

# ACRP Zoom Conference Friday 4 March 2022

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Ministry in Africa:  
Challenges in Perspective**

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*Thank you to the presenters who  
came forward with very relevant  
topics. We are looking forward to  
attending those presentations!*

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## The guiding light Newsletter



**Issue 14 – February/March 2022**



**This is a daily devotion excerpt from the  
African Women Devotional Bible**

**You live in a community...so count on others!**

No man is an island! And life can be so rude when we try to live as if we have all the necessary means and skills to face situations on our own.

Our pride, at times, speaks louder than our reason. Our knowledge, high qualifications or too high opinion about our beauty and ourselves may mislead us, giving a false assurance that we have the capacity to deal with obstacles and misfortunes by ourselves.

Faith and God are relegated to a second position. We do not even notice the presence of those trying to give us a helping hand or trying to tell us we are going the wrong way.

Prayer may be difficult when undergoing hard times, but God has given us brothers and sisters on whom we can count, and they will rejoice to be helping a member of their community in prayer. For "...while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you." 2 Corinthians 9:14. So, put pride aside, dare to ask for help and thank God for those who want to help.

*Lord, free us from the false image of ourselves. Give us the humility to accept our weaknesses and understand that we need others to help us live and grow in faith. Amen.*

**The African Women Devotional Bible – Available from the Bible  
Society (website: <https://www.biblesociety.co.za>).  
Email: [sales@biblesociety.co.za](mailto:sales@biblesociety.co.za)**

*Don't just count your blessings. Be the blessing other people count on.*  
- Anonymous

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## Finishing your grieving - Divorce

An article written by Dr Vincent Mazibuko, ACRP Chairperson

Every marriage is lived in both the present and the future. You were probably constantly thinking about where both of you, as a couple, would be 5, 10, or even 20 years down the road. "Two married people are like two trees that are growing side by side. The longer they grow next to each other, the more entwined the root systems become and the harder it is to extricate one from the other," says Pease Gadoua.

Divorce naturally takes away any dreams and expectations the two of you shared, leaving you confused and forced to learn how to build a brand-new life that doesn't include your ex. This is why newly divorced individuals find it so difficult to look forward. You could find yourself feeling stuck in the past, unable to reconcile that this chapter of your life is over, continually replaying what went wrong, and caught up in pain and negativity.

It represents the death of a marriage and all the hopes and dreams that went into it. The death of a marriage, like any death, requires a grieving process for healing.

Have you ever encountered people almost passionately anxious to show you how little they were hurting over their divorces? Commonly these people want to spray a lot of rage, and they often get immersed in senseless and destructive battles with their spouses.

But above all, they seem to want to show the world and themselves just how much they don't feel hurt.

"I don't care" and "This doesn't matter to me" and "I just want that nightmare out of my life"—these can become the slogans of people stuck in the business of avoiding or camouflaging their hurt. And the more that they remain in this state, the more devastation they bring to themselves and their children.

The greatest weakness of all is the great fear of appearing weak. Sometimes we want to "fool" ourselves that all is well while internally we are dying.

If we are in the midst of a divorce, we are likely losing most of the following:

- Your partner in building memories and dreams of growing old together
- Your ally in facing money woes, illness, and even school conferences
- Your companion to parties, weddings, family celebrations, and IRS audits
- Your confederate in lovingly outwitting your children
- Your helpmate who knew just how to unclog the sink, negotiate a car deal, or remember birthdays
- Your roommate in creating a family home
- Your bedmate
- Your friend

As we are losing this/these person/s, we are also losing:

- Consistent contact with our children
- Valued rituals
- The chance to share family memories
- Your spouse's family and friends
- Most of our financial security
- Friendships of people who related with us as a couple
- Predictability in much of our life
- Our sense of personal competence
- Maybe even faith that we will love and be loved again

Indeed, when this occur, we are feeling more than anger, an emotion that is very often a secondary or "cover" emotion for others.

What's more, the feelings of shock, sadness, hurt, and fear do not end when a divorce is concluded legally. The emotional divorce is not a legal event, but a process. For divorcing people, the question is not whether they will experience that process and its enormous emotional challenges, but how.

What we grieve for is not the loss of a grand vision, but rather the loss of common things, events, and gestures. Ordinarity is the most precious thing we struggle for.

