

Simplicity in our homes

By Martie du Plessis

I am privileged to have a few mentors in my life and the one important and recurring aspect is how they would emphasise the same core values without compromise. One of these was Christiaan "Konki" van der Walt who unexpectedly passed away in November 2013 at the age of 62. He was a true follower of Christ and his continued encouragement over several years was to live a simple life devoid of unnecessary performance. Brennan Manning, in *Ragamuffin Gospel* writes, "What makes authentic disciples is not visions, ecstasies, biblical mastery of chapter and verse, or spectacular success in the ministry, but a capacity for faithfulness," and this seems to beautifully illustrate Christiaan's core message.

Christiaan was a true example of a faithful disciple of Christ and he often commented that in a congregation of a hundred members, only five might be true disciples of Christ. This statement always perplexed me, but he qualified it by emphasising that the true discipleship meant a person categorically accepted what Christ had accomplished on the cross and did not need to add anything to it. "Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of our own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit" (Ephesians 2: 8-9).

I understood from this that many people live their lives full of anxiety and stress to obtain a false sense of righteousness, a place where they need to prove they are not failures, that they have something of value to give, and a great need to be acknowledged as a person of worth. The false sense of righteousness stems from the emphasis on what people are able to accomplish, rather than what God has already accomplished.

This spiritual "misdirection" also has an effect on how we fulfil our parenting role. We use many resources and emotional energy to strive being the perfect parent by trying to prevent anything bad from happening to our children, and to provide the ideal circumstances for them to develop into well-balanced and mature adults. The day they leave the safety of their parents' home, they

themselves start a repeat of the same process; acting on the model they recognise, they find themselves in the same trap of needing to be the perfect adult, parent, citizen or provider.

My plea to the reader is that we sow the seed now that will set the next generation free, and we can only do this if we are free ourselves - or at least if we understand the place of rest in God. When we are confronted by the great accomplishments of people around us it is sometimes difficult not to start striving ourselves. The Good News means we can stop lying to ourselves - God not only loves me as I am, but also knows me as I am. "Because of this I don't need to apply spiritual cosmetics to make myself presentable to Him. I can accept ownership of my poverty and powerlessness and neediness" (Brennan Manning, *Something is Radically Wrong*).

There is an increasing deep hunger within people to live a simple life, to do things of true value to the people around them, to be authentic and to be real. It seems as if men and women who are truly filled with light are those who have looked deeply into the darkness of their own, imperfect existence. So this is what we should help our children with: To live by grace means to acknowledge my whole life story, the good and the bad. In admitting my shadow side, I learn who I am and what God's grace means. Thomas Merton said, "A saint is not someone who is good but who experiences the goodness of God."

What we remember of those people who have imparted value into our lives defines the legacy of that person. Even when those whom we consider mentors pass on they leave us with an inheritance of value and worth; I am forever changed by a person who left me an inheritance compelling me to remember only one thing - that I am deeply loved by Jesus Christ despite not having done anything to deserve it. After the death of my mentor, I experience his inheritance through the grace I have for others and myself. I often see how families are bound by systems (e.g. school systems) that do not allow them to live with grace in their homes.

If parents can take hold of the this true Gospel of God and live it and remind their children about it, it might form the basis for a next generation of families who live more freely than our generation. If they can help their children to

accept themselves for who they are, it will decrease their hunger for power and breed an acceptance of others. Within this grace families do not need to strive for power and popularity, but accept the reality of their human limitations; they will also feel less of a need to please others and be more at peace with themselves and God. Ultimately we need to strive for a life of simplicity characterised by honesty and "being real" in our homes.

Dynamis empowers parents to take up their unique roles as God intended with the dads being the visionaries (spiritual leaders) of their household. The fullness of this influence in essence is not in what the parents say but who they are. Contact Dynamis for a presentation in your community.