the reality of so many women out there. You do what you have to, not what you love, just so you can earn a living. Those are warriors.

I believe one of Gods greatest gifts is the ability to recognise and fulfil Gods purpose in our lives. When you get that, you cease to exist but begin to live.

I pray you join me for more introspective journeys and lessons gained as I soldier through this adventure called life.

she is
{IN} clothed
strength & dignity
& SHE laughs
WITHOUT FEAR OF THE FUTURE
{PROVERBS 31:25}



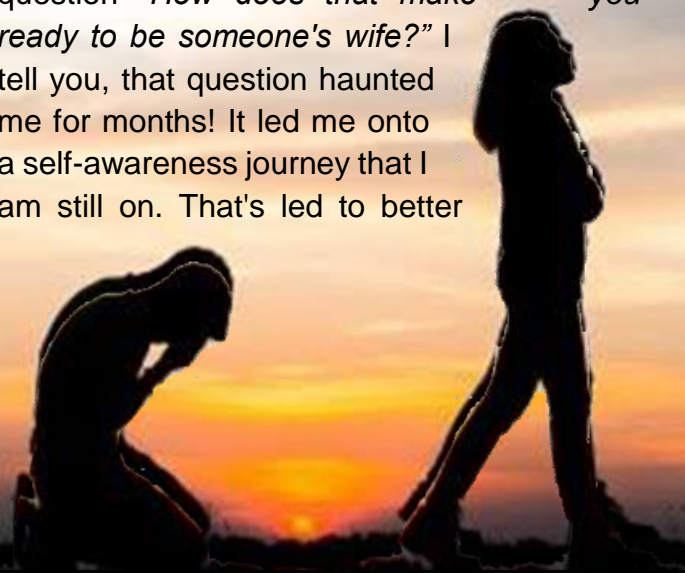
MADAM LYN is a writer, dreamer, historian and proud accepter of the label "Jesus Freak". Before she discovered her love for writing, she experimented with various professions: bartender, seamstress, restaurant manager and dentist's secretary and she continues to explore more of herself through her various businesses. She is married to a burly ex Rugby player who shares her love for Jesus and writing and together they created 3 forces of nature they

So a few years ago, I read a really interesting article online. The capturing headline read “If you're still single; it's your own fault!”

This article basically went on to say that if you find yourself single after the age of 25, you need to examine yourself and find out what you are doing to sabotage your relationships because if you really wanted to be married, you would be. So, here comes my bombshell...I kind of agree with some of the author's views.

Now as a spirit filled, thirty something, single, never been married Christian woman, you would think I would be up in arms about this article. But it made me take a step back and re-examine not only my past relationships but also my 'a/most' relationships

away and ghost the person but expect them to understand and be fine with it. And when these relationships eventually ended, I would say “Well there you go, he never did get me anyway”. It literally took God speaking to me during one of my quiet times, asking the question “How does that make you ready to be someone's wife?” I tell you, that question haunted me for months! It led me onto a self-awareness journey that I am still on. That's led to better



T H E **E** X F I L E S

“Why did those fail and did I somehow sabotage them?”

The simple answer is, they failed because we were not well suited and I really didn't know myself at that time. The more complicated answer is YES I have played a part in unconsciously, and in some cases consciously, sabotaging my past relationships and also my almost relationships. I realised that instead of having open and honest conversations with the person, I tended to pull

friends.

It's not easy, admitting that you are a flawed human being. That as much as we are made perfect in Him, we still need to work on ourselves. In **1 John 1:8**, it says “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” It further says in **James 3:1-8** that we all stumble in many ways. But God's grace is sufficient in all things...always.

By **MISS DEE**

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The Power of Goodbye

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

~Romans 6 Verse 6~

Vinnie and I have been together for as long as I can remember. He was there when I took my clumsy first steps and was there for the clean-up during potty training. He gave me the confidence to keep climbing back on to my BMX after I bruised my knees and elbows learning to ride it. Vinnie taught me how to talk to girls and was there applauding when the disturbingly experienced Amanda gave me my first French kiss under the guava tree behind the main hall at school. He was there wincing with me as I took my first gulp of Vodka after the inter-schools' basketball tournament and was patting my back and holding my head over the toilet bowl

as I retched my bowels out later that evening. He gave me the courage to court the hottest girl on campus in college and guided my hands as I made love to her for the first time, which happened to be my first time as well. Vinnie held my hand through my first job interview and helped me breeze through 3 promotions in 2 years at that same company. Vinnie is my confidant, my shield, my brother, the best and the closest friend I've ever had. And now, I'm going to kill him.

