

SISTERS

09 - 11 SEPTEMBER
11 - 13 SEPTEMBER

OF AFRICA
2025





2001



2002



2003



2004



2005



2006



2007



2009



2008



2010



2011



2012



2013



2014



2015



2020



2021

SEASONS

Celebrating
25 Years

SISTERS
OF AFRICA 2025



2016



2017



2022



2018



2019



2023



2024



SISTERS

OF AFRICA 2025

TUESDAY TO THURSDAY
CONFERENCE 1
9-11 SEPTEMBER

THURSDAY TO SATURDAY
CONFERENCE 2
11-13 SEPTEMBER
(AT CAPACITY)

YOUR HOST
WILMA OLIVIER

INTERNATIONAL GUEST SPEAKERS
HOLLY WAGNER (USA)
MANOUCHKA CHARLES (USA)
MICHELLE MCKINNEY HAMMOND (GHANA)

SEASONS



www.rivers.church



Let us pray

Did you know that our prayers can move mountains? Before reading our 2025 Sisters of Africa magazine, please pray for us as we and our guest speakers prepare for the two conferences this year. We want to bathe Sisters of Africa in prayer and trust God for our best conferences yet. Please ask for many salvations and breakthroughs in women's lives.

We will also pray for every delegate who has registered and will still register, that the Lord will hear the cry of their hearts, whatever their needs will be. We will believe with you, and ask you to believe with us, as we trust our Lord to answer our prayers. For those who may say, 'Lord, help my faith, my need is so great,' please know that He will, but here is a Scripture that will help and encourage you, dear sister:

Matthew 17:20 (NIV) "Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."



Come and celebrate Sisterhood with us in September!

Hello God's Gorgeous Girls,

Welcome to our Sisters of Africa Women's Conference magazine 2025. So glad it made its way to you to invite you to come and take your seat. Speaking of seats, Conference Two is at full capacity BUT there is space in Conference One. This is a big year for us as we celebrate our 25th women's conference and we are looking for ways to make it extra special for you. Our theme this year is SEASONS, and the topic lends itself to all we will experience in life based on the book of Ecclesiastes chapter three.

I was reflecting recently on our small beginnings and had to smile at how good our God is. *Psalm 119:68* says that He is good and He does good. In His goodness, He has shown us our worth and our purpose. He has reminded us that we are wonderfully and beautifully created in His image. He reminds us again and again that He wants to use us for His glory and that He wants us to celebrate being Sisters. He is a good, good Father. He has also shown us over the years that we are better together. We are called to unite, not divide, and to show how we do life, is opposite to the world. I was reminded once again of that wonderful verse in *Psalm 68:11 (NIV)* "The Lord announces the word, and the women who proclaim it are a mighty throng." We are a great host on the earth, and we are called to proclaim the Good News.

Our guests this year will be familiar to you, but I would like to introduce Manouchka Charles from Vous Church in Miami, Florida. Manouchka attended our conference in 2016, but this year she will be ministering to us. We are also welcoming back Holly Wagner, currently residing in Dallas, Texas, and Michelle McKinney Hammond from Accra, Ghana. Both have been coming to us for many years.

Running simultaneously to Conference Two is the popular Kids Africa Conference, an action-packed, fun-filled conference for children. This conference will allow you to relax and bask in God's Presence knowing that your children are in a safe and secure environment, also being ministered to.

But now, enjoy the moving articles over a coffee and make sure you register for conference and come take your seat.

Love and blessings,
Wilma Olivier
Conference Host

Conference information

We are so excited for our 2025 Sisters of Africa and Kids Africa Conferences!

This year we have two back-on-back conferences once again, with Conference One starting on Tuesday, 9th September until Thursday, 11th September and Conference Two starting on Thursday afternoon, 11th September until Saturday, 13th September. Please note that Conference Two is already at full capacity but we still have space for you in Conference One.

We look forward to our time together with our guest speakers. We are excited to hear from Manouchka Charles, who will be speaking at our conference for the very first time, as well as two friends of the house, Holly Wagner and Michelle McKinney Hammond, plus our conference host, Wilma Olivier.

We know you may have lots of questions regarding this year's conferences, so check out our FAQs below, and if there is anything else you're not sure about, email conferences@rivers.church.

HOW DO I REGISTER?

You can register online at www.rivers.church/soa-25 or the Rivers App, or at an Info Counter on any of our Rivers Church campuses.

HOW WILL I KNOW THAT I AM REGISTERED?

You would have received a confirmation email by now. If not, please check with the conference team or at an Info Counter at your campus.

CAN I BRING MY BABY TO CONFERENCE?

Absolutely! We have fully equipped Parents Rooms available for moms with babies. We also have allocated seats in the main auditorium for moms with infants, with easy access to Parents Rooms.

IS THERE AN AGE LIMIT?

Sisters of Africa Conference is open to women of all ages, from age 13/14, while Kids Africa Conference is tailored for kids aged 12 months to Grade 7.

WILL KIDS AFRICA BE AVAILABLE FOR BOTH CONFERENCES?

Kids Africa is only available for the duration of Conference Two.

CAN I REGISTER MY CHILD FOR KIDS AFRICA CONFERENCE IF I WILL NOT BE ATTENDING SISTERS OF AFRICA CONFERENCE?

You will need to be registered for Sisters of Africa Conference Two and you will need to be on campus for the duration of the conference.

CAN I REGISTER FOR SPECIFIC DAYS OR SESSIONS ONLY?

Your conference registration covers all conference sessions and you are welcome to attend sessions depending on your availability.

IS THERE FOOD ON-SITE?

As part of your conference fee, we will be offering a snack pack and lunch pack. Vegetarian options will be available. There will also be a variety of food options available to purchase on-site at the Rivers Coffee Shop and at various food vendors.

WHAT WILL THE WEATHER BE LIKE?

It will be springtime and the temperatures will range from 9-23 degrees Celsius. All venues are air-conditioned, so be sure to bring a warm jersey.

IS THERE WHEELCHAIR ACCESS OR ELDERLY ASSISTANCE?

Wheelchair access is available. Should you require any further assistance, please let us know in advance by emailing **conferences@rivers.church** by 7th August 2025 so that we can be aware of your needs and see how best to assist you.

CAN I TAKE SOMEONE'S SEAT IF THEY DO NOT ATTEND CONFERENCE THAT DAY?

The conference registration is not transferable once check-in has taken place and should you choose to attend the conference, a new registration would need to be purchased. You will not gain access to the conference venue on another person's registration.

CAN I BUY SOMEONE'S TICKET IF THEY KNOW THAT THEY ARE NOT ATTENDING ANYMORE? WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

Should you be aware of someone not attending either conference, you are welcome to contact them directly. The conference team would not facilitate this process. Should you want to take over someone else's registration, the original registration holder must contact the conference team on email via **conferences@rivers.church** for the transfer to be done on the system to ensure a smooth parking allocation and check-in process.



KIDS AFRICA CONFERENCE 2025



We are so excited for Kids Africa Conference taking place from the 11th to the 13th of September 2025.

What is Kids Africa Conference? Kids Africa is our annual conference, tailored for children aged 12 months to Grade 7 (age 13). It runs alongside Sisters of Africa Conference Two, and is an opportunity for your children to have their own conference experience.

Your children will have fun learning about seasons through age appropriate and impactful ministry. We have an action-packed programme which includes the Word, worship, prayer, games, arts and crafts, time with their friends and so much more. Each child will have an opportunity to learn about God and grow in their faith! Your children will be cared for by our team of incredible volunteers and will be provided with a light meal/ snacks throughout conference.





REGISTER TODAY

Make sure to register your children early so that they don't miss out on this fun, faith filled kids conference! We look forward to welcoming them to Kids Africa 2025.

Moms, remember that there will be no Kids Africa during Sisters of Africa Conference One running from the 9th to the 11th of September.







RIVERS.

CHURCH

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2024 Memories







2024 Memories

2024 Memories





my sister
my friend



Time to make that Shift!

Michelle McKinney Hammond

I believe we know change is coming long before it occurs. There is what I call a *divine discontent* that starts in the pit of your stomach, on the edge of your subconscious, that begins whispering that where you are and what you are doing is no longer sustainable. Something needs to shift. What is right now has worn out its welcome. Like the leaves that change color before they fall, you feel yourself and the circumstances around you fading from their former glory. You feel a strange sense of detachment, a lack of passion, a lack of desire to keep doing the same thing. Like a battery-run toy, you move slower and slower before coming to a complete stop, out of power, and unable to function.

The problem is that even though we feel ready for change, the actual manifestation of it can be quite disconcerting, especially if the change was not orchestrated by us. We want to be in control and yet we rarely are when an actual shift begins to occur.

You may notice that none of the questions I listed asked how you *felt*. That is because now is not the time to discuss feelings. The range of emotions you may experience will most likely not help you navigate as you should. Apprehension, fear, doubt, anger, and pain will distract you, pre-venting you from making good decisions. Moving forward, you will have to master your thoughts and instruct your emotions to follow, not the other way around. Therefore, it is

critical to make informed choices based on reality versus your response to it. Years ago, I found myself facing massive life changes. Financial fallout. My career seemingly screeching to a standstill. Losing my home and my office. The death of my father. All in a Job-like succession!

I didn't sit down and cover myself with sackcloth and ashes like Job did. (*See Job 16:15.*) I couldn't afford to! I had to make some radical decisions to stay above the circumstances. The luxury of feeling sorry for myself didn't exist. I had to figure out how to make life work. But where to begin was the question. Putting one foot in front of the other took more energy than ever, but I had to keep moving! I had to keep hope alive. Failure was not an option.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 (NLT)

"For everything there is a **season**, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up."

It is inevitable. Shift happens. Why? Because growth demands change. Nothing greater can happen if we are not compelled by shifts and changes around us as well as within us. God knows that it is a human tendency to bask in complacency if we are left to our own devices. Even when we don't like our lives,



the devil you know is better than the one you don't. We find excuses to stick with the status quo and try to ride it out on a sinking ship.

If you're honest, you've been here before, just with different characters and circumstances.

We mistakenly think that we are alone in our situation and that where we are will last forever, whether good or bad. Neither condition for anyone is rare or permanent. Both affluence and lack go through shifts and seasons of up and down. The stock market is proof of that. From bear to bull and back again. If only we could incorporate the principle of buying low and selling high in every aspect of life! Inevitably, what goes up must come down, and what goes down can only go so far before making the adjustment to rise again.

This is where faith comes into play. Fear and faith are both currencies that will purchase your result. Both are belief systems! They both produce what you choose to focus on. So, which one will you choose to bargain with: fear that it's over for you or faith that this setback is merely a setup for an amazing comeback? Your currency of choice — whether fear or faith — will determine how you spend your time and energy. Will you be distracted or determined? Either option will decide your emotions, attitude, beliefs, language, and actions. Your emotions will have everything to do with what you choose to believe based on the thoughts that generated your feelings. Once you've settled into agreeing with your emotions, you will make decisions that lead to actions, positive or negative. Those actions have everything to do with your outcome!

The biggest mistake one can ever make is to assume that things won't change. It is easy to believe this when you're in a euphoric state of accomplishment when you're on a roll. But many one-hit wonders have discovered the painful truth that life and the public are very fickle.

