

Overseer Justifies International Transfer of Perpetrators



By **wingsfortruth2** on May 19, 2025

In 1983, a nine-year-old girl was sexually abused by worker Johan Marais in South Africa. In 2010, the survivor came forward and disclosed her abuse to overseers Duane Hopkins, Trevor Loechel, Andy Robijn and Johan Kotze. She also confronted Marais in writing, and he admitted the abuse. After persistence by the survivor's advocates, Marais was removed from the work. He is currently the elder of a Sunday morning meeting.

In 2012, Leroy Lerwick wrote to the survivor and her family, advocating for Marais' return to the work in South America. He admitted the international transfer of workers who are prohibited from being on staff in their home countries.

Lerwick's letter and the survivor's response are posted below.

The yellow highlights in Lerwick's letter have been added by WINGS.

August 17, 2012

leroylerwick@Redacted

Dear Friends, the ____ family;

I was in South Africa for conventions this year but did not have the privilege to meet you, or be in the meetings where you attended. I labor in South America, in Ecuador. Interest is very good in this country. We are unable to reach all who would like to listen, due to our limited number of workers. This is true in several countries in South America. We are glad there were enough workers to reach our families when they first heard the message that gave them a hope for eternity and could make that hope available to us. We would like to believe that every seeking sinner would find the Lord, but our experience makes it very clear that many will go to their grave without hearing this precious gospel, even though they earnestly desire to, for lack of messengers. Jesus made this clear, too, saying that those he sent forth would not be able to cover all the places in Israel. The harvest is great and laborers are few.

Recently we read Paul's letter to Philemon. We do not know all the details of the situation, but can understand that Philemon had a servant, probably a slave which was his property, who had escaped from him and somehow made contact with Paul who was in prison in Rome or perhaps Caesarea. From some of the details of his letter and similar details of his letter to the Colossians it is thought that Philemon lived in that place. Paul says he had not been to Colossae, but had heard of their faith and was moved to write to them to encourage them. He does appear to know some who were from Colossae, perhaps those who labored in the ministry who were from there. We admire his interest in this runaway slave. What had he done, what harm had he caused his master, we do not know. Paul spoke to him about forgiveness, salvation, and he received a hope for his soul, as Paul states that he had become his father in the gospel. Now he sends him back to his master with this letter. Paul appeals to Philemon in a very humble manner, pleading that he would receive him, not just as his slave, but as his brother in Christ, and as a repentant slave who is willing to serve him now as if he were Christ himself. We can see Onesimus arriving with his letter, trembling, with fear, lest his master would not even allow him to present the letter, maybe he would not read it, but he does, and he watches his countenance as his master reads Paul's

plea, watches the softening of his countenance, and hope wells up in his heart, he is prepared to confirm what Paul has written, that he has changed, and now he hopes to prove it by serving his master as if he were Christ himself. We do not know the outcome, but what a lesson for us all, of the importance of reconciliation, how it can heal, how it can produce a rich fellowship. It is the reason Jesus came, to reconcile us to His father, not to condemn us, not to punish us for our sin, for sure to bring us to repentance first, but to reconcile us. None of our efforts towards righteousness or justice would be of value without reconciliation.

There have been some wonderful missions in Latin America in the past 30 or 40 years. Some countries were not given the opportunity until the 70's and 80's. When I arrived to Ecuador in 1983 there were only 7 people professing in the country, and now there are about 30 churches. The first pair of brothers arrived in Peru in 1969, in Ecuador in 1975, in Venezuela in 1980, in Colombia in 1988. There are many rejoicing in these countries now for the hope they have received. Where did these workers come from? USA, Europe, Canada, South Africa, Australia, Korea. Who were they? They were fragile human vessels that God was able to use. Some of them were very appreciated and loved in their home countries and went only because they insisted, though the responsible brothers in their countries would have preferred to keep them home for the need there. A few had not done well, and their testimony was such that they were not free to continue in the work in their home country. Many would have thought they should not have a place in the work anywhere. One such brother from Switzerland was given the opportunity to go to Peru, and we now can see that God's hand was in that arrangement, as he was the man with the courage and strength that was required to go to the high mountains to an area known for its violence, where even the police did not venture. Now there are many churches in that area, and many workers have gone forth from those churches. I asked this brother when visiting there if he had ever dreamed he would see such a response when he went there. He did not answer me, but bowed his head into his arms on the table and wept. I did not know what was behind those tears at the time, as no one spoke of his past and few in South America knew. He had committed a serious error and it had been undisclosed for years. Eventually it came to light and it was decided and correctly so that he should not be in the work in his country. However he pled for an opportunity to go to some country to pioneer, anywhere, no matter how difficult, and it was arranged for him to go to Peru. We wonder if and when the work would have ever begun in that country if this had not been arranged. God is merciful, and it is His victory when there is forgiveness and restoration, and reconciliation. It is our enemy's victory when there is none. Another brother who did not manage to maintain a good testimony was the first to go to a country in the Caribbean, a very poor country where none had ventured to go. The response there has been wonderful. None of us would have any hope of salvation without His mercy.

