

# True Champions: Dion Forster, fulfilling His God-given calling



A monthly column in which we share testimonies of some of South Africa's 'True Champions' who bring glory to God and bless their fellow-citizens, by opposing the tide of corruption and taking a strong stand for ethics in their spheres of influence.

**Suggest a True Champion:** email [news@gatewaynews.co.za](mailto:news@gatewaynews.co.za)

Your greatest joy, fulfillment and blessing are close to where you are says theologian and author Dr Dion Forster, who is Chairperson of EXPOSED, an international campaign that tackles the global issue of corruption and its devastating impact on the world's poorest people. I was talking to Forster, who is Senior Researcher in Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology at the Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology at Stellenbosch University at the end of a recent Winter School presented by the university's Faculty of Theology in collaboration with the Centre, Communitas and Ekklesia.

Forster who was one of the keynote speakers at the Winter School told me that most people don't have the privilege of discovering their true calling but this does not mean God does not have a plan for everybody. "People need to realize that they can transform the situation they are in to use it for God's glory," he said, illustrating his point with the example of Global Day of Prayer (2001) and Unashamedly Ethical (2009) founder Graham Power (See last month's [True](#)

[Champions](#) column) who God has been using while he remained in the construction industry, as opposed to calling him into 'fulltime ministry'.

### **Life changing meeting**

Forster says that his own life was radically altered following a conversation with Power who approached him after a service at a church he was pastoring in 1999. He shared Power's marketplace ministry journey becoming chaplain to the Power Group of Companies as well as the Global Day of Prayer and Unashamedly Ethical movements.

UE is a global partner of the EXPOSED campaign, which has offices in Cape Town, London, New York and Malaysia, and as Chairman of EXPOSED, Forster has been around the world meeting church and business leaders, as well as heads of state and the United Nations with the aim of securing their support in fighting corruption by mobilising the world's massive Christian population. He says, "We have achieved a global reach of 153 countries with 150 million people participating in the campaign. It will culminate with a global call to end corruption that will be presented at the G20 Leaders Summit in Australia. We will hand over the global call to end corruption, which includes a call for policy changes. There will also be a public press event involving the youth who are a key focus of the campaign."

### **Forefront of fight against corruption**

Forster considers being at the forefront of the fight against corruption a privilege, saying it has allowed him to express his faith in a tangible way. He adds: "Principles of justice and equity are a core of our faith; the Bible deals with very strong social issues." On the role of the church, Forster says the focus should not be on the church or politics but rather on being obedient to God and serving communities and the world according to the will of Christ. This was the thrust of his presentation at the Winter School, which he says was like getting a remarkable glimpse of the Kingdom of God with

several hundred people representing a wide range of denominations and races together for three days discussing the issue of the role of the church in Africa over the next 20 years.

Reflecting on the 15 years since his post-service meeting with Power, Forster says he cannot believe how fortunate he has been – especially considering his childhood. Born in Zimbabwe to parents who divorced when he was only two years old, he says growing up with an unstable childhood he never considered the possibility of ever leaving the area of his birth. This changed when his father obtained custody of his brother and himself after moving to Cape Town. He visited a church because of a girlfriend but Forster says: “I experienced such love in the church, like I never experienced before, and I knew in an instant that I would spend my life in ministry. That was while I was still in high school.” Although no longer in fulltime church ministry, Forster has remained true to his calling to serve and lead people out of darkness, albeit as a theologian, marketplace minister and global anti-corruption activist.

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## **True Champions: Graham Power, an example of obedience**



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Faith, passion, humility, determination and awe are clearly evident within the man whom God entrusted with a vision 14 years ago, which would later become a vision for the world. It was only one year after this highly successful businessman had surrendered his life to Christ, while on holiday with his family in Spain, that he awoke at 4am and received what he calls "detailed instructions" from God as to what was required of him when he returned to Cape Town. The man, of course, is none other than Dr Graham Power who started a small construction company in 1983 and grew it into the Power Group, a multi-million rand entity consisting of Power Construction and Power Developments.

The complete vision, which Power eventually received, consisted of three waves based on 2 Chronicles 7:14 – "If my people, who are called by my name, <sup>1</sup>will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and <sup>2</sup>turn from their wicked ways, then <sup>3</sup>I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." So far, two of the three waves have reached shore; the third wave is still on the approach. The first wave started with 45000 people coming together to pray at Newlands Stadium in 2001 and, only eight years later, culminated in a Global Day of Pray (GDoP) taking place in 220 nations around the world and has continued to gain momentum. The second has seen the establishment of Unashamedly Ethical, a campaign that has mobilised people globally towards ethics, values and clean living. So far, the campaign is active in 96 nations with 4 500 corporates and about 20 000 individuals signing a public declaration in support of it.