Thus, there is a need for constant recognition of the times and the flexibility to make the necessary adjustments to remain relevant. Once this is mastered, your latter days can indeed be greater than your former because of the constant improvements you are making in your life, your craft, your relationships, and everything about every area of your life! We tend to sit at a table that doesn't disrupt our comfort, even if we don't like what is being served. So, we add seasoning and try to change the flavor of what we are eating. We prefer minimal adjustments over leaps of faith. Past needs and present emergencies can cause you to rationalize finding another mode of living the same way. That is where we can find ourselves stuck even though a more exciting life awaits.

*“It is inevitable.
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well as within us.”*

After the loss of my job I considered taking the time I now had to write the book I had always wanted to write. I made a thousand excuses not to. I had to find a job, was the first thing at the top of the list. To be perfectly honest, my concern about my financial future short-circuited my dreams of a future in which I would write books and become an accomplished author. What if it didn't happen? How quickly could I earn an income? What would be next after that? My lack of clarity caused me to cling to the familiar, which

no longer wanted to claim our friendship. And that is when I became stuck for a season. Fact: There is a tension between who we once were and who life is pushing us to become. The unfamiliar challenges the familiar, and we are left standing in the middle, trying to decide our preference even though we may have no choice!

Life can become harsh and impatient when it is time to shift. How can you know the season is changing? Simple. The old avenues close. You can't reach the same people. The old way no longer works. Life as you knew it is no longer sustainable, attainable, or desirable. You can bang your head against an unyielding wall, insisting life has to go this way when all the signs are pointing elsewhere, or you

can choose to recognize the leaves are turning. The landscape of life no longer looks the same. These are all keys to knowing it's time for a change.

Many are not prepared for the next season because they did not anticipate that anything different would occur. Many eat all of their harvest in the fall, not preparing for winter. Always be ready for your next, not out of fear but out of practicality. Even nature stores up for the winter so that it can comfortably ride out the cold.

Jeremiah 8:7 (NIV)

“Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed **seasons**, and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration. But my people do not know the requirements of the Lord.”

An important factor you should know when you are in a transitional season is that the voices that surround you can shut you down, even if they mean well. They will hand you the ammunition for your excuses and exchange your faith for fear and doubt. It is all a matter of mindset—the mindset that generates from language and wrong confessions. The things that repeat themselves over and over in your subconscious can war against your conscious mind and win the battle if you let it. It is said that our subconscious mind controls 95 percent of our life. And yet, your subconscious can be realigned and designed to agree with your spirit, which has the unlimited capacity to not only dream but empower you to achieve what you visualize.

The subconscious mind does more than dream; it is also always awake because it controls all the vital processes and functions of the body. While the conscious mind sleeps, the subconscious mind is still fully awake, hearing and processing things while we sleep. The subconscious mind operates on habit and takes everything literally.

Did you know that the subconscious mind cannot differentiate between negative and positive thoughts? It is not subjective; it can't reason or think independently. It only obeys commands. It takes its commands from the conscious mind. In other words, you can have what you think and speak! This is why, in the Bible, God talks so much about controlling your thought life and directing your thoughts. (See, for example, Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:8.)

The other fascinating thing about the subconscious

is that it only thinks in the present. The conscious mind dwells on the past and worries about the future, but the subconscious can only focus on the present moment. The subconscious mind is like a computer that processes huge amounts of information through your senses and translates it back to you in a flash. It does not analyze; it focuses on emotion versus logic and reason. Therefore, your emotions cannot be trusted. Things are not always what they seem.

Why do I share all of this with you? Because I want you to understand how critical your mindset is for navigating shifts and changes in life. Based on your thoughts, attitudes, and emotions, your outcome can vary from amazing to devastating. The choice is up to you. Again, you get to choose the voice you listen to and the actions that will follow. How your story ends in this season is up to you.

Pray this prayer with me:

Dear heavenly Father, I am struggling with the season I am in. I confess that fear has overwhelmed me and blinded me to my options and has also drowned out Your voice. I am struggling to find my footing. I waver between trusting You and taking life into my own hands. I confess I was not prepared for what has occurred in my life, so forgive me for my lack of foresight. I need to know your requirements, as well as Your instructions for this season. I am seeking Your wisdom as well as Your assurance that I will make it through this challenge. I am beyond figuring this out. I need Your light. I need Your strength. Teach me Your ways and increase my understanding. Help me to hear Your voice. Lead me and guide me. I extend my hands to You and await Your word, in the name of Christ Jesus. Amen.

Excerpts from When Shift Happens, Say Yes to Your Next by Michelle McKinney Hammond.

Michelle McKinney Hammond is the president of MMH Ministries. She is the best-selling author of over forty books and has appeared on countless radio and television talk shows, and featured in magazines and newspapers in the US and abroad. She is an actress, as well as an accomplished singer, songwriter and producer, and is the visionary and pastor of Relevance, a unique music ministry based in Ghana. She also travels the world, speaking and performing.



Don't Quit

Finding strength in life's toughest seasons

Holly Wagner

Life has its seasons — some bright and beautiful, others dark and challenging. There are times when we feel like giving up, when the weight of our struggles makes the journey seem impossible. If you've ever felt that way, you're not alone. But I'm here to tell you: Don't quit.

Think of the apostle Paul. He wrote some of his most powerful words while sitting in a prison cell, awaiting execution. He had navigated countless seasons of hardship, and in his final letter to his protégé, Timothy, he looked back on his life and summarized it simply: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

2 Timothy 4:7 (NIV)

Paul was a great man! Whole cities of people came to know God because of him, and he introduced the continent of Europe to the gospel. Paul wrote one half of the New Testament. His secret to greatness wasn't in his knowledge, though — and he was a knowledgeable guy. It wasn't in his looks. It wasn't because of his eloquence. It wasn't even in his talents. Paul was extraordinary because he did not quit — no matter what circumstances befell him or how difficult the season he was navigating.

After his conversion experience, Paul found the people around him hostile; they despised and mocked him. He could have said, "There is no love here. I'm throwing in the towel." But he didn't. Then

the Christians didn't believe his conversion, and the Jews tried to kill him. He didn't give up.

Paul was thrown into prison more than once. He didn't quit. When he said yes to Jesus, he was all in. Before his conversion, he had persecuted and killed Christians. Like all of us he had been forgiven much. He knew what his calling was: to take the gospel to the Gentiles, and no matter what tried to get in the way, he persevered through it. He kept his eyes on Jesus. He did not quit.

He endured a cruel crowd's stoning him and leaving him for dead. How did he respond? He got up and returned to the city filled with the very people who wanted to kill him. Even in the midst of the literal storm and shipwreck he still didn't quit. Paul had plenty of opportunities to quit, to claim that his life was just too hard. But no matter how tough the season, he didn't quit.

How many times have you faced hard seasons that made you want to walk away? Maybe it's a career setback, a strained relationship, a health challenge, or an overwhelming sense of exhaustion. I have been through all of those, and there were a few times I came so close to quitting. Life throws obstacles our way, and the temptation to quit is real. But what if, on the other side of our struggle, there's a breakthrough waiting? What if our perseverance is the key to inspiring someone else? Know that

as you traverse this season, all the hosts of heaven are cheering you on. You must make it through. A whole generation of people needs you to keep going. They need the wisdom you will gain from getting through this season. Maybe it is actually selfish of us to give up in tough times. Or do you think that is too strong a word? I just think there are people we are supposed to help — right on the other side of this hard time. That is why we can't quit. It is not just about us. That's what Paul understood. You count. Staying your course matters. Gideon, another great leader, was exhausted yet kept fighting. He and his small army pursued their enemies despite being tired and worn out themselves. Why? Because victory was just ahead. The Bible tells us they were "exhausted, yet still in pursuit." Can you relate? Maybe you feel drained, yet something inside you knows you must keep going. God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. He sustains us when we have nothing left to give.

It's easy to feel like we need to be strong all the time, but real strength is found in leaning on God. Sometimes, it's in our moments of greatest weakness that we experience the deepest encounters with His presence. Remember, even Jesus, in His humanity, had moments of exhaustion and grief. But He pressed on, knowing His purpose.

A few years ago, my husband Philip and I visited Jerusalem and saw its ancient city gates. In biblical times, battles were often decided at the gates. If an enemy could take the gate, they controlled the city. It was at the gate where warriors had to dig deep, summon their last ounce of strength, and fight for victory. Your battle, this difficult season — whether it's a personal challenge, a professional hurdle, or a crisis of faith — may be reaching that critical point. Will you keep fighting?

We all have our battlefields. Maybe your battlefield is in your mind — fighting against anxiety, fear, or self-doubt. Maybe it's in your home — working through a strained relationship or navigating the challenges of parenting. Or perhaps your battlefield is in your career — pushing forward despite setbacks and disappointments. The key to getting through hard seasons is persistence.

The Eagle's Flight

I love the words that the prophet Isaiah used in *Isaiah 40:28-31 (NCV)*:

"Surely you know.

Surely you have heard.

The Lord is the God who lives forever,
who created all the world.

He does not become tired or need to rest.

No one can understand how great
his wisdom is.

He gives strength to those who are tired
and more power to those who are weak.

Even young children become tired and
need to rest,

and young people trip and fall.

But the people who trust the Lord will become
strong again.

They will rise up as an eagle in the sky;

they will run and not need rest;

they will walk and not become tired."

Rising up like an eagle is such a beautiful and powerful illustration. My husband loves learning about eagles. Recently he told me about a certain type of eagle that can, at one stage in his life, develop a wart-like growth on his beak. When this happens, this eagle's life changes. Normally, a healthy eagle can spot his prey from two miles away and, at one hundred miles per hour, swoop down on it with amazing precision. But now, the eagle with the growth dives for prey and misses. He slowly loses his accurate sense of perception and some cannot hunt effectively. He grows weary, loses his strength. When he lands, his balance is off, and he stumbles to a stop.

With his skills diminishing, he seems to get confused and doubt his own abilities. The eagle actually begins to appear depressed, and soon he starts to lose his beautiful feathers. He retreats to the darkness of a cave, continuing to weaken.

Then something interesting happens. It is as though the eagle plans suicide. Either he wants to destroy himself, or he realizes that he is about to die, so he decides he might as well do some flying. Perhaps he remembers what it was to soar above the clouds, to be the king of the air. He steps out of the cave, looks toward heaven, and begins to flap his tired wings. He lifts off and heads straight up. He goes higher and higher toward the heavens. He rises above the clouds and keeps going. As he continues to gain altitude, and as he goes through the atmosphere pressure

“So, to the woman who feels like giving up — don’t. Keep pressing forward. Keep believing. Keep your eyes on Jesus, the One who calms storms and strengthens the weary. Your perseverance matters.”

changes, the growth on his beak bursts. When it bursts, he is immediately energized with fresh power and strength. His equilibrium returns. His depth perception comes back. He is once again himself. He can hunt with precision and strengthen himself.