Professor Robert Emery from the University of Virginia adds a remarkable insight about four complexities to divorce grieving that often make it even more of a challenge than other kinds of grieving processes:

- Divorce grief is often disguised by other feelings and even emergencies (for example, financial concerns) to the point that a person can be unaware of the extent of his grief.
- Our society offers most divorcing parents no grieving ritual that plays the role of a funeral for the marriage.
- The very people a divorcing parent would likely grieve with over any other loss can become unavailable—one's spouse, in-laws, and even valued friends can be part of the losses of divorce.
- At least in our minds, divorce is a potentially reconcilable loss, leaving us with the sense it can go ungrieved by avoiding it altogether.

Divorce represents the death of a marriage and all the hopes and dreams that went into it. And the death of a marriage, like any death, requires a grieving process for healing. In almost every divorce filled with unending rage, conflict, and injury is at least one spouse, if not two, resisting this process and becoming stuck.

During divorce, an emotionally intelligent person will pass through a grieving process resembling Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's five stages of grieving death (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance). When experienced temporarily as part of the process of grieving, each step has its beneficial purposes. But, each stage also holds great risks for anyone who uses it as a final destination.

The better that one can embrace the need to pass through each of the five stages, including depression, the sooner and more fully he (or she) can experience the wonderful promise at the end of the grieving process.

**Divorce is not the end of the world, it does not mean annihilation, and it can yield to life, joy, and (yes) love.**

Here are some guides on the five stages that may help you in your journey.

1. **Denial:** "She just needs some time," or "He's acting out some midlife crisis," or "This only happens to other people" these are some of the hallmark phrases of denial. It's a numbing response that often follows a refusal to acknowledge a loss as oceanic as divorce. But like all stages, denial is meant to last only a limited time.

Benefits from denial if experienced as a temporary stage: Appropriately experienced, this protective reaction serves to blunt the initial shock and pain of the breakup. It can give temporary—but only temporary—shelter from the unthinkable until you gather your abilities to face the emotional, physical, and parental tasks at hand. Experienced in a healthy fashion, denial eventually gives way to a mature acknowledgment of the pain of the losses of divorce. That pain can then be a signal to you to take good care of yourself during your losses and recovery.

Risks from denial if experienced as a final destination: Any refusal to acknowledge the necessary end of an intimate relationship interferes with making important decisions—for oneself and the entire family. More important, pain is part of the healing process, and anyone unwilling to feel and acknowledge the pain can't heal or move to better decision-making.

2. **Anger:** As the numbing effects of the shock wear off, the intense feelings of pain, hurt, and fear rush in to flood your senses. Anger is a mechanism for deflecting these emotions. This is both a normal and necessary reaction to the enormity of the loss you may feel. Although you need to recognize and accept feelings of anger, it is essential that you avoid angry behavior toward your (ex)spouse and your children.

Benefits from anger if experienced as a temporary stage: Anger can serve to energize you and help you begin to make the difficult emotional break from your partner.

Risks from anger if experienced as a final destination: Anyone stuck in anger will likely be making poor judgments, expending unnecessary energy on futile conflict, and devastating the children. Although staying angry may feel like being in control, it actually renders one bitter, resentful, and unable to think or act in anything but the most uncontrolled and self-destructive ways. "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved." Helen Keller

3. **Bargaining:** In divorce, bargaining is usually an attempt to avoid relationship by promising to act differently, or by imagining or asking for changes that one hopes could make the marriage work. Bargaining is another attempt to gain control over what may feel like an utterly out-of-control circumstance.

Benefits from bargaining if experienced as a temporary stage: Bargaining is helpful when there is a chance your relationship can be saved. Lay or religious counseling, a period of separation, or relationship renewal groups can help you see if such hopes are realistic. (And by all means, if your circumstances are not dangerous ones, there is every reason to move slowly and soberly before ending a marriage.)

Risks from bargaining if experienced as a final destination: Staying stuck in the bargaining stage is often acted out by a spouse trying to continue a marital connection. Desperate promises, unrealistic attempts at reconciliation, and inappropriate sexual overtures can be part of the pattern. Sometimes being stuck in bargaining occurs with "negative intimacy" where former partners behave as if they have a right to be "key players" in each other's lives. They can delude themselves into thinking they should (or can) tell their spouses how to clean their houses, how to spend their money, or how much macaroni and cheese should or should not be served to the kids.

Remember, when either partner ends the relationship, neither has the right to be a major part in the other's life, except as they cooperate as co-parents to their children.