### **No holding back**

The obedience with which Power took hold of and carried out the vision is what sets him apart. There are many reasons that

people, too often, know what to do but don't do it, or start doing what they know they should but cannot complete it or see it through. With Power, the fact that he was heading up a large, multi-pronged organisation could have been reason enough **to hold back**. Yet, this was not the case. Once he had made the decision to live a life in surrender to Christ, his commitment was unwavering. As a result, a vision of the magnitude he received meant that business, at least for a while, had to take a back seat.

Not only did Power pour his heart, mind and spirit into working towards the fulfillment of the vision, but he ensured that a detailed account was recorded in print, on video and via the internet ([www.globaldayofprayer.com](http://www.globaldayofprayer.com) and [www.unashamedlyethical.com](http://www.unashamedlyethical.com)). In addition, he seemingly has no reluctance to share his testimony, surely, as God leads. A beautiful graphic illustration of the GDoP has been captured in the book, *'Chronicles of Africa'*, which has an accompanying DVD, while the more detailed story is shared in the book, *'Not By Might Nor By Power'*, written by Power and Diane Vermooten and published in 2009. The latter was followed by a guide to *'Transform your Work Life'* co-authored by Power and Dion Forster and published in 2010.

In his 2009 book, Power recounts a "divine appointment" with two intercessors mere days after the first vision who confirmed that God was calling the church to prayer. The meeting ended with a firm date for the historical Newlands gathering. He also recounts another experience pertaining to securing the stadium as a venue, which he was powerless to do, as he would be on a flight to Israel on the day that the Rugby Union Board was to meet to consider his letter of request. After the plane landed, he received the news that the request had been granted. However, as with any move of God, there was severe opposition that needed to be overcome, not least from the church, but this did not deter him. True to God's word, what the enemy plans for harm God turns around for our good

(Genesis 50:20) and, as a result of the opposition, a committee called 'Transformation Africa' was born.

## **Prayer**

Power says his prayer in the early hours of the morning of the first day of prayer on 21 March 2001 was, "Father, have I been completely obedient, and will this prayer offering be pleasing to You?" The manner in which God has used this obedience, fear and humility since that early morning on the island of Mallorca is astounding. There can be no doubt that Power is an example of what God is able to do with an obedient heart.

In 2013, the Power Group celebrated 30 years of success and growth and marked its 100-year plan "to improve the quality of life in Africa through infrastructure development". Like its founder, the company's values and culture separates it from most businesses. Power says the group spends much less on marketing than most companies. He believes that, "Words may mobilise the masses, but it is the ethical practices and actions of our company that will ensure our ability to stand out in an ocean of unethical practices." Under his leadership, the group and its people have won many awards over the years. In 2012, Power received the first Entrepreneurial Leader of the Year Award in Vancouver, Canada, from the Entrepreneurial Leaders Organisation and World Evangelical Alliance. This was followed by a Honourary Doctorate of Letters degree from Nyack College and Alliance Theological Seminary in New York. The latter recognizes an individual who has demonstrated academic excellence and who is globally engaged, intentionally diverse, personally transforming and socially relevant"!

Power, who describes himself as an African, has been married to his wife, Lauren, for more than 35 years. They have three children Gary, Nadene and Alaine and five grandchildren.

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# True champions: Christian policeman with a passion for justice



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Anyone who is familiar with the word of God knows that God is a God of justice. In Proverbs 21:3, for example, it is written that "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." In Psalm 119:121, David is also able to say, "I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors." President of the South African Christian Police Association (CPA), Colonel Jan Swanepoel, understands this. The CPA is part of a global movement of Christian police that will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in September this year.

Swanepoel's life is a living testimony of actively striving for justice. He has served more than 30 years as a member of the South African Police Service, which has required him to work in seven countries and eight provinces. He is not only a longstanding member of the CPA but also the Pan African



Christian Police Association Conference (PACPAC), of which he is a board member, and the international Pointmen Leadership Institute (PLI). The latter focuses on principle-based leadership training for various government organizations with the aim of exposing and eradicating corruption. It is named after the point men in an army who occupy the front positions to point out any problems and provide direction.

### **Corrupt societies**

According to Swanepoel, corruption is so embedded in some societies that there is no awareness that it is wrong. He says people need to have the mindset shift that they are not corrupt because they are poor but they are poor because they are corrupt.

“Corruption is prevalent in all sectors of society, whether you are in government or corporate. In some countries it is so bad that people depend on bribes to survive as they do not receive their salaries for months at a time. Corruption in all its facets, including the abuse of power, must be exposed,” says Swanepoel. He adds that corruption, often, does not start off in a criminal way – there is usually a slippery slope, which starts with a small compromise and then a gradual lowering of standards until it evolves into serious crime. Therefore, a zero tolerance approach is needed in order to nip corruption in the bud as soon as it rears its ugly head.

