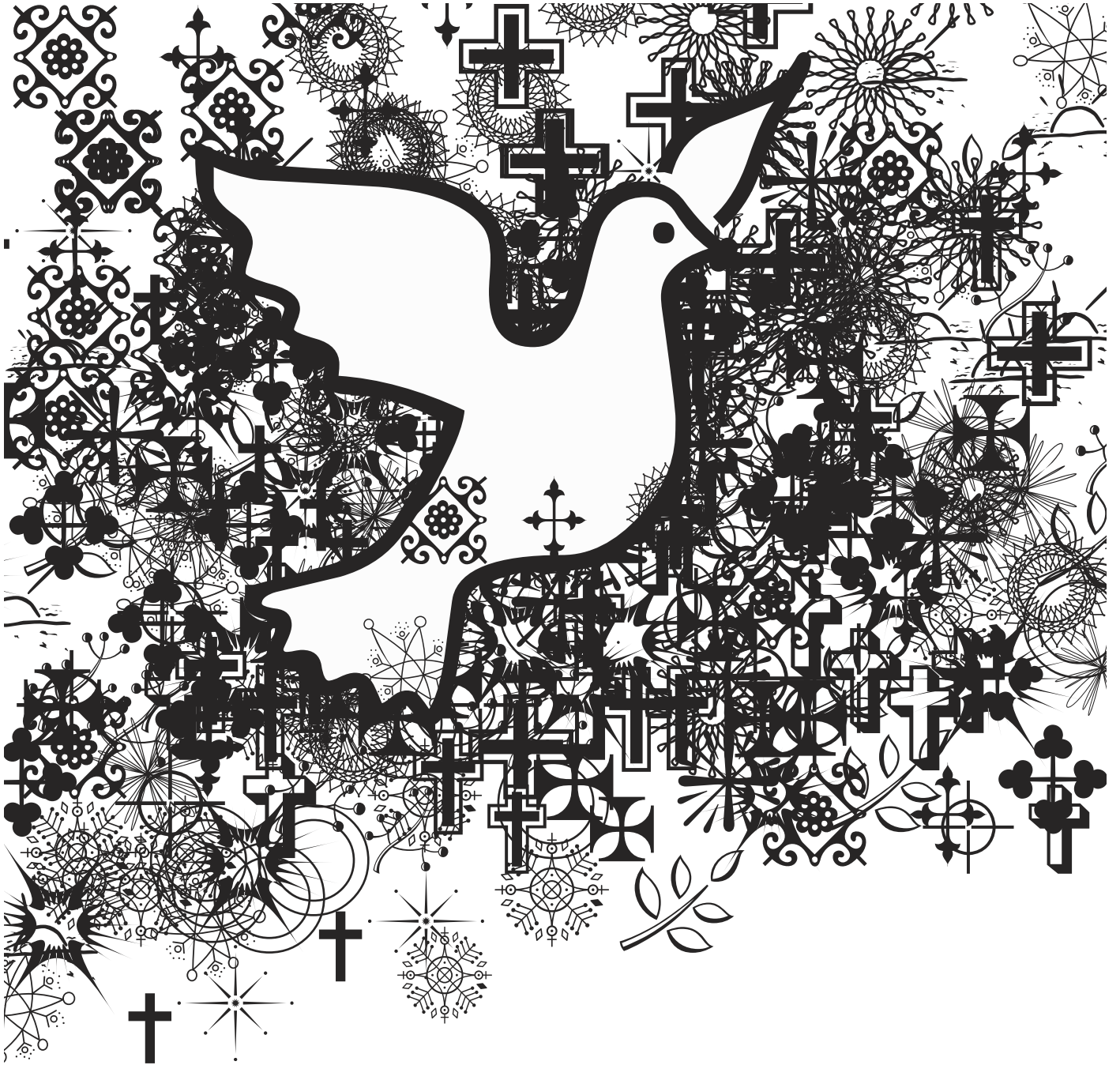


# ishah

exploring issues for Christian women

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## FATHER, SON AND . . . WHO?

THE HOLY SPIRIT...  
WHAT'S HE GOT  
TO DO WITH ME?