4. **Depression:** This stage can be so dreaded that it keeps some people locked in denial, anger, or bargaining—or some combination of them. But inevitably with the realization of the loss of the marriage comes searing sadness and regret. This is also a normal and necessary part of grieving (and a critical time to be connected to a healthy support system of family and friends). As John Bradshaw reminds his readers, "He who grieves well, lives well." So know that deep sadness is not necessarily a sign that you are failing, but indeed likely a sign of your healing.
5. **Acceptance:** This stage is not one of joy and great celebration, but of acknowledging the reality of divorce and embracing the readiness to move on. This stage is accompanied by a newfound realization of our resilience, potential, and commitment to forge a new life.

Although the five stages of grieving are necessary for healing, they are not always so clear-cut and concise. Most divorcing persons move through the stages more than once (and not necessarily in precisely the same order), sometimes experiencing more than one at the same time.

However, we can be comforted by knowing the stages and by our ability to recognize what we are feeling and when. We should be heartened to know that with pain comes healing.

"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." C. S. Lewis

We wish you good healing, good grieving, and good life.

"There are things that we don't want to happen but have to accept, things we don't want to know but have to learn and people we can't live without but have to let go." Author is unknown to me

## Allow me to conclude this piece with Tyler Perry's tree analogy of people



I have this tree analogy when I think of people in my life, be it friends, family, acquaintances, employees, co-workers, whomever...They are all placed inside what I call my tree test.

It goes like this:

### **Leaf people**

Some people come into your life and they are like leaves on a tree. They are only there for a season. You can't depend on them or count on them because they are weak and only there to give you shade. Like leaves, they are there to take what they need and as soon as it gets cold or a wind blows in your life they are gone. You can't be angry at them, it's just who they are.

### **Branch people**

There are some people who come into your life and they are like branches on a tree. They are stronger than leaves, but you have to be careful with them. They will stick around through most seasons, but if you go through a storm or two in your life it's possible that you could lose them. Most times they break away when it's tough. Although they are stronger than leaves, you have to test them out before you run out there and put all your weight on them. In most cases they can't handle too much weight. But again, you can't be mad with them, it's just who they are.

### **Root people**

If you can find some people in your life who are like the roots of a tree then you have found something special. Like the roots of a tree, they are hard to find because they are not trying to be seen. Their only job is to hold you up and help you live a strong and healthy life. If you thrive, they are happy. They stay low key and don't let the world know that they are there. And if you go through an awful storm, they will hold you up. Their job is to hold you up, come what may, and to nourish you, feed you and water you.

Just as a tree has many limbs and many leaves, there are few roots. Look at your own life. How many leaves, branches and roots do you have? What are you in other people's lives?

Thank God for the roots!

I fall, I rise. I make mistakes. I live, I learn. I've been hurt, but I'm alive. I'm human, I am not perfect, but I'm thankful.

### *Healing Prayer of Surrender*

Dear Lord, it is my will to surrender to you everything that I am and everything that I'm striving to be. I open the deepest recesses of my heart and invite Your Holy Spirit to dwell inside of me. I offer you my life, heart, mind, body, soul, and spirit. I surrender to you my past, present, and future problems. I ask You to take hold over every aspect of my life. I surrender to You all my hurt, pain, worry, doubt, fear, and anxiety, and I ask You to wash me clean. I release everything into Your compassionate care.

Please speak to me clearly, Lord. Open my ears to hear Your voice. Open my heart to commune with You more deeply. I want to feel Your loving embrace. Open the doors that need to be opened and close the doors that need to be closed. Please set my feet upon the straight and narrow road that leads to everlasting life. Amen.

— Unknown

## Community Development for Effective Local Government in South Africa with special reference to the RDP.

### A summary of a thesis written by Prof Dan Sandi, President of CICI-BU

As we all know the Reconstruction and Development Programme was the first non-racial and non-sexist development policy of South Africa in 1994 under the first non-racial, non-sexist, and democratic government. For the purpose of this article only the summary and the recommendations will be given plus a message to Church Leaders.

#### A WORD TO CHRISTIANS

If we, Christians believe in the four levels of human development established by God (Masibambane Close the Gap Universal Kingdom Removal Movement: MCG UKRM when it still existed under the late bishop Ready Valela of Motherwell in Gqeberha, now PE) namely Individual Self Responsibility Family Government, Church Government and Civil Government as the most important way in which God decentralises power, then let us all agree that (MCG UKRM):

“The prime responsibility of the church is to show mercy. In the first place it is to show mercy to sinners who are in rebellion against God and who, therefore, deserve His just condemnation. It does this by preaching the Gospel of forgiveness and salvation to them. It is them to instruct them in the Faith. For this reason, the prime symbol of the church is the keys which open Heaven to people (Mat 16:19). The spiritual of the church is generally acknowledged, and few people would disagree with it.”