This story about the eagle may or may not be true, but the Bible is. Isaiah told us that if we would trust God and remember that He is on the throne, then we too, would rise like the eagle. When we put our eyes and our hope on the God of the universe, we are strengthened. Those things that are trying to destroy us are themselves destroyed as we look up. In the midst of this painful season, keep looking up. It is easy to get freaked out — or at least distracted by the challenges of this season — but never forget Who is taking care of you. Stay focused by keeping your eyes on your God. So, to the woman who feels like giving up — don’t. Keep pressing forward. Keep believing. Keep your eyes on Jesus, the One who calms storms and strengthens the weary. Your perseverance matters. It could change your life and inspire someone else to keep going too.

Your perseverance is not in vain. Every time you choose to keep going, you are building endurance. Every step forward, no matter how small, is a step toward victory. Think about the women in the Bible. We stand on their shoulders, because they didn’t give up when the season was a challenging one. Think about the women in history who changed the world — leaders, activists, mothers, teachers, pioneers. They all had moments of doubt, seasons of difficulty, but they refused to quit.

You were created with a purpose, and every trial you endure, every season you navigate is shaping you into the woman God designed you to be. Have you ever noticed how a diamond is formed? It takes pressure

and time. Without that intense process, it would remain a simple piece of coal. Your trials are refining you, making you stronger, more resilient, and ready for the next season.

Think of a marathon runner. She doesn’t stop at mile twenty, even though every muscle in her body aches. She keeps going because she knows the finish line is near. Your finish line may not be visible yet, but it’s there. Keep running your race with faith and determination. You were made to soar.

You were made to finish strong. Keep fighting. Keep persevering through this season. And never quit. Your story is not over yet — it’s just beginning.

Pastor Holly Wagner, together with her husband, Pastor Philip, founded Oasis Church in 1984, beginning in a Beverly Hills home with a group of 10 people. Holly is passionate about seeing women become who God has designed them to be. She is the founder of She Rises (formerly GodChicks). She is an author, and a regular on Better Together on TBN. Holly and Philip currently reside in Dallas, Texas. They have been married for forty years and they have two adult children, Jordan and Paris, and four grandchildren.

13, 14
are the body of
members in par-
after that "miracles, first apostles, second-
diversities of helps, then gifts of
prophets? all tongues, then gifts of
all workers of apostles?
30 Have all teachers? are all
do all speak all the gifts of
31 But "covet earnestly the best
gifts: and yet shew I unto you a
more excellent way. **G. 13. 1, 2, 7**

CHAPTER 13


S **T**HOUGH I speak with the
tongues of men and of angels,
and have as not charity, I am be-
tinkling cymbal.
2 And though I have the gift of
prophecy, and understand
though I have all knowledge, and
could I remove mountains, or a
have not charity, I am nothing.
3 And though I bestow all my
goods to feed the poor, and though
I give my body to be burned, and
have not charity, it profiteth me
nothing.
4 Charity suffereth long, and
is kind; charity envieth not;
charity vaunteth not itself, is not
puffed up,
5 Doth not behave itself un-
seemly, seeketh not her own, is
not easily provoked, thinketh no
evil,
6 Rejoiceth in the truth;
7 Beareth all things, believeth
all things, hopeth all things,
8 Charity never faileth: but
whether there be prophecies,
9 **W. Ver. 5.**

CHAPTER 14

FOLLOW after charity, and
desire spiritual gifts, **G. 14. 1**
2 For he that may prophesy, and
unto men, but unto God: for
no man, but unto God: for
howbeit in the spirit he speaketh
mysteries.
3 But he that prophesieth in an
exhortation, and comfort, but
unto men to edification, and
unto men to edification, and
4 He that speaketh in all
the church, **G. 14. 2**
5 I would that ye all
with tongues, but ye all speak
prophecies: for rather that ye
prophesie with tongues, than
with tongues, except he interpret,
that the church may receive
edifying. **W. Ver. 15.**
6 Now, brethren, if I come unto
you speaking with tongues, what
shall I profit you, except I shall
speak to you either by revelation,
9 **W. Ver. 5.**

they shall fail: whether there
be tongues, they shall cease: if
9 For we know in part, and we
prophesy in part.
10 But when that which is in
part is come, then that which is per-
fect shall be done away.
11 When I was a child, I spoke
as a child, I thought as a child, I
knew as a child, but now I have
become a man, I have put away
childish things,
12 For now we see through a glass,
darkly; but then face to face:
shall I know even as I know: but
known. **G. 14. 3**
13 And now abide faith, hope,
charity, these three; but the great-
est of these is charity.

G. 14. 1
1 **W. Ver. 5.**
2 **W. Ver. 15.**
3 **W. Ver. 15.**
4 **W. Ver. 15.**
5 **W. Ver. 15.**
6 **W. Ver. 15.**
7 **W. Ver. 15.**
8 **W. Ver. 15.**
9 **W. Ver. 15.**



A Bible
that's falling
apart usually
belongs to
someone who
isn't

Charles Spurgeon



The Principle of Preparation

Manouchka Charles

Have you ever had a moment where you knew people were depending on your preparation, but you felt completely unready? That was me as I sat down to prepare my sermon for the last Sunday of the year. My pastor back in Brooklyn had asked me to preach from *2 Corinthians 9:15*. I read the text over and over, praying and studying, yet nothing seemed to come together.

I even considered preaching something familiar instead. But deep down, I knew God had something new to say.

As I kept seeking God, the light began to break through. That's when I saw it: the principle of preparation.

2 Corinthians 9 in Context

In 2 Corinthians 9, Paul writes to the church in Corinth about a financial gift they promised to give. As I read the chapter over and over, it was kind of funny to me that Paul didn't fully trust them to not embarrass him. Paul sends people ahead to make sure everything is prepared in advance. Paul

*"Before we even
knew we needed
Him, God had
already provided
everything we'd ever
need. Preparation
isn't just practical;
it's spiritual."*

uses this moment to teach about generosity, sowing, and reaping. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, he closes with this powerful statement:

2 Corinthians 9:15 (NIV)
"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

At first glance, this verse feels random. But it isn't. As they prepared their gift, Paul reminded them that the ultimate prepared gift is Jesus. Before we even knew we needed Him, God had already provided everything we'd ever need. Preparation isn't just

practical; it's spiritual. It reflects the heart of a God who didn't rush but carefully planned everything for our salvation.

Ready, Not Rushed

Preparation reveals the difference between being ready and being rushed. When you're rushed, everything feels overwhelming. But when you're ready, even unexpected challenges don't shake you. Preparation brings peace.

How often do we throw things together at the last minute and call it “good enough”? God has already prepared so much for us, yet we often fail to reflect that same intentionality in what we offer back to Him.

This year, let’s commit to being ready — ready for opportunities, challenges, and to reflect God’s excellence in everything we do.

Give God Your Best

God deserves our best, not just what’s left over. Preparation ensures that what we bring to Him—our time, talents, and resources—is an offering of excellence, not mediocrity.

Paul sent people ahead to Corinth to prepare their gift. In the same way, I believe God sent me ahead to remind you: prepare your gift this year.

“Preparation reveals the difference between being ready and being rushed. When you’re rushed, everything feels overwhelming. But when you’re ready, even unexpected challenges don’t shake you. Preparation brings peace.”

- If you don’t have a prayer life, now is the time to start one.
- If you don’t have a method for studying God’s Word, build one.
- If you don’t have a plan for personal growth, create one.
- If you don’t have a strategy for staying healthy, develop one.

This year:

- Complacency won’t cut it.
- Mediocrity won’t cut it.
- Procrastination won’t cut it.

Preparation isn’t about perfection; it’s about intentionality.

Where in your life could intentional preparation bring peace? Start there.

One Thought

The principle of preparation leads to the promise of provision.

One Verse

2 Corinthians 9:8 (NIV) “And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

Pastor Manouchka Charles is a speaker and pastor who is passionate about sharing the Word of God with people of all ages and backgrounds. She brings joy and hope to those around her. Originally from Brooklyn, New York, Pastor Manouchka is now a part of the Pastoral staff at VOUS Church in Miami, Florida. Being part of this community has made her faith and leadership grow, as well as push her to who God has called her to be.

Teach us
to number our
days carefully
so that we may
develop wisdom
in our hearts

Psalms 90:12 CSB



Every Timeframe Tells a story







Seasons are Timeframes

Wilma Olivier

Definition of time: era, age, period, generation, phase, stage, occasion, instance or moment.

Seasons are about the times of our lives. When we watch a period movie, a passage of time unfolds. It's the same when we look at old photos. We laugh at the fashion of the time and our hairstyles. When people visit us at our home, they may see frames of photos or a photo album. Invariably the visitors may ask, "When was this?" and we reply, "Oh, that was when we lived in Cape Town or visited London."

Timeframes change all the time and every timeframe tells a story. The words of the song, Turn! Turn! Turn! by The Byrds based on Ecclesiastes three, speaks of the earth turning around the sun year after year, bringing seasons and change in one way or the other.

Ecclesiastes three stresses the preciousness of time and it acknowledges the varying emotions and seasons all might experience on life's journey.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (NKJV)

"To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted; A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up; A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a

time to refrain from embracing; A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away; A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak; A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace."

Seasons are timeframes or periods allotted for life to happen.

Time is our most precious resource

Many things lost in life, we can regain again. Money, friendships, houses, and so many other things. Yet, time is the one thing we cannot regain. Years pass and we never get them back. As you get older, this will become more evident. It is vitally important that we use time wisely and not waste it on things that are meaningless.

Jonathan Edwards

"Time is precious because eternity hinges on how we spend it."

Time is a gift. We use time. It is something we cannot produce. At Bible College, one topic was time management and I never got it. I was the only student married with two children at school at the time, which meant I had to adapt to the children's timetables. Then several years ago, I read something that confirmed that to me:

Stephen Covey

“Time management is a misnomer; the challenge is to manage ourselves. Learn to organise and execute around priorities.”

The impact, quality and joy of our lives is directly associated with how wisely we use the time we have. We must think carefully about how we invest our time.

Ralph Washington Sockman

“Time is the deposit each one has in the bank of God, and no one knows the balance.”

Make time count for what is important

We are born with time. What we do with time is up to us. It is important to spend time with God and in church. Not occasionally, but as a lifestyle. A portion of our day belongs to God in prayer and reading the Bible because it waters our lives. Our Christian walk is our rehearsal here on earth for Eternity. We live out our lives and when translated to Eternity, it will be a smooth transition. We will know God personally and we will know His Word, His values, His heart and His people.

It is important to spend time on our marriages

There are many reasons why marriages break up, but one of them is because we did not spend enough time together. Invest time for the romance to continue. Our marriages and family life are a testimony to the world. André and I had date nights for many years while the children were growing up. It was a weekly exercise and even if we stayed home, we called it a date night. I lit candles, he played music we enjoyed together and we had our favourite foods and treats on that night. It was also when we shared our hearts with each other. As we are now in our seventies and our children are all married, we have switched to date days and prefer going to restaurants for lunch more than for dinner.

It is important to spend time with our children

Most mothers work today and so did I. Yet we still need to make time to invest in our children so that they can be mighty in the land.

Creative World School

“Here are the nine Most Important Minutes of Your Child’s Day:

1. The first three minutes right after they wake up
2. The three minutes after they come home from school
3. The last three minutes of the day before they go to bed”

The first three minutes should be something like a hug, a kiss or high five to the teens. After school, if blessed to be home, you can engage them with words like, ‘How did it go today?’ Instead of them running to the TV or starting to do homework, take a walk together. I used to take my kids for ice cream on certain occasions after school. Sometimes, I took them for a ride to the beach where they grew up. Find a way that works for you to spend at least these nine tiny minutes together! Not suggesting that is all the time you will spend together!