Maria Brand

ARMCHAIR  
GRACE

Rosanne Pedersen

THE PASSION OF  
CHRIST  
IN RWANDA

Alison Preston

ONE OF US

Sandra Joynt



Woman (Hebrew ishah). Woman, with man, was made in the image of God. 'Male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27).

## welcome...

*I grew up in a church where the only time the Holy Spirit was spoken about was when we recited the creed in a service. There was no teaching and little expectation of the Spirit's work - at least not that I could see. The Trinity was more like Father, Son and Holy Scriptures. Whilst this may not have been the intention of the leadership of my church, this is the impression I gained.*

*I grew confused about the role of the Spirit when faced with other churches who emphasised the Spirit almost to the exclusion of Jesus Christ. Often it seemed there was more of a focus on what I felt and experienced (or not) rather than on God himself. This led me to simply stop thinking about the Spirit at all: throwing the baby out with the bath-water, so to speak. As I talk with believers from various church backgrounds this state of confusion is common. Increasing that confusion is our western world that lifts up rational thinking and plays down experience, at the same time embracing relativism. How are we to work it all out?*

*Yet the Holy Spirit is God and we must ensure we neither ignore him nor misrepresent him. God is the only One who reveals himself, so we come humbly to the scriptures to understand him who dwells within us. I hope this issue encourages you to do just that.*

*The review on Hotel Rwanda and the Starting Point raise powerful and difficult issues. I hope they will lead you to pray and lament over a world in desperate need of the hope that Christ brings.*

*Please write or email us with your thoughts about this or any other issue. We love to receive your feedback.*

Claire Livingstone

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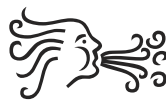
## our aims

1. To value the Bible as God's inspired Word to us and the ultimate authority on matters of faith and practice, through thinking hard about how the Bible applies to our everyday lives.
2. To encourage women to grow in godliness and maturity in Christ.
3. To equip Christian women to be creative, confident and effective in communicating the gospel.
4. To give women in a variety of roles and situations the forum to think about contemporary issues from a framework of Biblical theology and to articulate their thinking in a manner that stimulates themselves and others to live lives that are more faithful to God's Word.

## ISSUES TO COME...

**ISSUE 18:**  
Jealousy

**ISSUE 19:**  
The Bible in  
Everyday Life



# THE HOLY SPIRIT... WHAT'S HE GOT TO DO WITH ME?

BY MARIA BRAND

I have been attempting to avoid a particularly arduous task for several weeks now. I must excavate the buried 'city' of papers, books, folders, bills, letters and empty chocolate wrappers that has become 'my desk'. With a sudden burst of motivation, I set upon the task and like a skilled archaeologist, I carefully unearth the jewels from the junk. My eyes fall upon the notes that I made on what the Bible teaches us about the Holy Spirit. I can not help but laugh as I realise that their tangible position on my desk underneath the day-to-day life matters such as the mobile phone bill and the week old Kmart catalogue is somewhat analogous to the place of theology in our minds. So often, we allow what the Bible teaches us about the Holy Spirit to drift to the bottom of our minds as we pile on top the day-to-day practical matters of life. However, God's word illustrates that the Holy Spirit MUST have an integral and everyday place within our life.

Who is the Holy Spirit? He is God. Our one living and true God has revealed himself in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. What is the role of the Holy Spirit? Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we find that the Holy Spirit has an extensive role both in the world and in the life of the believer. The Spirit convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment (John 16:8). He is the advocate who comes to continue the work of Christ and testify to Christ (John 15:26).

The question of the Holy Spirit's role in our lives can be a controversial issue. I would venture to say that many Christian groups overemphasise one aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit to the detriment of his central work. The Bible illustrates that the central work of the Holy Spirit includes our conversion, participation in the body of Christ and our ministry.

The other day, while shopping, I was accosted by a man insisting that what Jesus said is irrelevant. He claimed that being a real Christian was simply about accepting the Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit continues the work of Christ, thus, understanding the message of Jesus is fundamental to understanding the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born as a man and lived on earth, died for the sins of the world, rose again in victory over evil and ascended to the right hand of the Father where he continues to intercede on our behalf (Romans 8:34). Those who repent and believe in him have eternal life (Mark 1:15).