Now let's come to church and development according to MCG UKRM:

The second area in which the church is to show mercy is to the needy of society. This has been widely recognised down through the centuries but has been neglected for most of the past hundred years or so. Therefore Christians today are ignorant of it. In 1 Tim 5: 3-10, Paul teaches that the church has the responsibility to the care for the widows who have no family. This was the practice of the early church in Jerusalem which provided food for the widows (Acts 6: 1-4).

However, we must never think of the church “as merely and institutional structure. The true church is made up of individual believers who are accountable to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. Therefore, God often burdens the individual Christians with a specific need. Thus, Dorcas made clothes for the poor (Acts 9: 39). James exhorts us to care for orphans as well as widows (Jas 1: 27). Paul, Dorcas and James were all applying the words of Jesus (Mat 10: 40-42; 25: 34; Luke 10: 33-37)”

What does the Bible say to us on development? I support the following MCG UKRM statement in this regard:

Following the instructions and example of the Bible, down through the centuries, Christians have cared for abandoned babies, elderly, the poor, the sick, unmarried mothers, the uneducated and even strangers. For nearly 1900 years Christians helped parents educate their children. Before that, the synagogue helped them. The first hospitals and universities were built by Christians. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the hospital movement was given fresh impetus by the compassion of two Christians. Florence Nightingale rejuvenated hospital care in Britain, and eventually, around the world. After witnessing the suffering of the war wounded Jean, Henri Dunant, launched the Red Cross.

The state has taken over many of the responsibilities that God has put in the hands of the individual, the family, and the church. Today the state worldwide claims to look after the sick, the elderly and the poor. It has to provide people with houses, jobs, and education. But it does not do a good job of any of these things, because these are not the responsibilities God has given to the state.

As Christians it is necessary that we understand the Biblical Model and begin to put it in practice in our lives, our families and in our churches. As individuals, we must again govern our lives in accordance with God's norms. Families, we must take seriously the responsibility to provide for ourselves and the needy members of our extended families. As local congregants we must again reach out to the needy in our communities and begin to assist them. We must do all we can to lessen our dependence on the state.

## Let's begin to truly love this February

**An article written by Reverend Dr Mark Abraham Schooney, ACRP Affiliate**

When browsing through the Bible from the perspective of the Koine Greek language that the New Testament was penned in, we find that love is indeed a many-splendored thing, described in a variety of differing expressions. The English language is severely handicapped and limited in its scope to fully explain love.

In the Greek language Eros is an expression of 'love' driven by intense sexual desire to be with someone. Philia is affection that doesn't involve any sexual intentions. Storge is familiar parental love and is a very strong bond that is never really broken. Pragma is the consistent affection that lasts beyond the duration of the honeymoon phase. Pragma is the origin of the English word pragmatic. It's a practical expression of love that stands the test of time - the kind of love a couple still have after fifty years of marriage, and they still want to cuddle and hold hands. Philautia love is where the English word "fellowship" derives and refers to a healthy self-esteem and is also the frame of reference through which we think, feel, and act, reflecting and determining our relationship to ourselves, others, and to the world around us. This self-love enables us to give and receive love properly. If we didn't have self-compassion, we wouldn't have Philautia and if we don't love ourselves we cannot possibly possess the ability to love others. I'm sure you've heard that charity begins at home. Charity is an ancient synonym for the word love-hence love begins with loving yourself.

Ludas is a playful form of love that marks the early stages of Eros. If you've ever been in love, you have no doubt felt Ludas. It's the butterflies in your stomach, the quickened heartbeat, the anxiety you feel when you're waiting for your love interest to walk through the door. It's the flirting, teasing and playing you do in the early stages of dating. The focus is usually more on fun rather than establishing a serious relationship. Ludas is where the word ludicrous comes from.

Agape is by far the most special, noble and admirable of all the types of love described by the Greek language. It is the expression of love Jesus refers to again and again and is the demonstration of love the entire Christian faith is based on. Agape is universal, unconditional, selfless and sacrificial love for others. It involves being altruistic and caring more for others than for yourself. Jesus perfectly exemplified Agape love when He died on the cross to save us from sin and death. He suffered so we could be set free. His Agape love moved Him to give the ultimate gift and make the ultimate sacrifice.

It amazes me how the English language manages to whittle all of this down to a 4-letter word-love that dismally falls short of describing true love. But what does love look like? During a time when people equate supposed love by celebrating Valentine's day, we have reached a cross-roads where we need Agape love more than ever because we are faced with a dilemma. The dilemma is what does love look like in the year 2022?