Children experience so much daily and a great way to promote emotional health is to capture your child’s attention and make an emotional investment at these key times. I also used to love my chats in the car with them to and from school. If we do not shape them, the world will. Even worse, TV and social media will.

It is a good habit to pray with your small children. Three minutes before bed or ten minutes if you like reading them a Bible story. Do not rely on their Children’s Church teachers to teach them to pray. Let their teachers and leaders reinforce what you have already taught them. With teens before bedtime, chat about things they enjoy talking about and encourage them to read and pray. This is an investment of time you will never regret.

Every day is a gift

Eleanor Roosevelt

“Today is a gift. That’s why we call it the present. The past is history, the future is a mystery.”

The past does count because we learn from it, but seize today and seize every moment. Enjoy every day and make the most of it. The future is a mystery but we can look forward to it. The future should include hopes and dreams. Live in hope for the future, but live also in the now.

“Seasons are timeframes or periods allotted for life to happen.”

Ps André Olivier

“Hope is the constant expectation of good.”

As daughters of the King, we should wake up every day thanking the Lord for a brand new day. I certainly do. I believe King David did too because he wrote:

Psalms 118:24 (NLT2)

“This is the day the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.”

Ask God for wisdom about time

Psalms 90:12 (NIV)

“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

Why would we need God to teach us about time? Because we need God to reveal to us the brevity or shortness of life. That revelation will help us grow wise, and wisdom is important because the choices we make during our brief stay on earth have eternal consequences.

I would listen to Moses because God spoke to him face to face as one does with a friend. The Lord needs to teach us that life is shorter than we think. It also flies faster than we think.

Psalms 90:10 (a) (NIV)

“The length of our days is seventy years or eighty, if we have the strength.”

God created seasons

We learn a lot from the seasons in nature. Wintertime is essential for the soil. We need all seasons to survive.

Genesis 8:22 (TLB)

“As long as the earth remains, there will be springtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night.”

All the seasons are necessary for sowing and reaping. For growth and development. It seems that God

in His wisdom punctuated all of life with seasons. We too, experience spiritual summers in life when everything is sunny and beautiful. We sense God’s blessing over our lives. But we were not created to live in an eternal summer. Neither created to face an eternal winter.

Our summer can be a time of falling in love. Now we enter a timeframe that may lead to marriage, then to having children. The expectation is exciting. Then one day, suddenly storm clouds appear when he breaks up with you because he met someone else. And in one day, you have gone from summer to winter. How do you handle it? Cling to Jesus. Ask for His strength. I was reading in Exodus:

Exodus 20:21 (GW)

“The people kept their distance while Moses went closer to the dark cloud where God was.”

I realised that God is present even in the dark clouds of our lives. Acknowledge Him in the season of dark clouds. He is ever-present in the good and difficult seasons. Spring is coming. In farming terms, spring is a season of annual return. Live in the promise of a great return.

Learn to adapt to the seasons of life

Most people do not know how to adapt and live in different seasons. They do not recognise change is coming. It is like when we enter winter unprepared, and not wearing warm clothing. We have not recognised the change and have not adapted. That is how people get sick.

Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary

“To expect unchanging happiness in a changing world, must end in disappointment.”

God is telling us that things do not stay the same. When we have children, they grow up. If we have a business that is thriving, and the demand dies down, we have to change direction. Our lesson from Ecclesiastes tells us to try to maintain the perspective

that hard times come and hard times go.

Thank God for the promises in His Word. The Scripture, *“It shall come to pass,”* is a good reminder that things will change. We read this phrase 120 times in the Bible. Storms come, and storms pass. The sun will shine again!

Jesus understood seasons very well. He mentioned three times that His time had not yet come in the book of John. Then later, while He was washing the feet of His disciples, He spoke of His betrayal. That was when He said that His time had come. His time to die for the sins of the world.

We need to know that not every storm will sink our ship. I also know that when the storm is raging, my feelings are not rock solid. God’s Word is rock solid. His promises are rock solid, His truth is rock solid and His love is rock solid. Seasons are timeframes that will change many times in a lifetime.

As I close, if you do not yet know Jesus, perhaps today the time has come for you to get to know Him. You can enter a brand new season and a new timeframe.

2 Corinthians 6:2 (NLT2)

“For God says, “At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.” Indeed, the “right time” is now. Today is the day of salvation.”

Pastor Wilma has been the Senior Pastor of Rivers Church, alongside her husband, Pastor André, since 1992. They have grown the church from just seventy people into a multi-campus church of thousands. She has a passion to build into women’s lives and heads up a successful women’s ministry called Sisters. She is also the founder and host of the annual Sisters of Africa Women’s Conference, through which she mentors, motivates and mobilises women from all walks of life to be all they can be for the cause of Christ. Pastor Wilma is the author of Small Beginnings, Life as a Chocolate Cake, and Keep Hope Alive.



Ecclesiastes

3:1-8

There is a time for everything, and a season
for every activity under the heavens:

A time to...





be born...





to plant...

To laugh...





To dance...

To embrace...



To keep...





To mend...

to be silent....



To love...



*and a time
for peace*





Time is precious
because eternity
hinges on how
we spend it

Jonathan Edwards



Christ or Career?

*Staying
grounded in
the modelling
industry*

Bisi Sowemimo

My name is Adebisi Sowemimo, and I was born in Lagos, Nigeria. I grew up in a big family. I have five brothers and one sister, and I am the last of seven children. I'm so blessed to have grown up in a family where I was loved and spoilt by my parents and siblings (not too much spoiling. Haha!) Growing up with lots of male siblings was a lot of fun as I got to play sports with them and they always protected me. We grew up in a Christian home and my parents made sure we were at church every Sunday. We had a prayer room at home, and I remember my mum would wake us up very early every single day around 5:30am to pray.

That season came to an end and a new season began when I left my family behind and moved to South Africa in 2005 when I got a modelling contract with a South African agency. Once I left home, I started living life my own way and doing things I thought were right in my own eyes, though I never stopped believing in God. When I got to South Africa, it took me a while to find a church to call home. I tried attending a few churches but I just didn't feel connected to them, or they were too far from where I stayed. I started attending Rivers Church in 2007 when a friend invited me. I would attend church on Sundays because I felt it was the right thing to do, but I wasn't fully committed to God.

All that changed in 2013 when I went through a very difficult season. I was in a very dark place and I had no one else to turn to except God. I knew then that I had to fully commit my life to Him. I remember one day the Holy Spirit prompting me to go to church for a specific reason, which was to recommit my life to Christ and to get baptised. I still remember that exact day, what I was wearing, where I sat, and the joy I felt knowing I was there to give my life to Christ. A few weeks after that, I got baptised. God got me out of a very dark place. In that season of deep anxiety and depression, not knowing what was going to happen to me, He saw me through. I had tried doing the Christian walk my own way but it hadn't worked because I was being legalistic. However, when I finally committed to God, and the Holy Spirit took control, He showed me the way,

instead of me trying to figure it out on my own.

Growing up, sport was a huge part of my life, so much so that I thought I would take up basketball as a career after high school. But God had other plans for me. Instead of playing basketball, I got into the modelling industry. I had never thought of modelling as a profession because playing basketball professionally was all I wanted to do. Besides, I had no idea what modelling was, and when I decided to give it a shot a lot of people discouraged me from getting into the industry. But when God has a plan for your life, not even people's discouragement and negativity can stop it.

I have been in the modelling industry for a long time now and God has blessed me tremendously. I have had the opportunity to travel the world, seeing places I never thought I would. God has opened so many doors for me in ways that I could never have imagined.

“When God has a plan for your life, not even people’s discouragement and negativity can stop it.”

I went through a season when God told me to walk away from a job that I loved so much, from which I was making a lot of money. I asked God what would happen if I walked away and He told me that I needed to just have faith and trust Him.

I told Him I wouldn't be able to walk away from the job on my own (because I was making good money) unless He got me out, and He did. I was down and out and I was very nervous about what the next step would be. For months I had to wait on God to show me what the next step would be and nothing seemed to be happening, but when I had reached the end of myself the God of the 11th hour came through in a way that I would never have imagined. He opened a door that I was not expecting at all. I now have a full-time job (still in the modelling space) that has been a dream of mine since I started modelling, and only God could have made that happen. I even got to open my own modelling school, which is also something I've always wanted to do. I am so grateful for His faithfulness and kindness towards me.

Being a Christian in an industry where most people don't believe in God, can be challenging. It is sometimes difficult to share my faith and testimony with people but I am glad that there have been times

when I have had the courage to do so. Even now at my workplace, I occasionally get to pray with my colleagues and share my faith with them.

There have been moments in my modelling career where I've had to choose God over certain gigs that came my way. Even though the jobs would have been good for my career, putting God first was way more important to me. I know that as a Christian in my industry, I need to be careful how I represent God. Don't get me wrong, I don't always get it right, but I'm grateful for the moments when the Holy Spirit has helped me to decide whether I should take a gig or not.

I have been plugged into church and serving on the Hospitality Team for over ten years now and it has been an interesting walk with the Lord, to say the least. There have been moments where my faith has been tested and I almost walked away from Him, but I knew I had nowhere else to go and I am so grateful that He didn't give up on me and I didn't give up on Him. In every season God has remained faithful, and it might sound crazy, but I am so glad I went through the difficult seasons because they led me to the Lord. Those seasons taught me new things about His goodness, and that He truly is a God who keeps His promises.

It's been twenty years since I left home, and I am grateful to have grown up in a household that taught me to stay connected to God. Even though I lost my way a bit, I am so glad I found my way back to God. I am grateful that all my siblings and I are walking with the Lord and plugged into church. My nephews and nieces have also followed the path of walking with the Lord. Clearly, my mum's strategy of waking us up at 5:30am every morning has paid off!

Bisi is a professional model and has travelled the world modelling for local and international brands and has graced the covers of various magazines. When she is not on the runway or coaching aspiring models, Bisi loves running and keeping fit. Through disciplined training and endurance, she has completed various marathons, including the challenging Two Oceans Ultra Marathon, and is not planning to stop anytime soon.

This is the
day the Lord
has made.
We will
rejoice and
be glad in it

Psalm 118:24 NLT



Best life decisions

Leishka Laljith

My name is Leishka Laljith, wife, mum and Clinical Psychologist. I was born in Durban and when I was six years old, my dad was offered a promotion which meant that we left all our relatives and friends behind, and our little family of four took on the City of Gold.

My mum has always had a close relationship with God, and her walk with God was the first introduction my brother and I had to what it meant to follow God and live in His ways. Because of my mum and her decisions, I've always known God's love. I would never have known, as a young girl, what safety and protection this would bring to my life, and it is something I am so deeply grateful to my mum for.

I remember as a teenager, around thirteen years old, understanding what it meant for me to choose the Lord as my Saviour. Going to church was no longer just something we did on Sundays. This was my first "best life decision". My mum brought us to Rivers Church in 2009 and as a family we haven't looked back. Well, to be honest, we arrived late the first time we attended, so we did in fact look back as we drove home, but we were on time the following week and every week since!