**The Holy Spirit makes possible our participation in eternal life through Christ**

### *The Problem*

People were created 'in the image of God' and in relationship with God (Genesis 1:27). However, they chose to follow their own will rather than the will of God and the consequence of this sin

was spiritual death and a broken relationship with God (Genesis 3). This sin was then passed on to all humanity through Adam (Romans 5:12). All people are dead in their sins (Ephesians 2:1). People naturally reject God and do not seek to do the will of God (Romans 3). How then do we suddenly turn to God, repent and believe?

### *The Solution*

The missing link to this apparent problem is found in the work of the Holy Spirit. God promises to give his people a new heart and to put his spirit within them (Ezekiel 36:25-7). This will enable them to respond to him. He will be their God, and they shall be his people (Jeremiah 31:33). Christians are literally regenerated and born again of the Spirit (John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 23). The Holy Spirit gives new life to people so that they can accept forgiveness and eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Holy Spirit thus overpowers our sinful state and brings us into the family of God by making possible our participation in eternal life through Christ.

### **God dwells in his people through his Spirit**

God comes to his people and dwells in them by his Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, God comes to dwell amidst his people, the Israelites. It becomes obvious that the dwelling of a Holy God among sinful people is a risky business for us (Leviticus 16)! Yet God provides special rules and ways for his people to atone for their sins through the death and shed blood of sacrifices:

Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness so that they do not die from their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst.

*Leviticus 15:31*

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became flesh and 'tabernacled', or dwelt, among us (John 1:14). Miraculously, through his once-for-all, perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 10:14), we are made clean and given new life. It is mind-boggling to believe that God would come to live amongst his people in a temple but it is even more incredible to know that through Jesus, God comes to 'tabernacle' not in a temple but actually in Christians themselves. Our bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).

### **We are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ**

Through the Holy Spirit, Christians form the 'body of Christ'. 'For we were all baptized by one spirit into one body ... and we were all given the one Spirit to drink' (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). While working in East Africa, I was privileged to join in a Christian celebration along with thousands of Tanzanians. I remember looking into a sea of old worn out faces belonging to the men and women who had served as ministers over the last seventy-five years. I did not see merely individuals. I saw God.

I heard God, as they sang. I felt God, as they showed love to one another. I witnessed the body of Christ. And I was filled with an indescribable hope. The Holy Spirit works not only in the life of the individual but also corporately through the whole body of Christ, working together for the glorification of God. The purpose of the Holy Spirit's work in believers is that they are made holy and 'born into a living hope' (1 Peter 1:3-5) of the future culmination of God's Kingdom (Revelation 7: 9-10). This hope is, however, made a reality now through God's Spirit indwelling in his people, the body of Christ.

### The Holy Spirit sanctifies us

Through the Holy Spirit, Christians are made holy and given the power to grow in holiness. We are made holy through participation in Christ's death and resurrection, and the agent of this participation is the Holy Spirit (John 3). I have let tears stream down my face, as I cry out to God, begging him to make me more holy. I have read books and searched the Bible for ways to become more like my maker. But holiness is not something that we strive to achieve on our own. Holiness is given to us by the Holy Spirit, when we are reborn as children of God. The Holy Spirit then dwells in us, sanctifying us:

And all of us ... are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

*2 Corinthians 3:18*

### The Holy Spirit equips us to serve God and spread the Gospel

The Holy Spirit illuminates the truth (John 14:16), and gives believers the power to be witnesses of the Good News to the rest of the world (Acts 1:8). Christ adorns his body, the Church, with gifts from the Holy Spirit. When used in love, the gifts of the Spirit enable the continuation of Christ's ministry on earth. Equipping Christians to make clear the 'God-spirited' word of God (2 Timothy 3:16) is fundamental to the Spirit's work (Ephesians 2:20). Other gifts compliment the spreading of the Gospel and these gifts should not be sidelined as unimportant or 'out of date'. However, nor should they be used without love or allowed to overshadow their giver and his message.

### The central role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer

The Holy Spirit regenerates people so that they are able to turn to God and repent. Through the Holy Spirit, people participate in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God dwells in his people through his Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, God's people become the body of Christ which is the church, living in holiness and furthering Christ's work empowered by the gifts of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit cannot be ignored or neglected in our Christian lives. He is responsible for our conversion, participation in the body of Christ and our ministry.

