

## Dear praying family and friends:



### Unkulunkulu?

This might be a mystery to you. Yet, for our students, here in South Africa it is a key question. Allow me to set the scene. In our class in Christian Doctrine, we talk about God and assert that the only True and Living God is known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We also say that God must be known as both Creator and Redeemer. So what does this have to do with Unkulunkulu? In Zulu culture, this is the name for the “the greatest one” or the creator God. In our class, we posed a key question? If a Zulu worships Unkulunkulu does he/she worship the true and living God? This is a lot more than theory, because if the answer is ‘yes’ then evangelism is not needed, and if the answer is ‘no’ then it is. One student raised his hand and said, if you look at the actions of Unkulunkulu then there is no way that he can be the Christian God. One student ‘VG’ decided to buy a Bible in Zulu and to explain it to his father who worships ancestors and Unkulunkulu.

### I AM statements and....?

Many of our students come from church backgrounds that largely disregard the Old Testament (OT). This presents a teaching challenge, as the OT serves as a strong foundation for reading the New. In class we went through the 9 “I AM” statements in the Gospel of John, such as “I AM the bread of life” and with each one, we looked at its OT background. We looked at manna and the ‘showbread’ or Bread of the Presence. We saw how Jesus was the provider of Ultimate nourishment and satisfaction---“they all ate and were satisfied.” The students were challenged to make a month-long teaching on these statements, and to show just how Jesus is very much the ‘I AM’ or Yahweh who revealed himself to Moses. One student ‘P” simply shook her head and said, “Jesus is greater than I had ever imagined.”

### Praises and prayers

- About six weeks ago, we each had a mild case of COVID. We were able to teach a week of classes remotely and almost back to full strength.
- In a miraculous way we were able to leave for a short ‘visa-hop’ to Egypt and despite some initial obstacles, were cleared to leave and re-enter South Africa.
- We were greatly encouraged by cards, communications and financial support over Christmas. We know we are not alone in this enterprise.
- We asked for prayer for a good quantity of students, and we have them both in quantity and quality.



## What is a topic sentence?

Anne and I teach different subjects, but they certainly complement each other. Next week, a group of my students will submit their first essay on the sovereignty of God. Fortunately, Anne is teaching them to narrow down their topics and to even write a topic sentence. Here is one such sentence: Many South African Christians are ill-informed or misinformed about God's sovereignty. Anne notices that the student has mastered the topic sentence by having a topic/subject and a controlling idea that will guide the rest of the paragraph. We are challenging our students to write well and even consider submitting their papers to a widely-read Christian magazine here in Southern Africa



## Prayer requests

- Shortly we hope to re-launch our long-term visa application process. It is very time and money consuming, and with busy teaching schedules, this will be a challenge.
- That more of our students, such as the Zulu student above, will have a burden to reach their own people. South Africa is very religious, but still has many aspects of ancient religions and Christianity all mixed together. It is common enough for a person to go to church and see a witch doctor all in the same week.
- That pastors here will be encouraged, as one said, "COVID has taught me that think---and wrongly so---that they don't need church." We know this is a worldwide challenge.
- For wisdom for a challenging journal article that I am writing which examines how some missionaries are using 'Holy Spirit' language to justify largely human-driven enterprises.

I (we) would like to support **John & Anne Span**

Here is my gift \$

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*Blessings  
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