Rivers is where I came to fully understand what it means to have a relationship with God and it was the first time I felt a sense of belonging and community

in my church. I started serving in the Rivers Café in 2011 and have been part of the team ever since. I struggled with feeling insecure and out of place, and the coffee shop felt like the safe option for me to connect with this new part of my faith. I had my mum around and a countertop between myself and others. As I continued serving, God gently and lovingly challenged me. Through serving, I gained a confidence in myself that never existed before. I became less and less preoccupied with my thoughts and feelings about my lack, and focused more on what God said about who I am. Serving has been a personal gift, an answer to quiet prayers and it has brought a depth to my relationship with God.

The Rivers Café was also the place where I met my second "best life decision" – my husband, Rowan. He offered me a cookie and it really was as awkward as it sounds. Thankfully we redeemed ourselves, and thirteen years later he still shares his snacks with me, albeit unwillingly. As I look back on it now, my life truly became filled with purpose, joy and meaning here at Rivers and I don't think it was by chance. Following God and His ways has transformed my life and brought with it so much more than I thought I deserved, and more than I could have imagined possible.

I now find myself in the season of motherhood. Our daughter, Emily Riah, is two years old and she has been our greatest blessing. This journey has



been so wonderful and I still find myself reeling at the joy of it all. However, it has also brought with it uncertainty, fear and a surge of old insecurities I thought I had laid to rest. It has been both interesting and overwhelming navigating this space, but more importantly, I feel that God has revealed Himself to me anew. I have come to realise that my stepping into motherhood, I have become someone new and different in many ways, while still being me at the same time. In some ways I feel like I am meeting with God again. I have felt His kindness, gentleness and patience in ways I have not experienced before. It makes me see that no matter where I find myself in life, whatever the season may be, God is so consistent in His love for me that He remains all that I need, no matter what changes around me.

“When everything around me is shaken
I’ve never been more glad
That I put my faith in Jesus
‘Cause He’s never let me down”

Firm Foundation (He Won’t) – Maverick City

Leishka is wife to Rowan, mum to the coolest little girl, and a Clinical Psychologist. She cherishes connection and finding joy in life’s everyday magic, be it a deep conversation, first sip of morning coffee or spontaneous family dance parties in the living room. She is passionate about helping others navigate life’s twists and turns and equally passionate about good food, great books, being curious and making memories.

Fixing my eyes on the “moon”

Nadia Kleynhans



Thirty-six years ago, my father caught me staring out the car window at night for a very long time. I was unusually quiet which made him concerned about what had captured my attention. Moments later he heard me crying and begging him for the moon. "Daddy, I want the moon!" I cried.

When he explained that he couldn't give me the moon, my crying only persisted, continuing throughout the entire trip and well into the evening—until, in my desperation to reach for the moon, I accidentally fell out the car window! Thankfully, the car was idle at the time, but that night was certainly one my parents would never forget.

Fast forward twenty years later, I stepped into Rivers Church. I was broken from expecting my moon, no longer from the sky, but now from the media, from the wrong people, and the wrong lifestyle. In March 2008, I finally received my moon from my true spiritual Father, the only One who could do the impossible and fulfill the deepest, God-given desires of my heart.

I was born in Johannesburg and raised in Roodepoort. I was very fortunate to have been raised by a loving mother and father. They taught me the importance of family and how to love unconditionally. Their example shaped me and has been the foundation of my marriage with Petrè. I am incredibly grateful for a husband who is not only a partner in life but also a best friend. Our marriage is built on a foundation of trust and love for God. To this day, we still pray together before we go to bed. It is because of our love for Christ and our commitment to keeping Him at the centre of our marriage that we have been able to overcome obstacles. We also share a core value and interest in living a fit and healthy lifestyle. Having met at a health club, we both strive toward a common goal of longevity.

Petrè has stood by my side and supported me through all of life's challenges, including my career. He is my mentor, often offering valuable advice in the workplace. Together, we have navigated seasons of loss and other hardships in our family. No marriage is perfect; every couple faces differences and challenges, but through it all, we have learned the importance of sacrifice, honesty and loyalty. I am beyond grateful to have a husband who leads by example in our home, encourages me daily, and lifts me up in life's struggles. I would not be the confident

woman I am today without a loving, God-fearing husband like him.

It has been fifteen years since I first walked into Rivers Church and surrendered my life to the Lord. From that moment, Rivers became my spiritual home. I found true fulfillment by serving God and serving others. As I stepped into serving, I became more aware of how God was working in me, changing me and helping me grow spiritually.

Within just three months of serving, I met my husband, and we have now been married for eleven years. I have continued serving ever since. I first joined the hospitality team at the Sandton campus Middle Earth building, and after moving to the Kyalami campus, I continued serving in the hospitality team there as well. Additionally, I lead a Connect Group in Blue Hills, Midrand, where I have the privilege of meeting people from all walks of life and sharing God's Word with them.

When I don't have early meetings or production commitments, I serve in the Rivers Foundation's Sarmy Army, where we make sandwiches for underprivileged school children. It is both humbling and heartbreaking to know that for some of those precious children, the meal we provide is the only one they will have that day!

I am incredibly grateful for the godly friendships and connections I've made at my spiritual home, as well as for the pastoral guidance I've received during life's challenges. These divine connections, along with God's presence, have carried me through difficult times. Rivers is more than just a church to me, it is a home that has spoken truth and wisdom over every area of my life.

I am currently a Marketing and Production Manager for a South African fashion retailer, where I have the privilege of capturing style, artistry and beauty through others. Getting there was a journey full of seasons, each shaping me along the way. It amazes me to see how God's favour has followed me and how His plans always unfold for His glory.

From a young age, I fell in love with the camera. I became a professional model and the lens became my best friend. Unfortunately, in my BC days (Before Christ), I got involved in the wrong genre of modelling. As I grew in my relationship with Christ,

my priorities changed. It became more important to honour Him than to chase the dopamine rush of public approval. I embraced modesty and started dressing in a way that reflected my faith. I am in no way perfect, and I often ask myself whether what I am wearing reflects God.

Looking back, I can't imagine returning to my past. The mere thought of showing cleavage makes me feel uncomfortable! It was a long journey of discovering who I am and to whom I belong. We live in a world that grows more artificial every day, but I remind myself daily that my worth comes from God, not from my image.

A turning point for me was reading "You're Not Enough (And That's Okay)" by Allie Beth Stuckey. It challenged the popular belief that we are perfect just the way we are. Michelle McKinney Hammond said it perfectly at the Sisters of Africa Conference, "There will always be someone prettier than you, smarter than you and or more talented than you!" Yes, we are knit together by God in our mother's womb (*Psalms 139:13*), but we are by no means perfect. True healing comes when we acknowledge our inadequacies and rely on a sovereign God to be our sufficiency, our confidence, our guide, and the giver of our purpose.

While modelling professionally, I completed my BCom in Marketing Management, but when my time in modelling came to an end, I had to find a full-time job. All I knew was that I loved being on set and working with still photography. However, I went through season after season of struggle, from driving long distances as a sales representative to working in advertising agencies that didn't align with my values. It was an incredibly difficult time. But whenever I wanted to quit, my husband reminded me of *Psalms 37:4*: "Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart." I also held onto *Colossians 3:23 (NIV)*, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters..."

Just when I was about to be retrenched, God gave me a "But God" moment. I received an unexpected interview with a fashion retailer, and when they asked if I could manage their marketing and still productions, it felt like a dream come true. This wasn't about networking or divine connections—it was purely God's provision. I have now been with

this company for nearly ten years, and every day I get to do what I love. God gave me my "moon" again!

In our spare time, my husband and I built a photography studio. More than just a photography space, we wanted to create a place where not only the photography lights could shine but, more importantly, where God's light could shine. We provide a space where fashion, family shoots, maternity shoots, and music videos can be captured—all for His glory.

Throughout my fifteen-year journey of knowing God, I have learned the importance of seeking Him in every thought and action, and trusting Him and praising Him in every season! It isn't always easy, but every time I surrender control, I experience breakthroughs and a deeper connection with Him.

As I continue this journey, my prayer is simple: May God be my "moon" through every season of life as I trust and fix my eyes on Him.

Nadia is a devoted daughter of the house, who loves to worship God by shining his light in and out of the studio. Coming from a background of professional modelling she runs a photographic studio alongside her husband of eleven years. She is passionate about staying active and embracing a holistic and healthy lifestyle. Nadia sees her family as a precious gift from God — one she consistently prioritizes, regardless of the season she's in.

There is indeed a future,
and your hope will never
be cut off

Proverbs 23:18 @W



I praise you

because I am fearfully

and wonderfully made:

your works are wonderful,

I know that full well.

Psalms 139:14 NIV



Lessons over seventy years and more

Snowy Thubisi



Throughout my seventy years and more of life, God has been faithfully present. He has remained consistent and the same through all seasons, providing wisdom, guidance, protection and blessings!

This year, Pastor Wilma thoughtfully chose the theme of Seasons from the wisdom of *Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NIV)*: “For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.” Whether it’s a time for planting, growing, reflecting, healing, celebrating, building, changing, mourning, or renewing, this theme resonates deeply with me. It reminds me of a song I have loved since the 1960s, *Turn! Turn! Turn!* by The Byrds. It shifted something deep within me, and it always makes me stop and stand in awe of God’s love and mercy. This song was the opener at the first Sisters Night this year, and it carried a message about seasons changing, or things turning, something that has always stayed with me.

When I arrived home after that Sisters Night, I stopped the clock and revisited my youth, reflecting on the significant seasons of my life. I was born in Pretoria in a place called Eersterust in 1952, to hardworking labourers. I was the third of six children. My brothers always made fun of me because I loved to dream, but my parents were there to support me. I was my parents’ oldest daughter, and I had two younger sisters. Our childhood was blessed and beautiful.

Then, one day, our season changed. It literally turned upside down! I was eight years old, returning home from school, when I walked straight into the chaos that had erupted in our community. There were soldiers, police, and armoured cars everywhere, and people’s furniture had been tossed outside! Fear, panic, and confusion filled me as we were forcefully removed from our homes and taken eastward, into what looked like an open veld. Great uneasiness swept

through our community, and the entire country. This was the forced removals during Apartheid. This was also the season when forced segregation started in South Africa. Separate bus and train systems were introduced, and British education was repealed and replaced with Bantu education.

Fear, pain, anxiety, and frustration overshadowed the peaceful eight years of my childhood. My family and I prayed and sang every night, even before the removals. So, in those difficult moments, we focused on the love and power of God, which gave me peace and sanity during this period. As it says in *2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT)*, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.”

That promise carried us through and despite the hardship, we kept hope alive.

Before the removals, our community was a beautiful and sophisticated learned place. It was made up of people of mixed races, teachers, doctors, and educated individuals living in small, well-kept houses. In our area, schools had already been established.

After the forceful removals, it was amazing to witness how the community transformed adversity

into opportunity. People became incredibly entrepreneurial, relying on each other and the support of local churches. The churches played a pivotal role, helping individuals build informal houses, providing spaces for education, and fostering a sense of togetherness and hope. Through this collective effort, schools were established in these new spaces, offering the community access to education, despite the challenges they faced. It was in this environment that I was able to complete my matric.