Christians must expect to see miraculous works in their brothers' and sisters' lives because through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, God's Spirit actually dwells in his people! When someone accepts Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, God dwells in them through his Spirit and all things are possible. We must not limit the work of God. The 'Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become [his] disciples' (John 15:7-8). In John 15, Jesus tells his disciples that if they are abiding in him and he in them, then they may ask for whatever gift they wish and he will delight in giving it.

Be thankful. Thank God for your rebirth in the Holy Spirit. Be excited and awestruck as you remember your holiness as a member of the body of Christ and pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to grow you in godliness. Be bold. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you great love and power to spread the Gospel so that God's joy may be in you and your joy may be complete (John 15:11).

■ Maria Brand is completing her M Div at Ridley Theological College and works part-time as an assistant Chaplain and tutor to University students and as Promotions Officer at the Mukti (Salvation) Mission Organisation. She is engaged to her 'darling' Byron and enjoys talking, laughing, being creative and eating sugary foods.

I shudder in fear and awe as I watch God's righteous love overpower death and sin. A miracle of grand proportions has occurred. One of my friends has just become a Christian! Once a sinful mortal deserving death, they have now been reborn in the Holy Spirit, and through the Holy Spirit, they have been forgiven and given new life by co-participation in the death and life of Christ. Now I watch with great anticipation of the fruits of the Holy Spirit which will be evident in their life, their holiness and love and their Gospel work.



# ARMCHAIR GRACE



*For God does speak, now one way, now another  
~ though man may not perceive it.*

Job 33:14



BY ROSANNE PEDERSEN

At a prayer meeting recently I was warmed to hear the expression 'armchair grace'. A vibrant missionary nurse and many others had experienced this as part of the East African Revival. She told of their having to learn to "rest in this armchair, with God taking the full weight of their strivings". Their experience brought forth tears of repentance and a fresh start in listening to his ways.

As I heard about God's mercy toward a whole nation, I was moved to recall a similar embrace of God that was likewise needed to grow me some eight years ago when my husband Kev and I took our first Parish in the Dandenongs. I'd like to take you to that place of new beginnings - to my own 'armchair revival.'

From my time in 'The Hills', I've become aware that we are in a time when spiritual experiences are craved and that even Christians can fall into the trap of replacing their daily devotional with the reading of inspirational books. As I write, therefore, I hope that you get to know more about God than myself and that any experience told will re-awaken your desire to know the power of God's word.

My delight has been to quietly help women return to their Bibles believing John 6:63 - "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." My own journey involves this very process of God training me for spiritual warfare; to receive the sword of the Spirit and to be awakened to the pride and fear in my life that prevented me from using it effectively.

The Dandenong Ranges is a beautiful area, whose original shire motto was "Prolific in God's gifts." In earlier days Christian conventions brought abundant life to the church community and townships. Over time, however, the hills have also attracted a variety of occult and witchcraft activities. When we arrived in the mid nineties, we found a small remnant of believers pushing on, in what had become a very dark place. Within a kilometre radius of our church we had every form of idolatry mentioned in the Bible with only a few churches still standing. The impact of this was new to us but not to God.

Although I believe we arrived well equipped and with great enthusiasm we soon discovered what every other minister before us had discovered: a real battlefield. Neither implementation of programs nor hospitality effort could sustain interest or growth of our church. In fact everything we touched provoked an accompanying trouble, eventually leading to exhaustion. To make things harder still, our family also had increasing troubles we'd never experienced before: undiagnosable stomach problems, unusual disruption of sleep and accidents where our sons in their own words 'tripped up over nothing.' The only thing we had been taught from our previous placement that was still working was prayer. And that is how we discovered God's voice.

One day, determined to overcome my anxiety, I remember taking off my rubber gloves to pray, but not before a song at the piano. Before I sat down I reached out to clear an E.F.A.C (Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion) bookmark off the keys but as I touched it something of God's presence travelled up my arm to embrace me. It was like the Holy Spirit had rushed towards me, enveloped me, and then led me towards my armchair. My thoughts raced to Acts, where even Paul's handkerchiefs brought healing.

