



# DISCOVERING THE SAVING POWER OF CHRIST

*South African rugby player **Siya Kolisi** has made a name for himself as one who can play any position in the back row, though he normally features as a flanker. Kolisi made his senior debut for Western Province during the 2011 Vodacom Cup, and in 2018 was elected as captain of the South African national team, becoming the first black captain in the 126-year history of the Springboks' rugby union team.*

I grew up in the impoverished township of Zwide in South Africa, where I was raised by my grandmother because my mother and father were too young to look after me. Ever since I can remember, rugby has been a big part of my life. My dad and uncles played this sport and as soon as I could, at the age of 8, I started playing too.

Living in the ghetto, we struggled to get by. We couldn't afford to pay for my school and all the fees that went along with it, but I went to school every day because it was where I received my one meal for the day. In the evening, I would return to our two-bedroom home where seven of us lived, take the cushions off the couch and sleep on the floor for the night.

I always enjoyed rugby; I trained every single day for it. Rugby seemed to keep me away from a lot of the bad things going on around me. I lost a lot of friends because while I was focusing on being the best I could be in my sport, they were falling prey to the struggles and temptations of life in the hood. I was set on preparing myself for any opportunity I could, though I didn't know what that may be.

# SIYA KOLISI



When I was 12 years old, I went out on the field to play with my school team in our first game of the season. Facing a nearby school that had a great coach, we were defeated by 50 points. After the game, that opposing coach approached me and said he thought I had talent. He invited me to play for his school. From there, this coach took me under his wing, becoming more of a father figure to me than I had ever had. He knew how much this opportunity meant to me and I worked hard to take full advantage of it. He took me to my first provincial trial, where I played in boxers because I couldn't afford rugby shorts. Soon, I found myself on the provincial team, heading to tournaments to play the game I loved more than anything.

When I was 19, I became a professional. In 2012, on the same weekend of my 21st birthday, I played my first game with the South African national team. Having the chance to play in the 2015 Rugby World Cup was a huge privilege, though I only got to play 30 minutes of it. Now, as a captain of the Springboks, I couldn't be more honored and excited to represent my country in the World Cup. I know I was chosen to be a captain of this team — the highest position one can achieve in this sport — for the person I am. Therefore, I try to remain true to who I am, not letting little things get into my head. I try to be a positive example to others when I play.


God has been preparing me for such a time as this. While I grew up going to church with my grandmother, and went off and on the past few years, it wasn't until a few months ago that I truly gave my life to Christ. While struggling with a lot of things personally — temptations, sins and lifestyle choices — I realized I wasn't living

according to what I was calling myself: a follower of Christ. I was getting by, but I hadn't decided to fully commit myself to Jesus Christ and start living according to His way.

That is, until something I was struggling with in my personal life was exposed to the public. Up to that point, everything I was fighting against was hidden, but when my sin was exposed, I knew I either had to change my life, or lose everything. I decided to lose my life and find it in Christ.

Walking alongside a spiritual mentor, I've been able to discover the truth and saving power of Christ in a whole new way. This new life has given me a peace in my heart I'd never experienced before. Now that I have given everything to God, nothing else affects me. I now live and play with the freedom of knowing His plan will always happen, and at the end of the day, that's all I care about!

I don't have to understand everything in life, and there are so many things I don't, but I know God is in control of it all. My job is to do the best I can and leave the rest in His hands. While I was really struggling in the midst of my sin, I read a verse in the book of Isaiah in the Bible that really stood out to me. Isaiah 43:2-3 says, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." I read it over and over, for days.

If God can come through for countless people throughout history who had their backs against the world, He can do the same for me. 

*Siya's favorite verse:*

***"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior..."***

***— Isaiah 43:2-3***



# SOUTH AFRICA