After completing my matric year, I joined the nursing profession. I started as a junior general nurse and eventually trained to become a midwife.

*For God has
not given us a
spirit of fear and
timidity, but of
power, love, and
self-discipline.*

2 Timothy 1:7 NLT

Later, I completed my degree in Community Health and Education. Though the journey was filled with hardship and uncertainty about the future, I kept my head up and persevered until I finished my studies. Afterward, I met the love of my life at a hospital in Durban. He was a young doctor from the Free State, and we fell in love. A new season began in my life.

I married into a different culture, and it took time for me to adjust. My husband is Tswana, and I am Zulu. His family was different, and they would sometimes laugh and make fun of my cooking because our foods were different, but I managed through it all because God never forsook me. We have been blessed with a daughter, two sons, five grandchildren, and a beautiful, large extended family. Our journey through marriage, growing a family, and facing life's challenges has been quite an adventure. Through it all, I held onto the promise that no weapon formed against me or my family would prosper, as it says in *Isaiah 54:17*.

Pastor Adi Olivier, Lead Pastor of our Sandton and Kyalami campuses, taught a powerful message on the pain of rejection. It took me back to a deeply painful season I witnessed first-hand during my early years in Community Health Practice in the 1980s. I'll never forget how individuals suffering from HIV/AIDS were not only battling a life-threatening illness, but also the cruel sting of rejection. They weren't rejected by strangers, but by their very own families and communities. We, as nursing practitioners were deeply affected by this. We saw people being chased out of their homes, forced to live in cramped backrooms, isolated and treated as if they were no longer human. It was heartbreaking to witness how food would be thrown at them from a distance, and how love and dignity were stripped away from them in their most vulnerable moments. That season taught me more about pain, compassion and humanity than any textbook ever could. It also revealed how the enemy often uses rejection to break people, long before the illness ever could.

After retiring from nursing, I started a business managing a branch of a large courier company, which I went on to manage for twenty-six years. When the Covid-19 pandemic began, it brought with it a long and challenging season. But God has been faithful. His Word promises that He has plans for me and a future (*Jeremiah 29:11*), and I fully trusted in that. The Covid period was a difficult time for many

businesses, with many facing hardship and closing down. Yet, by God's grace, my business survived, and I give all glory to God for that!

From a very young age, I recognised that there were lessons woven into each season of life. I learned about hope, resilience, patience, unconditional love, and perseverance. I also learned that laughter and light-heartedness are just as important as the serious moments. I learned the value of Christian-based counselling and discovered that even the small or mundane things in life hold potential.

I look forward to the wisdom and blessings that the seasons yet to come will bring. Through it all, I will continue to hold onto God's Word and marvel at His wonder.

Job 42:5 (NIV) "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you."

Snowy is a vibrant, young-at-heart woman who fully embraces her role as wife, mom, grandmother, and businesswoman. When she's not rolling on the floor with her grandkids, you can find her baking up a storm or skilfully sewing previously loved items and giving them new life!

Those who look
to him are
radiant;
their faces are never covered
with shame

Psalms 34:5 NKV



As seasons
come and go,
let's grow

Trish Henry

During my turbulent twenties, in the process of trying to heal myself from being date raped, I engaged in a series of unhealthy relationships that confirmed my lack of faith in men. In my wary and disillusioned condition, I thought it would be best if I went back to church to try and revive the languishing faith I had started cultivating during my teens. When the lead pastor suggested greeting the person beside us, I started digging in my handbag for the illusive little tub of Zambuk or stepped out to visit the ladies' room. I was not ready to engage with anyone.

But God's mercy is boundless and as the weeks went by, God softened my heart and revived my hope for a better future. I met lovely people and through volunteering, I found a renewed sense of purpose and identity. I encountered gentlemen worthy of respect. I was able to observe how young married couples treated each other and I was encouraged to consider dating again.

I had noticed a young man named Nigel at church. I was most of all impressed by the way he volunteered and the way he engaged with the Junior Youth kids at Rivers. Nigel and I became friends because we were committed volunteers and we both enjoyed mountain biking. Sometimes we even rode to church and attended services in our cycling gear. Nigel treated me with the utmost respect and concern, and it was easy to fall in love with him and begin having the conversations about our happily-ever-after.

The lessons I learned in my twenties which I carried with me into my thirties were:

- Being in a community of believers brings healing and restoration.
- Relationships are important – to help us grow and to stave off loneliness.
- People around us represent role models to help shape our perspectives.
- You could meet your mate by volunteering and serving.

Unfortunately, it was not meant to unfold as we had planned. On a Thursday evening while I was at Worship team practice, Nigel went for a ride along the Braamfontein Spruit. He was held up by thieves, but he refused to hand his bike over. They stabbed him eleven times and he died right there beside the river. During the dark months of grieving that followed, when it seemed impossible to read my Bible, I played worship music or sermons in my home and car. I hoped that those faith-filled words would encourage my sad soul even if my ears were not receiving the message.

It was at the lowest point of sorrow that I felt God visit me and hold me and cradle me in His big, strong, loving arms. In that place of absolute vulnerability and all-consuming love, I knew that I wanted to serve the Lord full-time and help others find the comfort and love that I had found in the arms of

Father God. I was already volunteering extensively at church, so it was not a huge step to offer more of my time and start working on the team part-time.

So, while my twenties were painful and intense, the season of full-time ministry which followed was joyful and intense. The team was small, the work wonderfully varied, and the pace was blistering. But what an incredible privilege to be part of Rivers during those years of explosive growth! It was the work that healed me. It was serving the Lord, and it was the community of believers that helped me recover from my loss and become whole again.

I was not particularly focused on getting married or having children. I occasionally just reminded the Lord about His Word that says in *Proverbs 18:22 (ESV)*, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing

and obtains favor from the LORD,” and I would mention to the Lord that I am now a good thing worth finding.

There was a gentleman I had noticed in church who served Jesus with a heart like mine. Added to that, he had a beautiful voice and a wonderful calming presence. But he was younger than me and his skin tone many shades darker than mine. I figured I had been through enough heartache; it would not be wise to cross both the race and the age barrier. So, Nick and I just became friends. We served the Lord side by side, sometimes setting chairs in the old building until 2am because they were all moved during a particularly dynamic conference session and inevitably, we fell in love. So now I was serving the Lord in my vibrant church, and I got to do it alongside the man I loved. It was not long until we



were married and not too long after that until we were expecting. Nick patiently and lovingly walked me through my issues with intimacy, men, and loss, and helped me become a wife worthy of this good man.

As the church grew, my little family also grew and the demands of that season of life became greater. There was a time when Rivers had five weekend services and in addition to participating in these, I had periodic funerals and weddings to conduct. I made the monumentally tough decision to step off staff so that I could be a more present mom to my daughters. I felt that God had shaped me for full-time ministry, so searching for a new role to fulfill was really challenging but I knew that I had made the decision based on my core value system and somehow God would work it out for me.

What I learned in my ministry season to take with me into midlife is:

- Loss and death can help us crystalize our core values and define what really matters.
- In the intensity of pain, the Lord can bring healing that is so profound it defies words.
- Being engaged in a community of believers is immensely therapeutic and nurturing.
- Hard work brings a profit, but it should not overshadow other core values.
- Remember: you could meet your mate by volunteering and serving others.

Building a new career in midlife was not easy. I needed to put effort into redefining my identity from being known as Pastor Trish, to just Trish.

But God's mercies never fail. If we seek Him, we will find Him, and we will find help in our time of need. (*Jeremiah 29:13, Hebrews 4:16*) He helped me encounter exactly the right people, books and situations that enabled me to establish my vocation as a humanitarian.

When I was a teen, I had a prophetic word spoken over me about serving the Lord and being engaged in helping people find food. I had it in my heart to help people with food and nutrition – not just spiritual food. When a door opened for me to work as the Administration Manager at JAM South Africa, I did not realise that the Lord was bringing into reality a prophecy spoken over me thirty years earlier. It was such an awakening for me to realise that I was still serving the Lord in this new place, and that I could continue to fulfill His call upon my life. He said that He would bring to completion the good work He began in me (*Philippians 1:6*) and I still trust Him to complete the mission. I realise that the Lord is more interested in the work He is doing in me than the work I am busy with out there in the world, and I am never too old to keep growing and bearing good fruit.

I began journaling in this season of my life. I learned that ten minutes of directed reflection is enough to help shape our belief systems and set in motion the next chapter in our life's path. I spent extensive time in the Word, meditating on each verse and applying it to my situations. I targeted specific challenges, found verses that spoke into each issue, and meditated on God's Word for me and for the issue at hand. I intentionally created belief systems for myself that were godly, productive, restorative,

“It was at the lowest point of sorrow that I felt God visit me and hold me and cradle me in His big, strong, loving arms. In that place of absolute vulnerability and all-consuming love, I knew that I wanted to serve the Lord full-time and help others find the comfort and love that I had found in the arms of Father God.”

and built my confidence. This has been an ongoing job. I had heard so many messages about renewing the mind and the power of our belief systems, but I could never find the practical tools to help me renew my mind. In this season I figured out how to identify the unresolved issues and ungodly thoughts, and articulate them in my journal. With a lot of prayer added, I took time to reflect on the source of the negativity and then cultivated positive, biblical thoughts to refute the negative ones. Everyday I would review my list of positive thoughts. I would find scripture to support and cement my new beliefs and would memorise those verses or write them onto small cards that I would stick next to my computer screen. Slowly but intentionally, my newly created godly thoughts became habits and the negative ones faded away. I could also recognise the fruit of these efforts in my behaviour – some situations which had previously produced a bad reaction, began to evoke a good response.

While I worked at JAM, my girls became ladies, and the founders of JAM retired. I began to search for a position that would give me further reach.

What I learned in my forties that I am taking with me to the fifties is:

- We can rewire our thinking and belief systems even when we are mature, but it takes quite a lot of effort.
- Don't let go of the hopes, dreams and promises developed in the teen years.
- God is more interested in us as people than the work we do.
- Recognise what thoughts are running through our head. Pray and think better thoughts intentionally.

In my current season, I returned to university to obtain a Post Graduate Diploma and I started working at the United Nations World Food Programme. My children are adults now and are making their own life choices. It is tough to step back and let them go, but my parenting work is done and now it is time to consider the next season of life. This year Nick and I have been married for twenty-five years. He is my best friend and he still treats me like his cherished bride. We both serve Jesus through our careers in the non-profit sector, and we are considering how we can take our vocations to the next level now that we have less parental responsibilities. Every day we

consider our lives and encourage each other to keep becoming more like Jesus. We may be getting a little older but we are finding that, actually, you can teach an old dog new tricks!

What I am focusing on for the next season of my life:

- My life's purpose is to delight God. How can I do that more?
- I am exercising so that I am fit and healthy, and I can play with my grandchildren when the time comes.
- I want to empower young people with life lessons and help them find a healthy sense of self-worth and purpose.
- I would like to obtain a master's degree so that I can keep growing new brain cells.