What does Agape love look like in the discourse between the vaccinated and the unvaccinated? What does Agape love look like between people who are heterosexual and members of the LGBTQI+ community? What does Agape love look like when some emphasize that black lives matter-and they certainly do. Yet Agape love is the "whosoever" kind of love. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes will not perish but have everlasting life - John 3:16. The kind of love described here is all-inclusive regardless of ethnicity, creed, skin colour or any other dividing line.

We might readily identify with Eros, Ludas, Philautia, Pragma and Storge, but what does Agape love look like? What does it mean to practically follow Jesus and to love one another as He loved us?

That is the catch. We're required not just to love, but to love as He loved us all. Universal, selfless, unconditional Agape love.

The love we need in 2022 is not cheap. It comes at a price higher than any Valentine's Day present and it will require a real sacrifice of our ego on the altar of service. Where do we go from here in attempting to solve the conundrum at hand?

What does the Bible say about love? What does love say about us? More importantly and more pertinently however, what does love look like in practice? The obvious question consequential to this is, what if love became an integral part of how we relate to each other and engage with one-another? What would the world look like if the people who are called by His name-and that name is Love- would humble themselves and turn from their wicked ways and just love?

Love is indeed a multi-layered and multi-faceted concept because even God Himself is described as the Personification of love. He doesn't give love or prescribe love, but God is Love. What a statement. Love isn't mentioned as an adjective quality or an attribute or identifying characteristic of God but as the complete and full revelation and description of the invisible God. He is Love.

Above all that it is and represents love is a verb. Love demands action. The Apostle James creates a hypothetical scenario where he says, "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him 'Go, I wish you well, keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2: 16-17) Love is the action that adds life and substance to faith.

In the age where the longevity of relationships are reduced to be decided for instant termination at the click of a button we are commanded to love. It's resident within human nature to categorize ourselves as the priority and to deprioritize everyone else. Those who differ from us, offend, or oppose us are instantly "Blocked" virtually, emotionally, or physically. The irony in this is if we are only ever pleased by those who are exactly like us, then it follows that we are still only succeeding at loving ourselves but dismally failing at loving others. And it doesn't end here. Jesus proposed an even more extremely foreign concept to the human psyche when He said, Love our enemy. We are more prone to "Unfriend", "Block", "Unfollow" and in some way or another excommunicate those who provoke us and those we would perceive as enemies. Yet the Lord Jesus Christ calls us to actually love our enemy. What an oxymoron. Love and enemy in the same sentence. But how can we possibly succeed at doing this?

Matthew 5:43-48 outlines the following 4 key activities that are antithetical to our default response to situations that the Lord Jesus commands us to do. By performing these activities, we can master Agape Love.

**1: Love:** Agape Love is unselfish, therefore Jesus didn't seek to protect Himself. He even showed love to Judas. Popular culture encourages us to conduct witch-hunts and declare war against those Judas characters in our circles, but Jesus loved Judas. We each run the risk of becoming a Judas once we get focused on other forms of love that falls short of Agape Love. Our great and perfect example, Jesus didn't allow the actions of those who were weak to define His behaviour toward them. Rather, He remained consistent.

**2: Bless:** Jesus embraced those He could have been tempted to treat as "others". People who were not accepted by anyone were embraced and blessed by our Lord. Jesus teaches us to identify with and embrace those we might be tempted to treat as "others" in our lives. Those who haven't even made it to our Facebook page and those who never receive invites to our functions. What would happen if we sat down and got to know them and found out ways we could bless them?

**3: Do good:** Jesus didn't allow the fear of evil to dictate who He would love. His love for the lost was greater than His love of His own reputation, His own safety, and His own comfort. Consider the Gerasene demoniac. There could be no greater spiritual outcast than a raving mad, naked man, living among the graves hitting himself with stones and feeding off the decaying flesh of the dead.

We also know social outcasts in our day. They are the ones exiled to the outside of the walls of social and spiritual acceptability because they are so different to us. We know them in our lives as the ones being the most hostile toward us.

The ones causing pain to themselves and anyone near them. Jesus didn't focus on the evil coming out of the man. He focused on the healing He desired to accomplish in the soul of this man and He responded to the soul, not the situation.