The PLI has provided ethics training in countries such as China, Russia and Liberia. In Africa, Swanepoel says Botswana is leading the way against corruption with the government taking a firm stand, which has included dismissing a third of the members of its police force who were suspected of conducting illegal activity. Visitors are provided with a letter on arrival in the country detailing the government’s stance against corruption with a tip-off line they can call to report alleged corruption. He attributes Singapore’s improved economy and level of education to the fact that it is one of the least corrupt countries in the world (Transparency



International's Corruption Perceptions Index – CPI, 2013). There has also been a marked improvement in Liberia's CPI rating as a result of ethics training.

Unfortunately, in South Africa, the PLI has not received a warm welcome from government over the years, despite the association's offer to conduct training at no cost.

### **No perceived need for ethics training**

Swanepoel says: "There is no perceived need for the training nor is there the political drive to change. There is much talk of fighting corruption but no action. In addition, people are not being empowered to take a stand against corruption. Examples of this are cases where whistleblowers have been victimised, instead of protected." He adds that it is for this reason that he is particularly excited about the launch of "Unashamedly Ethical" by Graham Powers.

While the focus may be on corruption, the Colonel's heart is clearly on justice and shining God's light in the darkness. However, he says wisdom has taught him that, in the workplace, one cannot randomly approach people with the aim of sharing the Gospel. He says, "You need to develop a relationship with someone first and expose them to your character, which should create an open door. When you have the first love you want to save everyone and the Lord is able to use this – sometimes you do need fire and boldness – but we need the consistency of big logs that keep burning."

It is clear that the Colonel is not afraid of entering the enemy's camp and shining the light of Christ for all to see wherever he goes.

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# True Champions: standing against abuse of political power



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This month's True Champion is not an individual but rather the church leaders in Nelson Mandela Bay (NMB) who are taking an active stand before the May 7 elections against corruption, maladministration and incompetence that contribute to lack of service delivery, education, health and unemployment. A key objective of the initiative is to keep politicians accountable to how they spend public funding budgets.

I spoke to NMB Consultation of Christian Churches task team chairman Pastor Neville Goldman about the initiative a week after the leaders released their [declaration of war on political power abuse](#) in which they say they intend to mobilise civil society, business and other sectors of society to join them. He said they had made a solid start with a round of cluster meetings in various parts of the metro, aimed at mobilising pastors to know the specific needs of their wards, the key local roleplayers, and to monitor service delivery in their wards. Next week they will have a series of meetings with politicians. And before the elections they plan to hold

several mass meetings focused on service delivery and on voter education aimed at discouraging voters from supporting a corrupt system. He said churches in the metro are already educating voters from the pulpit – not as a political party but as a prophetic voice. He said it is significant that by far the biggest voting bloc in the country is made up of people who are not card-carrying members of any party and therefore not ‘owned’ by the parties.

Goldman said the church leaders do commend government for the good they have done over the years “but we cannot allow corruption and maladministration to cloud all of that.”

He said it seems that when government corruption is exposed there are no legal consequences, people make excuses and justify their stealing and the ‘tenderpreneurs’ are able to continue leading to poor service delivery which hits the poor hardest.

“That is why the church is rising up,” he said. And judging from phonecalls and Facebook responses it seems as if many people have been waiting for the church to give leadership.



**UNASHAMEDLY ETHICAL** invites True Champions to stand up and be counted: More than 15 000 South Africans have signed the Unashamedly Ethical commitment to a public life of ethics, values and clean living. If you haven't committed yet, why not do so now, [here](#)?

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**True Champions: 'No!' to**

# bribes



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Keontse Selesanyeng, 33, refused to pay a bribe to pass her driver's license. Selesanyeng had an appointment to be tested for her driver's license. Upon arrival a personnel member suggested she pay a bribe to pass her test. Although she desperately needed the license to do her work, she decided not to pay. "I will pray and trust in the Lord" she confessed to the personnel member. She passed her driver's license!

Selesanyeng works in Bloemfontein for "Employers for Christ". Telling people every day to obey God, what kind of example would she set by paying the bribe? There is so much corruption in South Africa. Paying a bribe to pass a driver's license would only promote that. Many young people yield to the temptation of corruption under the pressure of unemployment, says Selesanyeng.

Working for "Employers for Christ" gives her the opportunity to visit people at work to bring the Gospel of Christ. Many of these people do not have enough opportunities to go to church. Ministering to them at their places of work gives Selesanyeng an opportunity to strengthen them in their faith. Getting her license gave her an opportunity to continue with this uplifting work.

Selesanyeng received a diploma in Biblical studies from the Bethesda Biblical College in Durban. She does not only bring messages of hope to people, but is sometimes also involved in counselling people in need. “Prayer is very important. Talk about everything to God. Cast your troubles unto Him. He will carry the burden,” encourages Selesanyeng.



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