Each season brings beginnings and endings. Jesus is constant in all seasons; He is ever-present to provide the resources we need to help us navigate our current season. The sum of all our seasons makes our character – the Lord is far more interested in our character than our achievements. Some issues that arise will affect us more than the next person – recognize when there are unresolved issues and present them to Jesus. He can help us leave the past behind and apply all our energy to the future. (*Philippians 3:13*)

Trish is a godly, productive, genuine and insightful woman. She is married to Nick whom she adores, and they have two adult daughters of whom they are very proud! She serves at the United Nations World Food Programme, and is allowing the Lord to bring the good work He began in her to completion.



Snowy, Flowy, Blowy,
Showery, Flowery, Bowery,
Hoppy, Croppy, Droppy,
Breezy, Sneezzy, Freezy.

George Ellis

Seasons of rebuilding

Barbara Singh

I was born into a Christian family. At three months old I had to live with my granny's sister due to family circumstances. Although my new family were not believers, I attended church and Sunday School. I got married at a very young age and we soon had our daughter. Three years later, we were blessed with our second daughter.


At the time, we were renting a flat in Overport, Durban but were trusting God for our own home. We eventually had to move out as our landlord needed the place. This was a huge disappointment as we had all developed amazing friendships there. We stood on God's promise in *Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)*, "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." We understood that God's delays were not His denials and that His timing is perfect, but our patience and faith were put to the test during that season.

The day finally arrived when we moved into our brand new home and our friends and family came over. We were enjoying a lovely meal and fellowship. No one paid any attention to the noise outside until it was right on our doorstep. It was mayhem! People were running around with all kinds of dangerous weapons, breaking into unoccupied houses, lighting

fires inside houses and painting names on walls. We found ourselves right in the middle of a land invasion!

The army was despatched and escorted our friends out of the area, and then stationed themselves outside our home. We didn't get much sleep that night as we took turns making coffee. It was a bitterly cold night. The violence continued the following day yet in the midst of all the turmoil we remained calm as we knew that God's protection was over our family. The rioting continued and we eventually had to leave our fully furnished home behind and walk away for the sake of our safety. It wasn't long before our home was vandalised and all our belongings stolen. We stayed with my sister and her family for a while as we rebuilt our life and tried to get back on our feet.

A few years passed and we were blessed with a new home. It was a great new beginning for us and a reminder that no matter how hard the past had been, we could always begin again. As we settled in, we were excited to announce that we were expecting a baby boy! As the due date grew closer, I went into hospital to have a procedure done and I was sent home. I later learnt that I should have been booked into hospital for observation. Unfortunately, the nurses hadn't read the instructions properly. That



night
and the
following
day, I
experienced a lot
of discomfort and I
was exhausted from the
heat. The baby's movements
were also sluggish. I went back
to the gynaecologist and the scan
showed that the umbilical cord was
tangled around the baby's neck. Our baby
boy (already full-term) had no heartbeat.

Instant trauma and heartbreak set in! How could this have happened? I had so many questions. Who was to blame? The doctor? The nurses? Me? Throughout this difficult time, we had amazing support from our family, friends, colleagues, and some missionaries who all upheld us in prayer. I still had my beautiful daughters to take care of, so I had to get out of my depressed state and be the mum they needed.

A year and nine days later, we were blessed with an amazing baby girl. She brought so much healing to our lives and I was able to forgive, as I focused on the gift right in front of me. Our baby girl, Micaila, reminded us daily of God's love, mercy, kindness and goodness. *Mica* means "who is" and *ila* means "like God."

In the midst of all the heartache, we continued to serve God. We were in a fairly new area with no established churches, so we hosted weekly meetings in our home, distributed tracts (printed sermons that were handed out as an evangelism tool), and also hosted a Sunday

School.

So many people in the neighbourhood were saved through our obedience to God. Later, whilst on holiday in Johannesburg, Michael went for an interview and got the news that he was successful and needed to start soonest. At the same time, the company I had worked for, for thirteen years, burnt to the ground and everyone was retrenched. This terrible situation turned out to be a stepping stone for us, as we were able to use the money paid out to make the move. We left Durban, the land of curry and all things spicy and headed to the land of milk and honey, the beautiful city of Johannesburg where dreams become reality. This was

in 1999 and it was another great season of change for our family. We left everything we were familiar with and started from scratch yet again. I now believe that season was our Autumn.

Autumn is a season of reflection, gratitude and transition. Spiritually, it's a time to harvest the wisdom and lessons that we learned from previous seasons. For us, it was a time of preparing for our spiritual "winter" of rest and renewal. In that season we learnt to let go of the attachments and negativity that hindered our spiritual growth and surrendered them to God, trusting Him for new beginnings.

In the same year we were invited to Rivers Church (called Rivers of Joy, at the time) and attended our first meeting on the 28th February. I immediately started serving in the Kids' Ministry. We also joined a home cell where we formed amazing friendships that have lasted to this day. I remember a particular service in which Pastor André prayed for us to buy a house. He was very specific – a good home in a safe area, with the correct price that we could afford. Bear in mind, we had no intention of buying a house at the time but God had bigger plans for us than we had for ourselves. We went to see a home that we really liked but it was beyond our budget. A few months passed and the agent contacted us to say there had been a price drop and asked if we were still interested. Needless to say, we jumped at the opportunity as it was everything that Pastor André had prayed for! All that we had lost had come back to us full circle.

A love rekindled

I had never spent much time thinking of the emotional distance between my mum and I. Growing up, circumstances had been unavoidable, and she had done the best she could at the time. Moving up to Johannesburg was an opportunity for a closer relationship with her, as she lived there. I remember attending a Sisters meeting close to Mother's Day. Pastor Wilma gave us some practical tips about spending time with our mums, how to have good relationships with them and make the wrongs right. This hit home and I realised it was time for me to change the trajectory. That Sisters meeting changed my life. After a whole lot of crying and forgiveness, I was ready to embrace what would become the best years of our lives. My relationship with my mother grew from strength to strength. She was a

God-fearing, loving person and she became the sounding board I never knew I needed. My mum came to live with us and we had so many opportunities to make memories that will last me a lifetime. I thank God for our monthly Sisters meetings and the practical teachings we still receive from Pastor Wilma, the mother of our House.

A season of blindness

One Monday after a work team building weekend away I wasn't feeling too well and my eyes were sore. I went to the local GP and was diagnosed with conjunctivitis. I was prescribed medication but nothing helped. My condition only worsened. I went daily to see the doctor and on the fifth day he was away, so I was referred to another doctor. Thank God! As soon as I entered his rooms he seemed to know what was wrong and immediately referred me to an ophthalmologist. My diagnosis was a damaged cornea. This was a bombshell moment! Things happened so fast. We found ourselves navigating Friday afternoon traffic as we headed to the Pretoria Eye Institute where they were ready to commence treatment.

Whilst at our team building event, a bug got into my eye when our raft capsized. It had been eating away at my cornea until I eventually lost sight in that eye and needed new cornea. By God's grace, a donor became available sooner than I expected. The operation was a success. Thankfully, my donor's eyesight was much better than mine. What are the chances that we would have the same eye colour!

A day after the transplant, our youngest daughter was graduating from preschool. I was not well enough to move around on my own but I was excited about her big day and did not want to be late. I went down the passage and, misjudging the distance, I bumped my eye against a shelf! I managed to go to the graduation just in time to see my little princess being capped but I had to have an emergency operation to fix the damage caused by the bump. I still have scars on my eye from the operations, but they are a reminder of God's faithfulness.

Christmas and New Year came quickly and I experienced another setback – Encephalitis. Due to the imbalance caused by this condition, I fell and broke my leg. Just as I was recovering, my dad suffered a massive heart attack and passed on. I relied

on God's promise in *Joshua 1:9 (NLT)*, "Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

It was an emotionally draining few months and at some point I became so sick that my colleagues thought I wasn't going to make it. They cleared and packed up my stuff. My family was equally concerned and feared the worst. Throughout this challenging season I had many prayer warriors and God saw me through some of my hardest days. I felt Him carrying me every step of the way.

We have since been blessed to celebrate two of our daughters getting married to wonderful men. We are also proud grandparents of an adorable little one-year-old boy. For this child we prayed and are so blessed with this latest addition to our family. There is nothing like being a grandparent. It's a relationship unlike any other and is a whole new season to navigate, with lots of wonderful new experiences and lots of joy!

The biblical seasons in Ecclesiastes chapter three are metaphors for the different stages in our lives and in our spiritual growth. The cycles of day and night, seedtime and harvest, winter and spring, teach us valuable lessons about our faith. God has seen my family and I through some trying, and equally amazing seasons. We and we are so grateful for all the experiences. They have taught us that there is always an opportunity for personal growth. They have also taught us how important it is to "let go and let God" and to embrace the changes that come as each season unfolds.

Barbara is the youngest sibling in her family. She has been married to Michael for forty-one years and they are proud parents of three beautiful daughters, two son-in-laws and an amazing one-year-old grandson. She has been attending Rivers since 1999 and has served across various ministries.



I lift up
my eyes
to the
mountains
where does
my help
come from?





My help
comes from
the Lord,
the Maker
of heaven
and earth

Psalms 121:1-2 NIV

Art of Gold

Mmoneng Gwebu

I grew up in the awesome 90s with posters of old school RnB and boy bands all over my wall. I was a shy, skinny, little kid who thought baggy jeans, Tetris and Harriet the Spy were the coolest. I thought makeup was silly and made people look old, and I never understood all the fuss with girls being so... girly! A lot has changed since those days. I've seen seasons come and go, and I've navigated many changes, and I now appreciate what it means to be a woman. We make it through the awkward teenage years and can't wait to go to university, then to start working and become independent, get married, have kids, and enjoy retirement. Then one day we look back and think, "Where on earth has the time gone?" and long for how things used to be. Or we live constantly waiting for a better season, the next big thing, and fail to realise the beauty in our current season. But every season eventually comes together like a work of art in the Potter's hand, the good and the bad, and He masterfully creates something new, something beautiful and something unique, all for His glory.

I was fascinated when I learnt about the Japanese art form of Kintsugi. This is an ancient art form in

which broken pottery is repaired using gold powder and a lacquer to fill in the cracks. From what was once broken and deemed of no more worth or value, something new is created – different but strikingly beautiful! Normally, when something breaks or gets chipped (even if it's that favourite Carrol Boyes mug from last Christmas), we throw it out and replace it. But the beauty with Kintsugi is in taking the broken and putting it back together, but instead of superglue, gold is used, creating a priceless masterpiece, one that cannot be replicated. I see life a bit like that, every gold-filled crack marking a different season of life, but all coming together to form a work of art that God continues to refine throughout our lifetime. He never runs out of gold to repair us and give us fresh purpose and perspective in every season.

I remember years ago moving to Joburg to be closer to work and looking for a new church. In that particular season, I wasn't looking to volunteer. I felt I deserved a break after all the years I had already put into serving God. Then I found Rivers. A nice, big church where I could attend and just "receive". I was quiet and kept to myself, so there was no way anyone would notice me slip in and out of church



“I see life a bit like that, every gold-filled crack marking a different season of life, but all coming together to form a work of art that God continues to refine throughout our lifetime. He never runs out of gold to repair us and give us fresh purpose and perspective in every season.”

every Sunday. It was perfect! Well, that season was short-lived. I was so touched by what God was doing at Rivers that I couldn't help but want to be part of it. So, there I was serving again and before I knew it, I joined the staff team. It's been fifteen years since, and I'm a very different person from the quiet little girl who first walked through the doors of the church hoping to enjoy some solitude. God knit me into this spiritual family and used it to grow me in ways I never expected. Today, my friends make fun of me because I can't walk from one end of the foyer to the other without stopping to greet everyone. It's not that I became an extrovert, it's just that I grew to love people, I learnt to come out of my shell, and I now enjoy the gift of connection.

