

TESTIFY

MAGAZINE

August 2026



Scan Me!

SIYABONGA
SIBIYA
BY GERDA
POTGIETER

From Crime to Christ: Proclaiming Liberty to the Captives

Coach Freek The Prison Preacher

IN THIS EDITION

Issue 43
August 2026

Coach Freek The Prison Preacher



The ministry has grown far beyond prison walls. Through Baasraak (Afrikaans word meaning to overcome) Ministries and Grace Behind Bars Prison Mission Trips, we now proclaim the Gospel through prison outreach, schools, radio, television, podcasts, online broadcasting, and music. Whether someone is in a correctional centre, listening in their car, watching online, or sitting alone in their home, our desire is the same —to introduce them to Jesus Christ, the only One who can truly set people free.

One of the most exciting developments has been our Prison to Praise music ministry. We are helping offenders discover that God can turn their pain into praise and their past into a testimony. It is a beautiful picture of redemption when men who once used their voices for violence now use them to bring glory to God. Throughout these years, I have learnt that ministry is never about one person. Every prison door that opens, every Bible that is placed into someone's hands, every journey made, and every soul that comes to Christ is the result of God's faithfulness and the prayers and support of His people. I remain deeply grateful to every ministry partner who has stood with us over the years.

EDITORIAL

Editor-In-Chief : Mark Page

Contributing Editor : Gerda Potgieter

Monthly Contributors : Evangelist Freek Vermaak

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www.gobigpublications.com

mark@gobigpublications.com



+27 603520652

Polokwane Limpopo South Africa



TESTIFY MAGAZINE (TELLING PEOPLE'S STORIES - AFFIRMING GOD IS ALIVE!)

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COVER STORY

COACH FREEK THE PRISON PREACHER



COACH FREEK THE PRISON PREACHER

There was a time in my life when I was heading down a road that would ultimately lead to destruction. Anger, crime, violence, and brokenness had become part of who I was. Looking back today, I know that had it not been for the mercy and grace of God, I could easily have been the one sitting behind prison bars instead of walking through those gates as a messenger of hope. In May 2001, everything changed. I encountered the Lord Jesus Christ, and He completely transformed my life. Five months later, in October 2001, God called me into full-time ministry.



COACH FREEK THE PRISON PREACHER

I had no formal theological training, no ministry experience, and no great qualifications to offer. All I had was a testimony of what Jesus Christ had done in my life and a willingness to obey His call. For the past twenty-five years, that testimony has opened doors that no human being could have opened. God has given me the incredible privilege of proclaiming the Gospel inside correctional centres across South Africa. Every time I stand before inmates, I do not preach as someone who thinks he is better than they are. I preach as a man who knows that the same grace that rescued me is available to them. One of the greatest privileges of my ministry is sharing how God's goodness led me from crime to Christ. Time and again I have watched hardened men begin to weep as they realise that God has not forgotten them. Murderers, gang members, drug addicts, and broken fathers have bowed their knees and surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ. Watching prisoners lift their hands in worship behind steel bars is one of the clearest reminders that no prison can keep the Holy Spirit out.



COACH FREEK THE PRISON PREACHER



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COACH FREEK THE PRISON PREACHER

I remain deeply grateful to every ministry partner who has stood with us over the years. As I look to the future, my prayer is simple: that God will continue to open prison doors until every inmate in South Africa has the opportunity to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I also pray that He will raise up more labourers who are willing to go where many are unwilling to go. My life is living proof that no one is beyond the reach of God's grace. If Jesus could transform a man like me, He can transform anyone. That is the message I carry wherever I go. The words of Jesus in Luke 4:18 continue to define my calling: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me... He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives."

Until the Lord calls me home, that is exactly what I intend to do.

Coach Freek The Prison Preacher



COACH FREEK THE PRISON PREACHER

From The Editor: In Gratitude!

It is with deep gratitude and admiration that I write this small portion concerning Freek Vermaak.

A long story short is that when I was at my lowest and down and out this man Freek Vermaak, saw my dream, my vision and my talent and despite where I was with nothing took me in, gave me a computer and allowed me to be me!

After 9 months he let me go and Go Big Media was born and established. It is now merely 4 years later, and God has used me and done things that, on many days, I do not even know myself what has happened or what is happening.

I will always have a deep debt and thankfulness to this man and let me say without any reservations: if people know how much sacrifice and selflessness Freek Vermaak has gone through and what he has and is achieving, we should all support him and walk this road he is on, it is blessed by God in ways we will only in Glory know one day.

Freek, thank you! You are a legend and I do not say that lightly....

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thank You". The script is fluid and cursive, with the "T" and "Y" being particularly large and stylized.