I reached back to pick up the bookmark only to discover its title was "Prayer". Very quickly tears of repentance flowed and I knew healing was taking place because the Holy Spirit convicted me of the pride and fear in my life that had become a stronghold. A range of my own 'pet theories about life', from how to raise children to even my theological position, seemed to be handed over and repented of. Eventually I quietly asked the Lord my biggest question: "Do you want me to receive training in spiritual warfare?" And as if I too had become Balaam's donkey, God opened my mouth supernaturally to speak, "Go forth in my name."

God's 'armchair grace' had embraced, rebuked and delivered me from all anxiety and striving. Slowly the fear of trying something new and the worry of what others would think lost its grip.

"Go forth in my name" made sense to me in the light of 2 Corinthians 10:4 - "The weapons we fight with have divine power to demolish strongholds". I brought this to Kev only to discover that God had been working independently in his life to lead him to the same conclusion. The great commission needed to be done but not in our own strength (Eph 6:12). We were surprised to find that our pride had become a blindfold, which prevented us from seeing our need for his power and authority to be at work through us. Very soon Bible verses that would equip us for the journey ahead began to 'leap up at us' from the page. We began to pray for our family life in a new way as we learned the power of Jesus' name to bind up the wiles of the enemy. Eventually peace was restored and our children grew in faith to the point where they also knew how to call on Jesus' name to rescue them from 'night time terrors'. With this new confidence in Jesus' power to deliver, we started to pray boldly for our Church. This part of our story needs more time than we have here, and special care, because God did deliver, but with much heart ache.

I believe God has begun to take the old Shire motto "Prolific in God's Gifts", and make it true in the experience of the churches in the Hills today. We recently joined together with almost a dozen other churches in a united Mission to the Community under the name "Encounter". Working together in mission, united in Spiritual understanding, new life and hope has begun to emerge. Every home and street has been prayed for and many dramatic changes have occurred. Kevin and I have now moved on to another wonderful spot knowing the Lord has appointed some dear friends to continue the work. The only thing we left in the bookcase is something the ministers fraternal passed on to us upon our arrival nine years ago - Dr Ed Murphy's "Handbook for Spiritual Warfare". God's wisdom to us sat for too long on our bookshelf - but pride is like that - and takes time to uproot. God was speaking but we did not have ears to hear.

■ Rosanne Pedersen is married and has three children. They currently worship at Ormond Anglican. She feels her main gift is encouraging other women to be themselves, knowing that is who God made them.

# THE PASSION OF CHRIST IN RWANDA

BY ALISON PRESTON

*What follows is more than a review. It explores some of the issues portrayed in Hotel Rwanda, as well as drawing on the author's own experiences.*

*Hotel Rwanda* is a painful, shocking, and tender film, as it follows the true story of a family struggling to survive their country's descent into brutal violence.

Paul Rusesabagina, the manager of Kigali's most elite hotel, is the leading character performed with moving depth by Don Cheadle.

A quietly charismatic and intelligent man, Paul has spent a career attending to the every need of Rwanda's elite, and to visiting foreign businessmen, diplomats, and aid workers. At night he drives the hotel minibus home to his wife and children in the suburbs.

Paul's journey into the horror starts off slowly – it is as if we can see the growing crisis far clearer than he can. Sure, there is ethnic and political tension, but Paul knows that across Rwanda there are hundreds of thousands of marriages and firm friendships between the two main ethnic groups, Hutus and Tutsis, with his own marriage an example.

Paul also knows that the United Nations peacekeepers and foreign military forces in Rwanda will prevent any real outbreak in violence.

But Paul is terribly wrong. He finds himself inside the hotel with a thousand people fleeing from certain death outside the gate, little food, a swimming pool of water, a cellar full of alcohol, and his family.

Outside the hotel gates, more than 800,000 people are being killed, raped, and tortured. Homes are burning.

One very interesting thing about *Hotel Rwanda* is that, for a movie about a genocide, relatively little violence is actually shown. We see veiled images of the aftermath, we see terrifying drunken

mobs, and burning buildings, but much is left to the imagination.

Why did the director choose not to show these details? I think a deliberate effort has been made to ensure that this important film is appropriate for viewing by as many people as possible.