As I journeyed in my Christian walk, I went through a season when, without realising it, I had slipped

into a kind of spiritual cruise control. I knew the route so well that I didn't realise I had fallen asleep at the wheel. I had lost my spiritual edge. But there's nothing like a few personal crises to jolt you out of spiritual slumber!

When the constants in your life crumble and it feels like the rug is pulled out from under your feet, often the first response is, "Lord, what just happened?!" As I began to catch my breath, through a time of prayer and fasting I was reminded why I couldn't afford to slack off in my walk with God and that He had more in store for me. That season helped me put off distractions and turn my focus back to God. It was like a recalibration of sorts, and reminded me that even though God allows certain things to happen, He always has my back.

I often think of how differently I imagined my current season would look; that I would be married by thirty-five and have a big, crazy, loving, fun family like the one I grew up in. Well, thirty-five came and went, a whole six years ago. Turning forty was a light bulb season for me. The "don't haves" in my life were overshadowed by the "haves" as it dawned on me just how blessed I am! Instead of trying to barely get by while I wait for my next, I am appreciating all the benefits of being single all the more. I get to go home to a nice, peaceful, quiet space, read in bed, sleep in on Saturday and Monday mornings, and enjoy crackers and cheese dinners, with those giant, seedless green grapes on the side. I can sleep over at my parents' and run errands for them, being available in a way I would otherwise not be.

I am also "Aunty Momo" to the most amazing nieces, nephews, godchildren and all the other kids in my world. These little ones keep me on my toes with questions like, "Don't you want to get married and have children?" Last year I witnessed my godson being born; though not in a medical facility with doctors and nurses all around while we take cute little pictures to post. No. He was born in the back of my Yaris at 00:37 on the 20th of August 2024 and I got to clamp his umbilical cord. It was crazy but it was also one of the biggest privileges of my life! I may have also appointed myself his godmother and didn't give his parents much of a choice.

On the other hand, as a single person I still have to take out my own trash, carry my own groceries in, get up and make my own food when I'm sick,

take myself to the doctor, and take my own car in for service and carwash. But hey, this too is only a season!

My life is like one big ongoing kintsugi project. I am living a life of purpose, without the unrealistic pursuit of perfection. I understand God's peace because I've gone through challenges. I know what it is to be loved because I have experienced God's forgiveness. I appreciate His provision because I know what it is to lack. I don't take the gift of life for granted because I have experienced loss and grief. While the difficult seasons may not have been God-sent, they have certainly been God-used. Even in those seasons that were more like "Huh?" moments than "Aha!" moments, "...in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." *Romans 8:28 (NIV)*

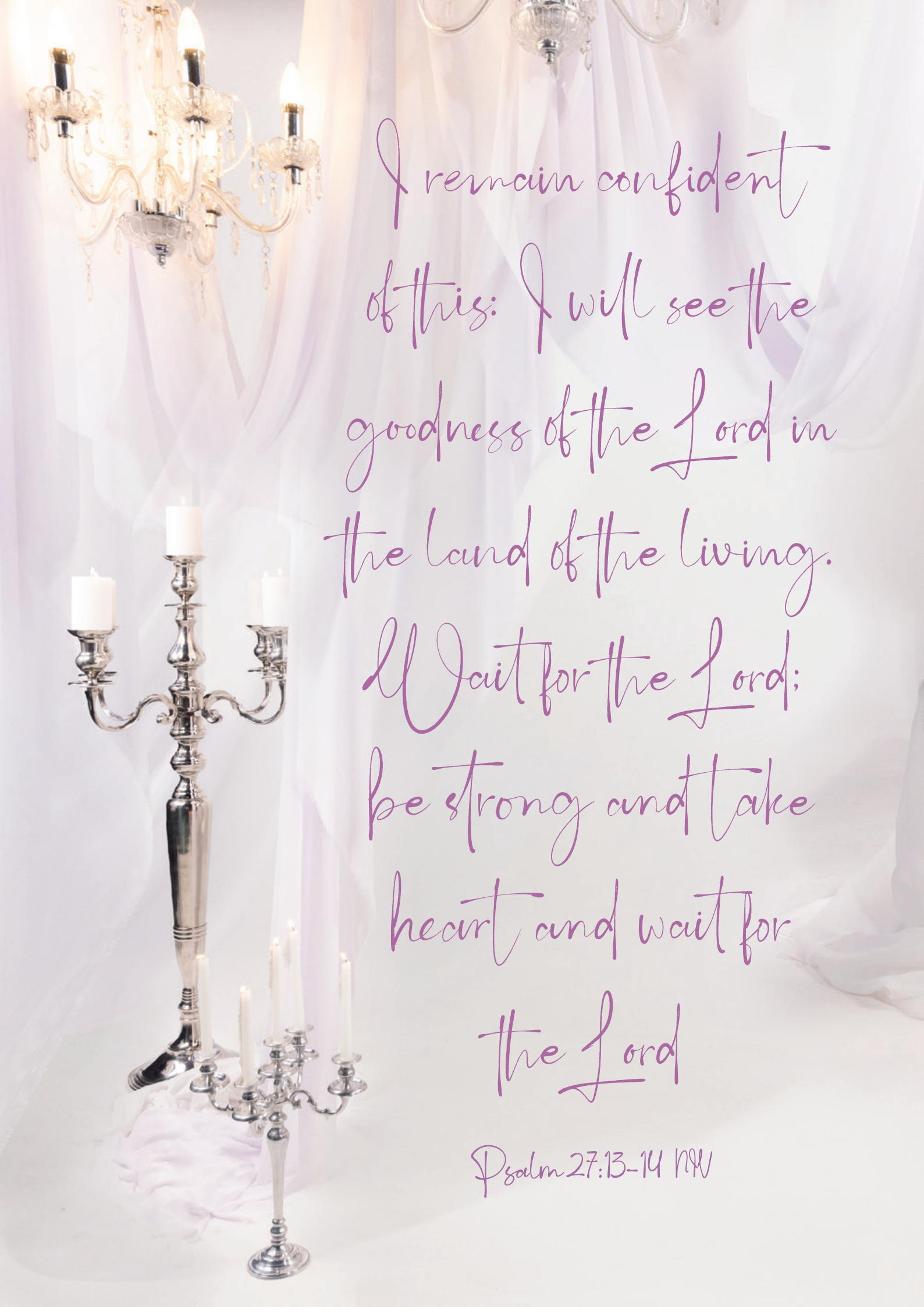
Ultimately, it is those gold-filled cracks from every season that make our lives unique, valuable, beautiful and wonderfully complex! (*Psalms 139:14*)

Mmoneng has been on the Rivers Church staff team for over fifteen years and has loved serving in different departments. She enjoys reading and writing, as well as early morning trail walks rewarded by a great cup of coffee. She has an infectious laugh, an adventurous spirit and loves quality time with loved ones over a meal.



Be Still
before the Lord
and wait patiently
for him

Psalm 37:7 a ESV



I remain confident
of this: I will see the
goodness of the Lord in
the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take
heart and wait for
the Lord

Psalm 27:13-14 NIV



Rivers Foundation

*How the Sisters of Rivers Church are
changing lives, one act of care at a time*

*Nuska Zwane
Director of the Rivers Foundation*



The Rivers Foundation has been a vital expression of compassion, reaching beyond the walls of our church to care for the most vulnerable in our communities. The heart behind the foundation has always been to nurture hope, dignity and opportunity, and we have personified Helping People by continually showing love and care, and offering practical help.

Across the five campuses of Rivers Church, our foundation supports:

- Twenty-five Children's Homes
- Twenty-nine Schools
- Fifteen Crèches and Day-care Centres
- Six Gogo Homes (These elderly women look after their many grandchildren and destitute children in their communities.)
- Numerous community-based initiatives
- Churches that make a difference in their communities

We are particularly passionate about investing in the future of women and teen girls. Over the years we have been actively involved in empowering school girls by supplying them with monthly necessities, such as sanitary towels and other toiletries to help them remain in school during their menstrual cycle. We also collect gently worn bras, clothing, shoes and Matric Dance outfits. These donations help to restore the girls' confidence and celebrate womanhood. We also provide interview clothing to help women step into job opportunities with dignity and courage.

In 2019 the Rivers Foundation partnered with Phakamani Educational Centre in Finetown, and this partnership has blossomed into something truly impactful for both the learners and educators. Phakamani is more than just a school; it is a beacon of hope in one of Johannesburg's most under-resourced communities. The passionate and principled educators who lead the school believe every child deserves a great future, regardless of their current circumstances.

The Sisters ministry has been a great supporter of Phakamani in a number of ways, including providing learners with:

- Two meals daily
- Monthly toiletries and personal hygiene supplies
- School uniforms and stationery
- New underwear and socks

- Thoughtful extras like Easter treats, Christmas hampers and a Christmas lunch for the staff
- Sportswear, gear and water bottles for the school's sports team, which has achieved great results at a national level

Over and above offering the learners educational support, we sponsor learners with registrations to attend the Rivers Youth and Young Adults Conference each year. In this way, we help to enrich their lives spiritually and emotionally.

Behind the scenes, we have also contributed to dramatic improvements in the school's infrastructure. From building child-friendly toilets for Grade R learners, to donating rechargeable lights for Matriculants to use during power outages, and even helping the school move towards solar power. The investment has been both practical and transformative.

In 2024, our Sisters ministry started the "Adopt A Child" initiative, encouraging the women in the house to cover the annual school fees of only R 400, for those learners whose families cannot afford it. Once again, the women came on board, with many women even partnering with their friends to sponsor the learners, proving that when women unite in purpose, lives are truly changed!

Now, an exciting new chapter is unfolding at Phakamani: we have just broken ground for seven brand new classrooms to help accommodate the school's growing enrolment, with over 990 students already. This is more than a building project; it is a symbol of what it means to nurture future generations with vision, faith, and action. Despite the hardships around them, the leadership of Phakamani has never allowed lack to define their identity. Their resourcefulness, integrity, and unwavering belief in their learners, has made them a joy to partner with. And for us as Sisters, it has been a profound privilege to walk alongside them. As Ps Wilma often says, "We nurture not just through what we give, but how we give—faithfully, joyfully, and with love."

The Sisters ministry will continue to support the Rivers Foundation, nurturing the future of our nation, one child, one mother, one grandmother, one classroom at a time, reminding us all that love in action is the greatest legacy we can leave behind.



RIVERS
FOUNDATION

Make a girl smile

Would you kindly consider bringing any/all of these unused or new items to the Foundation Centre at conference this year: Sanitary pads, roll-on deodorant, bars of soap and Vaseline. Alternatively, you can use the SnapScan code to make a donation. No contribution is too small.



RCFoundationDonations



Yesterday is history,
tomorrow is a mystery,
today is a gift.
That is why they
call it the present

Eleanor Roosevelt





RESTORING

JOY

2026