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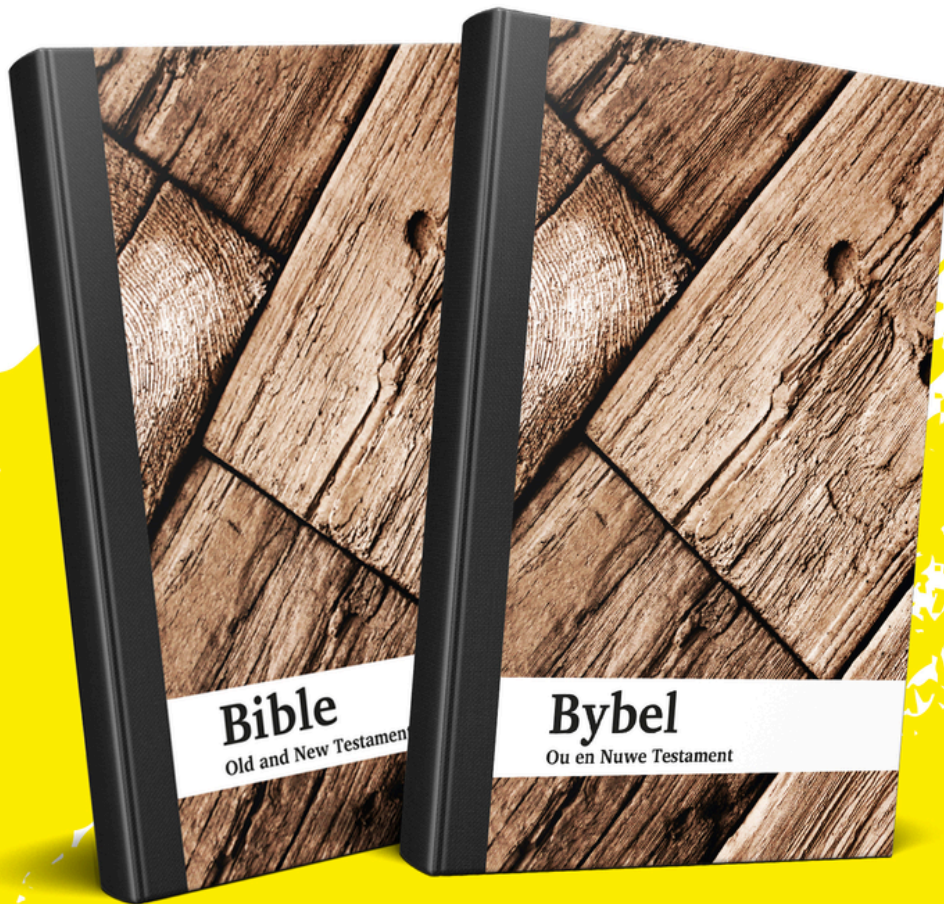


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en alles wat hy doen, voer hy voorspoedig uit."



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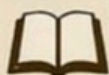
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GERDA POTGIETER

SIYABONGA SIBIYA



From addiction and prison to restoration: Siyabonga Sibiya asked his grandmother for forgiveness.

By Gerda Potgieter

Psalm 107:17-19

GERDA POTGIETER

A testimony has the power to awaken hope, point others to Christ, and reach people trapped in deep trouble. Sometimes a simple word of good news, the Gospel shared with love, or a prayer offered in faith can become the turning point in someone's life. The prayers of a faithful parent or grandparent can stand between a lost life and a restored one. Siyabonga Sibiya's story bears witness to this. He was saved through the prayers of his loving grandmother, and after receiving the Lord as his Saviour, he was the first to ask her forgiveness. This is his story of restoration, in his own words.

"God showed me mercy during the times when Satan thought he had destroyed my life. My testimony is anchored in the words of Psalm 107: 'They were fools because of their rebellious ways and suffered because of their iniquities. Their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distress.'

"My grandmother raised me after my mother passed away when I was young, while my father is still alive but not well-known to me. She took great care of me until I finished school. However, in high school, I started using drugs, beginning with dagga, influenced by friends despite my grandmother's warnings.

"I would lie to my grandmother about needing money for school trips, but in truth, I wanted money to buy dagga. She would give me money out of love, thinking she was helping me, but I was deceiving her. Smoking dagga affected my studies, and I couldn't concentrate properly. I spent more time with friends who encouraged my bad behaviour.

GERDA POTGIETER

That was when Satan began to tighten his grip on my life. Still, I did manage to pass my matric well.

"After matric, I delayed further studies and wasted time drinking. By the time I applied, universities were full. I eventually enrolled at Rosebank College in Johannesburg for Public Relations, but ended up socialising with friends who smoked and drank instead of focusing on my studies.

"Later, I progressed to sniffing cocaine. In the area where I lived, many young people used it, and it was seen as 'stylish'. If you didn't use cocaine, people looked down on you, but Satan's chains bound them.



GERDA POTGIETER

"Life in Johannesburg was tough, and things worsened during the COVID-19 lockdown when classes moved online. I had to return home to Empangeni, and Satan used this opportunity to trap me further.