Does *Hotel Rwanda* give some insight into the utter violence that erupted across a beautiful country of farming families who had shared churches, schools, markets, marriages, playgrounds and a common language all their lives?

I think so. As with any nation, Rwanda has a complex story. A story of divisive colonial rule, of political and economic crisis as plunging world coffee prices dropped millions of comfortable Rwandan families into desperate poverty. And a story of failure by developed nations to intervene.

Something explored only in the background of the film but of great importance to us, is that 94% of people in Rwanda are of Christian faith.

Sophie, Paul's wife, wears a cross throughout the film, and there is a scene where a flood of priests and nuns pour into the Hotel desperately seeking sanctuary for their parishioners.

Tears poured down my face as the non-Rwandese priests and nuns were evacuated - because I suspect that I would have chosen to be evacuated too, and yet the concept that protection is provided according to which passport one holds is a profound injustice.

What is not shown in *Hotel Rwanda* is that across the country thousands of people fled to their churches for refuge. It was inside the churches that people were trapped and massacred. Some priests actually betrayed their parishioners, others died refusing to abandon them.

Did God abandon the people of Rwanda?

This is a question I have struggled with for many years.

Why did Christians kill and torture their neighbours? Why did Christians around the world who knew what was happening do nothing?

In some ways, *Hotel Rwanda* flips these questions around and gives us positive answers – for it is a story of an ordinary man who chooses to act in love towards those around him, even though he faces almost certain death.

Indeed, one writer in the widely read American publication *Christianity Today* said that *Hotel Rwanda* could have been titled "The Passion of Christ".

*Hotel Rwanda* is a story about how people make choices under pressure.

We should each think carefully about the frightening power of "group psychology" to reduce the humanity of people, or to undermine our belief that every human being is created in the image of God.

As the real Paul Rusesabagina wrote in June this year, "Genocide is madness. It makes monsters of normal people. In Rwanda, it was not just men who used machetes against their neighbors. Women and children participated."

The role of God intervening (or not) in human suffering is more difficult to explore.

When I stood in a church building in Rwanda strewn with the remains of hundreds of people, left exactly as they had been killed to record a glimpse of the massacre, my mind was screaming out in horror and confusion.

When I read the Bible I do not see promises from God that he will always save us from physical suffering. But somehow I have been deeply "programmed" to expect this.

I have found great wisdom and comfort in Gary Vaughan's excellent book, "Good News About Injustice" – an exploration of God's character and promises in the Bible in the context of great suffering. Vaughan was the member of a legal team documenting mass graves in Rwanda for the International Criminal Court.

A Rwandan friend of mine, Solomon Nsabiya, miraculously survived the genocide and now leads a team of people who run healing and reconciliation workshops in villages across the country. He lost some 80 family members.

Solomon watched *Hotel Rwanda* with his family and some friends.

"We all cried as we watched the courageous acts of a man like Paul Rusesabagina, who decided to save lives amidst hopelessness and horror," Solomon wrote later.

"The movie is wonderful, and will again remind the powerful nations of their failure and neglect to protect those who were exterminated."

"Unfortunately the movie shows little of the widespread rape of women. I understand (why) they have avoided these nasty images, but this is one of the most tragic stories of the genocide."

It is true that the widespread rape of women is neglected, and that the film does largely

focus on the story of men – on Paul, on the calculating men leading the genocide, on the UN General of Peacekeeping, on the drunken mobs doing the killing, and on the men in offices in Paris, Brussels, New York, and Washington.

However Tatiana, Paul's wife, and a female English Red Cross worker are intelligent, resilient and compassionate women in the film, and both display remarkable courage.

Another reviewer of this film, Denis Haack, describes the role of Tatiana, played by Sophie Okonedo, well: "Paul provides the film's moral center, but Tatiana is, in many ways, its heart. Through her, we witness both the horror of seeing one's family ripped apart and the love that can, against the odds, help keep it intact. Okonedo's face registers every raw emotion, from terror to steely resolve, helping lend the film its harrowing, almost documentary-like-feeling."

This remarkable resilience was certainly reflected in the women I worked with in Rwanda – as they told me of watching their families killed around them, of rape, guilt, loneliness, and living with HIV/AIDS.