**4: Pray:** Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed forgiveness for those who meant Him harm.

He saw those who hurt Him as needing healing and prayer. The first recorded words of Christ on the cross are "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Perhaps it was hearing this that changed the heart of this man. Perhaps simply hearing Jesus pray forgiveness for His enemies got the thief thinking about the concept forgiveness. Perhaps that prayer was wisely spoken aloud by Christ for that very reason. We can never underestimate our prayers for those who are hostile toward us.

The Message translation of the Bible puts Matthew 5:43-48 this way:

"You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best — the sun to warm and the rain to nourish — to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that. In a word, what I'm saying is, 'Grow up.' You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you."

Jesus modelled Agape love to us and He expects us to do the same to the world.

*Prayer:*

*Dear God*

*I ask Your blessing upon all who enter my life today. May they feel Your love as they interact with me, hear Your love when I speak and leave my presence knowing they have been touched by Your love.*

*Guide me to see, feel and love the way You do.*

*Not only with those who are pleasant and good but with those who are angry and have lost their way.*

*Remind me that everyone I encounter today is made beautifully and lovingly by You.*

*Amen.*

*- Anonymous*



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**INTERPRETING THE BIBLE - PART 9B**

In the last issue we saw how the types of literature in the Bible affect interpretation. Now let's consider the impact of context and language.

**Context**

Interpreting the Bible requires paying close attention to the context. The context of every biblical passage includes the historical period, political situation, cultural setting, geographical backdrop, and religious beliefs of that period. In addition, every passage was written as a part of one of the sixty-six books of the Bible, and each of those books was written to a specific audience for a special purpose. The more you can learn about the background of these individual books, the easier it is to understand specific parts of a book. A study Bible, Bible commentary, or dictionary will give this information. And with careful reading, you can sometimes learn much of this background directly from the Bible itself.

The immediate context refers to the verses before and after the passage being studied. For example, while studying John 3:16, it would be helpful to go back a few verses and read Jesus' teachings to Nicodemus about being "born again," and then read forwards a few verses to see how judgement and salvation relate to the Son. We receive hundreds of messages each day, and the way we interpret them and the significance we give them is determined by their context.

**Figurative Language**

The abundant use of figurative language in the Bible can make interpretation difficult. Figurative language refers to words used in a nonliteral sense. It uses a word to create a mental image that will substitute for or help describe or illustrate another word. For example, when Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11) he did not mean he had abandoned Joseph's trade as a carpenter and started herding livestock. This is a metaphor that means Jesus treats people as a shepherd would. The Bible also contains similes ("like a thief in the night"), personification ("the trees of the field will clap their hands"), hyperbole ("All night I flood my bed with weeping"), and many other figures of speech. The Bible has borrowed a lot of language from the ancient world, and it has become such an important part of our spiritual vocabulary. We use the words "justified," a word taken from the law court; "redeemed," a word taken from the slave market; "saved," a word taken from the language of fear and danger. Knowing where these words came from can give us insight into how to understand them and the truths they represent.

**Other Issues to Consider**

- Interpret obscure passages in light of clear passages.
- The person speaking frequently changes, especially in the Psalms and prophetic literature. Therefore, always note who the speaker is in any text.
- Because a parable is meant to teach one basic truth, we should not seek meaning in the individual parts.
- The chapter and verse divisions were added many years later and do not always represent natural breaks of thought.
- Four good ways to force one to interpret are to summarize, paraphrase, amplify, and translate into another language.

In the next newsletter we will learn about application.

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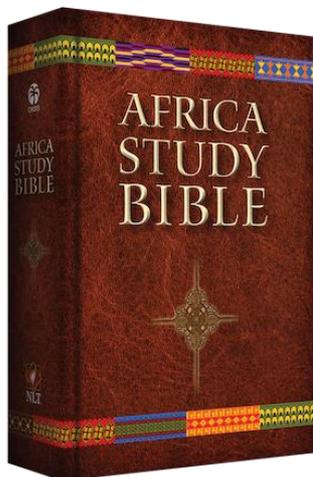
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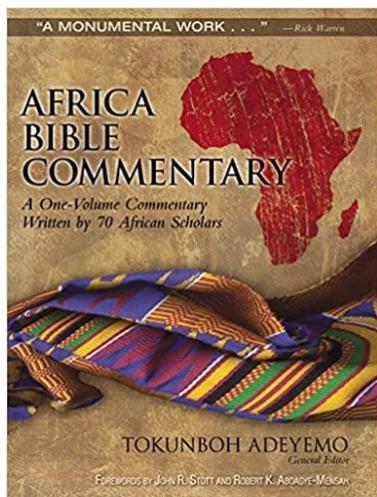
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