Now that I have your attention let me start by putting your mind at ease, I'm not about to commit a felony. Well not in the traditional

sense that would have me incarcerated but the consequences are no less severe.

I guess to add context to my ramblings I need to explain where my murderous intentions stem from.

As much as Vinnie gave me the courage and mental fortitude to practically reinvent myself and excel, he was also responsible for the behaviours I wanted to walk away from.

I was always a meek and introverted child. I was socially awkward and found it difficult to function in crowds. The two friends I made on my first day of Grade One are the same two I managed to sustain until the end of primary school. The good Lord didn't bless me with any level of athleticism and it was a wonder that I wasn't asthmatic to boot. I managed to scrape through academically and my reading and comprehension skills were just good enough for the school authorities not to place me in the special educational needs class. In the middle of all that awkwardness, however, I would get these occasional bouts of daring and perceptual stamina that would surprise and frighten me sometimes. I would pull a "rabbit out of a hat" and perform acts of uncharacteristic bravery that unfortunately

wouldn't sustain themselves. Then I would recede back into my shell.

I, however, always found solace in the fantastical world of cartoons and comic books. I related to the timid and soft spoken normal humans like *Clark Kent*, *Bruce Banner* and *Hal Jordan* that got upgraded with incredible versions that the world cheered and revered. It was during these formative years that I started feeling the presence of and unconsciously developed my alter ego.

During the befuddling years of puberty and High School is when the Ego came into its own, catalysed by peer pressure and raging hormones. I joined the public speaking and debate team and became their champion. I made new friends and even tried out for the basketball, rugby and swimming teams. I only managed to obtain a mascot position in the first two and became the breast-stroke guy in the mixed relay swimming team. I started rolling with one of the "cool kids", became cool by association and girls started noticing me. One of my friends from primary school noticed the grandiose metamorphosis and instinctively started calling me Vinnie. When I quizzed him about the nick name, he said I wasn't the old Alvin anymore and deserved a "cool" upgrade. I embraced the Superman to my Clark Kent and caroused in my new found confidence well into adulthood. I would even engage in conversation with Vinnie which, much to the irritation and vexation of my wife, ended up looking like a madman talking to himself.

All was well, until I experienced *The Quickening*. Upon vowing to re-establish my relationship with Jesus, I came to terms with some uncomfortable truths. As much as Vinnie gave me the courage and mental fortitude to practically reinvent myself and

excel, he was also responsible for the behaviours I wanted to walk away from. I came to a point where alcohol and the occasional high didn't do the trick anymore and I started feeling genuinely guilty whenever I turned my head to look at another woman in the mall. Profanity and sexist jokes left a rusty metallic taste in my mouth and I couldn't stand to watch horror movies anymore.

I viewed my relationship with Vinnie much like a marriage. I however had reached the point where I felt that our association had become toxic and unhealthy so I opted for a dissolution of the union. **Romans 6:6** says “...our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed...” if my old man is dead then why do I still find myself wrestling with him?

In any divorce, you gather your thoughts, sign the papers and usher the undesirable party to the nearest exit. You shut the door behind them and proceed to live your new life in their absence. Simple, right? If so then why does one find themselves 3 months later engaging in the same pre-divorce behaviours and lifestyles while cursing themselves for their weakness and lack of self-control? I have found myself in this position on multiple occasions. So this time I decided to take a closer look at where exactly I was lacking. I realised a fundamental flaw in my both my thinking and method. Maybe it stemmed from a naïve appreciation of the concept and process of divorce but I noticed where it was all coming undone. I recognised that separation transcends a simple disassociation with the significant other. Though you've gotten rid of the person, you once shared a life and space for the longest time. Some of their clothes are still in your

