

## Episode 117

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*The people of the island saw it hanging from his hand and said to each other, "A murderer, no doubt! Though he escaped the sea, justice will not permit him to live." But Paul shook off the snake into the fire and was unharmed. The people waited for him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw that he wasn't harmed, they changed their minds and decided he was a god.*

- Acts of the Apostles 28:4-6

I recently asked for book recommendations on a WhatsApp group and was rather surprised by the answers. I didn't get any. Yes, there was a lot of banter, and suggestions that I read 'Die Swart Kat' and other random recommendations, but all the suggestions that I did receive, were sent privately to me. I couldn't help but wonder if it wasn't because they were all insecure about sharing what they were reading? "Joel Osteen? How could you read anything by him?!" or "Hey, all of those books you recommended are secular!" or "Shame, it looks like you don't read very weighty books?!" We are so very deeply aware of what others think of us. All the time. In everything we do.

Ecclesiastes 4.4 says "all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind." If we fail, public opinion declares that we got what we deserved. And if we fly, we are considered gods. It was true of Paul and it's true today.

I've had to wrestle this through with my kids because they don't have the street smarts to navigate this flaky world they are growing up in. So I've taught them about Boytjies and Gherkins. The urban dictionary defines a Boytjie as a jock, someone who is self-centred and insecure, padding their insecurities with achievements. This is a good start, but I added that a Boytjie behaves like a boy in a man's body. They can be 50, yet behave like a 5-year-old. And I warned my daughters against them.

The same applies to Gherkins. This was their word, cos they didn't think Girtjie had the same oomph. A Gherkin is someone who is deeply opinionated, self-obsessed, and unteachable. I've met 30-year-old Gherkins who behave like 3-year-olds. Take away their phones and they throw the same tantrums.

However, the opposite is true. I've had to teach my kids not to lean on Boytjies and Gherkins because their friendships are flaky, but if they open their eyes, and pay attention to those who stand in the shadows, they will find men inside the boys they meet and deeply secure women inside some of the girls at school. These are the ones who are true friends, who will fight for you, treat you like you deserve, and stand by your side through thick and thin. These are the ones the Spirit of God shines through and it's evident if you just choose to look.

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