"I became deeply addicted to cocaine and surrounded myself with many friends who also used the drug. I began stealing money at home and lying to my relatives to get money for drugs and alcohol. Eventually, even my grandmother realised something was wrong because of the way I was behaving.

"I attended online classes while struggling with drug addiction. I met a woman, and we had a child together, but I continued using drugs and progressed to smoking crack cocaine. It required constant money, so I began committing robberies and selling household items to fund my addiction.

"Eventually, I was caught stealing at home and beaten by my uncles and aunts. I then escalated to breaking into people's houses through the roof and stealing cars from car parks in town.

"At that point, my grandmother became ill, and her blood pressure rose because of me. At home, they eventually said I should go live with my friends because I was uncontrollable and refused to change my behaviour. Even the mother of my child left me, saying she was tired of me.

"It was painful because I was no longer wanted at home or in the community. I gave up on myself, using all kinds of drugs, injecting drugs and smoking heavily, until I was finally arrested and went to prison.

GERDA POTGIETER

"When I was released from prison, my family assisted me in finding a place where I could find help, and I was brought to CYPISA at KwaSizabantu Mission. I received spiritual guidance and prayer, and God's grace, and He forgave my sins.

"I returned home to apologise to my grandmother, my uncles and the community for the way that I had behaved. I continued to visit the Mission and assist with preparations for youth conferences, and I was finally at peace. The Lord has since blessed me with employment at the mission, and now I can work for God."

Psalm 107:17–19: "They were fools because of their rebellious ways and suffered because of their iniquities. Their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distress."



THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS!

HAVE YOU ACCEPTED JESUS
CHRIST?

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Romans 3:23 ESV

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

The abovementioned verse is an extremely well used verse and many people know it and can even quote it off by heart, but the significance of it is the reality that every single person needs to contemplate.

If you have not accepted Jesus as your Personal Saviour yet or are thin king about it, you have to start here. The reality of your sin problem cancels and disqualifies you from the very presence of God and this bars you from eternal Life. Your choices are simple here, either an eternity with God or an Eternity without God. I would think that the logical answer would be an Eternity with God. Why? Well let's look at this:

2 Thessalonians 1:9

"They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might"

NASB

This is the reality of a choice that omits Jesus as your Personal Saviour -

= Everlasting Punishment

= Destruction

= Shut Out

= No Godly Presence

= And no Glory at all

This is not something to take lightly and by the way this is not scaring you into making a false decision, God is love, thus we as His followers are love, this means if I say I have the love of God, it is my duty to tell you the truth and point you into the right direction.

So in looking at the sin problem and the reality of this, what is the answer then? Let's look at this:

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

NASB

What a wonderful solution to an immense problem, God has made a way and in making the way He has also made it very clear that this is the only answer to the problem. You have to accept Jesus His Son in order to obtain Eternal Life and ward off all the destruction and other bad things spoken about in the previous Bible verse.

It also makes it very clear that this can only be done through JESUS CHRIST His Son, there is no other way to salvation or Eternal life other than through Jesus, NONE!

Let's look at this too:

John 1:12-13

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

NASB

Wow! Just look at this, not only do we get Eternal Life but we become Children of God. The impact of this is massive as it speaks to the fact that we now belong to the family of God and receive the benefits of being part of a family, and not just any family but a royal family (1 Peter 2 vs 9).

So in looking and understanding all of this, How do you accept Jesus as your Personal Saviour?

Romans 10 vs 9-10

"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

NASB

Let me just make one point very clear before we look at the above verses, your salvation cannot be obtained by good works, you cannot go to Heaven or be part of God's family because you are a good person, or you do good deeds, No! The Bible makes it clear, if you want to accept Jesus as your Personal Saviour then it gets done on the basis of two things. These two things are critical because it will also help you on your work with the Lord and attain righteousness and a life pleasing to God.

Firstly, you have to confess with your mouth that Jesus is your Lord, this is very important because by your confession God will know and people in the world will know. This is significant because one does not hide a light under a bowl. Everyone must see and hear that you are a child of God.



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And secondly you must believe in your heart, with your whole being and understanding that Jesus was raised from the dead and is alive and is your only Saviour.

So if you have read all of this and the Holy Spirit is directing you to accept Jesus as your Personal Saviour please pray the prayer on the next page, God loves you so much.

ACCEPTING JESUS IS EVERYTHING!

PRAYER FOR SALVATION

Dear Lord Jesus,

I understand that I am a sinner and in need of desperate saving, The Bible tells me clearly that the only answer is for me to confess with my mouth and believe in my heart. I am now confessing with my mouth that I am accepting You as my Personal Saviour and believing in my heart that you are alive and well and dwelling within me. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of other Believers and allow me please to follow in your footsteps. Amen! Wow! Congratulations if you have just prayed this prayer, and know that you are now part of the family of the Kingdom of God. Please tell someone about your decision, prayer all the time and read and study your Bible. Find a Holy Ghost, Bible preaching church and join.

Please let us know if you have made this decision and allow us to point you in the right direction.

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