shared wardrobe and still carry their scent. Their hideous taste in wall hangings still offends your walls and their half-eaten sandwich is still in the Tupperware container in the fridge. You reminisce about the good old days when you play their favourite playlist and see bits and pieces of them in the faces of your clique of friends. The person may be gone their presence is still felt. It's like a copy of a copy of a copy of them. Faint, fuzzy and poorly rendered but the image is quite recognisable. Then one day you come home to find them sitting on their favourite sofa watching TV and asking you how your day was. It dawns on you that they kept their copy of the front door key when you kicked them out. Next thing you know, you're sitting right next to them sharing a drink and having a top laugh like the divorce never happened in the first place. Right back to square one.

My old man, like a bizarre re-enactment of The Walking Dead, keeps coming back.

One of my favourite authors and evangelists, the late *Dr Myles Munroe*, once said that “*Divorce is worse than death*”. In divorce, after you complete the official annulment proceedings, the marriage is dead and buried. But as you go through life, there is a resurrection. You see them at the store or bus stop or even in church. It is the kind of death that is “never closed.” In death however, someone dies and you take them to the mortuary and they are placed in a box. People dress in black and go to a cemetery where the dead are placed in a hole. We pour dirt over

them and are buried to be seen no more. **Ephesians 4:22-24** instructs "... to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self ..." This got me thinking about my continually recurring predicament. Simply disassociating myself from Vinnie can never be enough to truly be free of his influence and power.

This time, after I expel him from my house I will collect all of his clothes, unmount all his repugnant paintings, collect the CDs and

proceed have a massive bonfire in an open field. I shall wait until the last ember has extinguished then I will end Vinnie's life for good and bury him in an unmarked grave. My old man, like a bizarre re-enactment of *The Walking Dead*, keeps coming back. I need finality and conclusion. Drastic and melodramatic as it sounds, I believe the death of Vinnie is the only way I can find the righteousness and holiness of **Ephesians 2**.

By **ALVIN MLAMBO**



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I remember when I was a child, we used to share everything with my siblings and cousins. From clothes to food and even diseases. Yes, diseases.

To avoid all the care giving stress later on, my parents would organize sleep overs at which ever cousin's had a flavor of the month communicable disease. All our other cousins and close family friends would gather to share in the tragic community pot that Patient Zero would generously provide. Whether this practice was sanctioned by the

W.H.O. or not, I am yet to investigate. Contracting child diseases like the Mumps, Measles, and Chicken pox became group activities and we would trade notes on levels of pain and itchiness. We grew up with a few children of the same age group and the rest being a bit younger so it was a given. The logic was that our clique of relations and friends would all contract the disease at once, develop immunity all at once and all move on with life.

LIVING CHRISTIAN

In a Time of

CRISIS

I recall an incident when one of us got the Chicken pox and I didn't catch it till all of them were done. That calamine lotion looked like poorly rendered zombie make-up on my dark African skin. I walked around looking like a rejected extra from Michael Jackson's *Thriller* video. (For our younger readers please refer to YouTube if you are unfamiliar with it. You will only appreciate the visual after watching the music video). I got teased a lot by the earlier survivors of the disease and because I was the only one with it at the time, they had to be quarantined .It was not pleasant watching my play mates, playing and

enjoying their recovery through the confines of my bedroom window. I would ask to participate and hearing them say *"NO we can't. Mum said to stay away from you."* As a child you feel much debased by such situations because playtime is everything. It wasn't a pleasant experience at all to a point that in my adult life, I remember the somber feeling well. I eventually healed and joined the crew but that feeling stayed with me. That feeling of being an outcast because of a sickness. No one wanting to touch or play with you and treating you like a mucus monster. In this time of the Corona Virus (Covid-19), the

methods of keeping one safe are similar to my childhood quarantine though the stakes are far higher.