Many of these women cling to God with a faith that is utterly humbling.

There is so much I want to tell you about Rwanda. There is so much to try and

understand. As Christians, I believe we are called to be passionately concerned with the wellbeing of all in the global community, and to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. I know this is often overwhelming.

But, I encourage you to see this film, and echo the words of my Rwandan friend Solomon:

"I know you will get the opportunity to watch *Hotel Rwanda*. Please do".

#### Further Reading:

Isaiah 42:1–12 and John 10:10

*Good News About Injustice*  
Gary Vaughan

*We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with all our children*  
Philip Gourevitch

*Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*  
Robert McAfee Brown

■ Alison Preston is a Christian and works in the area of overseas community development and post-conflict recovery. Throughout 2001 and 2002, Alison extensively interviewed women affected by conflict in Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Email: [alijp@yahoo.com](mailto:alijp@yahoo.com)



## write of reply

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## RECOMMENDED READING:



*Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*  
Jack Deere, Zondervan, Michigan, 1993



*The Work of the Holy Spirit*  
Christian Theology, Millard J Erickson, Baker Books, Michigan, 2002

*Paul, the Spirit and the People of God*  
Gordon Fee, Hendrickson Publishers, Massachusetts, 1996

*Contours of Christian Theology: The Holy Spirit*  
Sinclair Ferguson, Inter-Varsity Press, England, 1996



*I Believe in the Holy Spirit*  
Michael Green, Hodder & Stoughton, Sydney, 1985

*The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*  
E Murphy, Thomas Nelson, 2003

*Keep in Step with the Spirit*  
J I Packer, Inter-Varsity Press, England, 1984

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*Starting Point is a regular column that aims to encourage readers to engage with a contemporary issue in the media.*

## ONE OF US

Months have passed since Schapelle Corby's arrest and subsequent trial in Indonesia, yet her face still periodically graces our newspaper pages. Much has been said about the amount of publicity surrounding her case. Our media has focused on her (and ignored countless others unjustly imprisoned in various parts of the world) because, regardless of her actual guilt or innocence, she's stereotypically "one of us" – white, Australian, girl-next-door.

Yet as Christians, our primary citizenship is in heaven. How much more, then, should we be aware of other Christians round the world who are unjustly imprisoned for their faith – for these people are certainly "one of us" in God's kingdom.

Persecution of Christians doesn't make the news very often, but did you realise that an estimated 500 people are killed *per day* around the world because they are Christians? It's true that Christians aren't the only ones persecuted for their faith – but where believers are persecuted for proclaiming Jesus as the only way of salvation, it's not just a human rights issue but also a spiritual battle. This is what we see happening when Christians face discrimination, harassment, vandalism to homes and churches, arbitrary imprisonment, torture...

### Two snapshots:

- Recently in Indonesia, three Christian women were accused by a Muslim council of breaching the Child Protection Law by evangelising Muslim children during a voluntary Sunday school program. Rebekka Zakaria, Eti Pangesti and Ratna Mala Bangun are awaiting trial and have been refused bail – so they are currently unable to live at home and take care of their own children. If they are convicted, they could be sentenced up to five years and fined US\$103,600.
- Eritrean evangelical minister Oqbamichel Haimanot was jailed in January along with 64 church members for meeting to pray and worship without government approval. None of the prisoners have been charged in court or brought to trial. Pastor Haimanot has recently suffered a mental breakdown due to harsh physical and emotional mistreatment during his imprisonment.

Why not commit to being informed and praying regularly for our persecuted brothers and sisters? Up-to-date information and prayer requests are always available from the following websites:

- ▶ Voice of the Martyrs - [www.vom.com.au](http://www.vom.com.au)
- ▶ Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission - [www.evangelicalalliance.org.au/rlc/](http://www.evangelicalalliance.org.au/rlc/)
- ▶ Open Doors - [www.opendoors.org.au](http://www.opendoors.org.au)
- ▶ Tears of the Oppressed - [www.human-right-and-christian-persecution.org](http://www.human-right-and-christian-persecution.org)

■ Sandra Joynt works as a graphic designer, attends Glen Waverly Anglican Church and would like to be seated next to John Safran on an aeroplane.