We are aware of the offense your family suffered and do not wish to give the impression that we do not consider it a serious matter. We hope and pray that such matters can be dealt with fairly and justly, and the final result can be healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. There are cases where one has a weakness and becomes a serial offender. There is no doubt that in such cases it is not possible to continue in the ministry or in any capacity that allows further offenses to occur. However, we in South America can say that Johan Marais has a good testimony during his years in Bolivia and Peru. There are many in those two countries that will be eternally grateful for the help received from his ministry. We have a sister from Bolivia on our staff in Ecuador, who has great appreciation for Johan, as he was in her home when her mother passed away, a terrible time for her and her sisters who were all young at the time, and in primary school. There was never any incorrect behavior towards her and her sisters. Her eyes fill with tears whenever his name is mentioned. The need is so great for laborers; all of us are so extended trying to reach needy

souls. We pray that Johan could be restored to a useful place in South America even if he cannot and should not be active on the staff in his home country. Nothing matters but salvation, and the salvation of many is at stake. God can forgive, as we sing, "not a sin so great but he'll forgive it." Repentance is turning and not continuing in the same error. Forgiveness is possible when there is repentance. Forgiven sinners do not have a past. Offenses we have suffered do not continue to harm us when there is forgiveness, as we also no longer have that past. When we do not set a brother free, we keep ourselves in bondage. Our humble plea is that there can be reconciliation, forgiveness, and all can be set free, so that this great kingdom does not suffer loss. Forgiving does not mean we forget, but it changes the way we remember, as it frees us from the bitterness of the memory and replaces those feelings with thankfulness and peace. David was forgiven by God, but not by Ahitophel, Bathseba's grandfather. His end could have been so different, had he forgiven as God did.

We respect and appreciate the efforts of all on the behalf of the kingdom and the salvation of all and I have felt moved to write this letter in support of those efforts. I hope it may be received in the same spirit. Finally, our humble plea is that in the interest of souls crying out who can help us, in these needy fields in South America, would you consider assuring the responsible brothers in South Africa that you would not object to Johan Marais helping in a field in South America, though he not be on the staff in South Africa. I am sure he is willing to spend the rest of his life in South America in the work and never return to his homeland if that were the conditions required of him. This is not a plea specifically in favor of Johan Marais, rather it is a plea on the behalf of souls that are destined to perish for lack of laborers. Your response will be appreciated.

A brother, LeRoy Lerwick

Date: Wed, 22 Aug 2012 at 20:04

Subject:

To: <leroylerwick@Redacted>

Cc: <andrewrobn@Redacted>, <johan.sirof@Redacted>, <duen2288@Redacted>, <dgshultz@Redacted>, <jsgunn@Redacted>

Dear Leroy,

I have read with interest your letter to my family and would like to address some inaccuracies regarding Johan Marias.

Johan Marais sexually abused me. He groomed me over a period of time and then lured me to a secluded place where he molested me. It was a premeditated and calculated act. He has admitted abusing me, both verbally and in writing. Any 26yr old man who gets sexually aroused by a nine yr old girl-has something fundamentally wrong with him. This is not a case of forgiveness - nor is it one of reconciliation between Johan and myself-it is a case of a **CRIMINAL ACT PUNISHABLE BY LAW**. As damaging as the physical act was, his words to me after I had escaped from him, were as damaging. He told me, whilst holding me down, that God would punish me and my family, if I told anyone.

When Johan Marias landed in South Africa on the 30 December 2010 he phoned me and the first question I asked him was whether he had been with any other child. His VERY chilling words to me were "What do I consider a child, as they differ so much in maturity". I find it totally reprehensible

that you would consider having Johan back in the work where he will be in a position of authority and in a position where he could molest other children.

I also find it disturbing that you would undermine Andy Robijn and Johan Kotze's decision to remove Johan Marias from the work. This incident with me is one of MANY incidents where Johan's indiscretion with women, as well as his arrogance, manipulation and incorrect attitude have been seen. Seeing as you quoted scripture to me, may I remind you of a few things. In Timothy, it speaks about the role that an elder or worker must have- fundamental to this is the fact that they must be BLAMELESS. Johan Marais is not blameless. He has NOT taken responsibility for his actions- if he had, he would be content to get on with his life. I have NO doubt that he is aware of this letter that you wrote to my family.

Should you persist in garnering support for Johan Marais and incorrectly petitioning me to forgive Johan, I WILL prosecute him. My advocate has made it her lifes work to prosecute paedophiles- she has a 100% conviction rate.