Today the Corona Virus has become a household name all over the world. The world's scientists have had previous experiences with the virus, in one form or the other, since the 1960s. Some of the most recent encounters are the SARS (SARS-CoV) outbreak in mainland China in 2003 and the Middle East Respiratory syndrome (MERS-Cov) in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Korea in 2012. But none of the previous encounters have garnered as much notoriety as the current iteration, Covid-19. According to the World Health Organisation, as of the 3rd of April 2020 there were 900 306 confirmed cases of the virus with 45 692 confirmed deaths and a total of 206 countries or

being left out of playground activities for the social butterflies, this is a waking nightmare.

This disease has in every essence taken away the human aspect of being a human being and that is being around other human beings. God created us NOT to exist alone. Our existence is intrinsically linked to the world around us. Trees need us for the carbon Dioxide we exhale and we in turn need them for Oxygen. We need the earth to produce our food and water to enable the plants grow. The examples of what creature needs what to live are too many and would take a lifetime to write about. Bottom line is we are not created to live in isolation. I know some introverts are not much perturbed by the restrictive measures



territories with confirmed cases. With the world scrambling to “*flatten the curve*” of infection, medical scientists have devised a raft of prevention mechanisms.

Chief among them are social distancing and self-quarantine. Recently some countries, South Africa Included, have instituted a nationwide lockdown where all social and mass gatherings are prohibited by law. Just as I felt the sky was falling because I was

and feel right at home in such environments, there are inherent advantages and perks to being able to associate with a warm body as and when one requires. This pandemic began in a market in the Chinese city I had never heard of called Wuhan. Now, it has managed to bring the whole world to a standstill. We here in South Africa have had to adjust to the Lockdown and are unable to send our children to school. We are now working from home and are avoiding all contact with the outside world

unless absolutely necessary. Yet we don't even live on the same continent as Patient Zero.

It has escalated to a point that borders have been closed. It is tall order to contain a virus that mainly spreads through normal social human contact. Now we are being taught not to touch our faces, keep a 2 meter distance between us and others, cover our faces and hands when we do interact and not to shake hands. The very communal activities that make us human. There is most definitely *"...an evil under the sun"* – **Ecclesiastes 10:5**. By extension Church gatherings are also now illegal. We live in the age of mega churches where gathering of 500 or more are common place. If this is not an attack on the body of Christ then I don't know what is.

"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power."

- 2 Timothy 1:7.

I believe all maladies and negative events that occur in our lives are designed to keep as distractions from worshipping and praising God and also serve as diversions you from our mandate here on Earth. Covid-19 has managed to isolate people and turn them into little islands individuals in their homes. Most who left their native homes or provinces and came to Gauteng for economic opportunities, live alone. With the usual weekly association and fellowship with other believers taken away from them, this means and even deeper social and spiritual isolation. The Bible says

"When two or three are gathered in my name I will be there" - **Mathew 18 Vs 20** Some

- It has managed to stop associations or human interaction the bible says *"...love one another as I have loved you"* - **John 15:12**. Jesus Christ didn't love from a distance, He was with people preaching and healing and sharing.
- It has caused mass panic with people hoarding food in fear of lack. The Bible says *"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power."* - **2 Timothy 1:7** and Men will not live on bread alone.
- Economies have declined due to whole industries being shut down and people not being economically productive. The bible says the Lord shall *"...will establish the works of our hands."* - **Psalms 90:17**

I read a post on social media that said people are not even looking at each other in the supermarket and are practicing serious social distancing. I know some might argue and say it is just a disease. Yes it might be, but still diseases are not from God. HE gives life and LIFE in abundance and yet the manner in which people are living now is existing not living. If your life has not been heavily disrupted by the Corona Virus, you are blessed. But I know the effects have been unpleasant on masses of people. However God being God, He will enable one to see the positive in any situation because HE is GOD. I say in these turbulent times practice peace. You ask how? Well if you and your children are home please reconnect and do all the things that the "busy" of life stops you from doing. Do the gardening. Play games. Clean

the house. Paint a self-portrait. Read a book.
Read your BIBLE. Use this time wisely, in
peace and I assure you, you will come out a
much better person and a better family.

By **MADAM LYN**

**May the grace of the Lord
Jesus Christ and the love of
God and the fellowship
of the Holy Spirit be
with you all.**



2 Corinthians 13 : 14

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