

## interview



# Q&A WITH DERON SPOO

BRAD KIRSTEN

**Brad Kirsten:** What an honour to sit across from Pastor Deron Spoo, from the First Baptist Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I don't know too much about Tulsa but I can tell that this guy that I follow on YouTube is an inspirational individual from Tulsa, Oklahoma, and he just tells me the weather is not too unlike Cape Town - a few seasons in one day and you never know what you're going to get.

**Deron Spoo:** That's exactly right! Now one thing - if you come to Oklahoma, get ready for tornadoes! I don't know if you have tornadoes here in South Africa, but they're frightening but they're also fun too.

**Brad Kirsten:** I'll tell you what is also frightening, is the Word of God, for a new believer. And, I've heard a story that you've told before about a young woman in your Church, who had her very first experience of Church in her whole life, in your congregation. Tell us that story, very briefly?

**Deron Spoo:** Yeah, that's right. So, she looked to be in her mid-thirties; I stepped off the platform after teaching on a Sunday morning and, she shared with me her name, and she said 'this is my first time in Church, in my entire life.' And, she asked a rather innocent question, you know, 'is there a book you people read - meaning Christians - that will help me understand what you believe about God'. And, in a moment, that was just like a quick movie that I saw in my mind, I could see me handing her Bible. She would, maybe, get through Genesis; maybe make it through Exodus, but when she got to the Levitical Law, she would check out and she would say: 'this is weird, I don't want any part of this'. So, I knew that there must be a way to make the intimidating Bible more approachable for people. And, I searched all over the web, to try to find that tool that I was looking for. And, when I couldn't find it, I decided to write it, but for

my own people, as a Pastor, to give newcomers into our Church an opportunity to engage with the Scripture, for the first time.

**Brad Kirsten:** We have a Pastor who does quite a lot of broadcasting on our station. One of the questions, one of the comments he often makes is: if your devotional is above your Bible, in the pile of books next to your bed, you're in trouble. And, I've come to get that feeling that the Bible is tough for some people to read, and without a Pastor, or whomever, writing through a devotional, people struggle to really go and take chunks on their own, because they just don't have what it takes to, maybe, figure out the trickier stuff. I mean, Paul certainly hasn't made it easy for us.

**Deron Spoo:** No, no, no, and even Peter said Paul wrote some very difficult things. So, in this book, what I tell people, or what I try to communicate, is that the Scripture is the most valuable thing. And, in fact, I encourage people to read these forty chapters of the Bible, as a place to start. Read the chapter first, then read my devotional - maybe there'll be some benefit from that - but then, go back and read it again. Because, as we become more and more familiar with the Bible - it's like a friendship - you know, you must break the ice a little bit. And, as you listen more to the Scripture, you'll start to hear the voice of God. It takes time and patience. So, if I can just give a little guidance, a little bit of a nudge, then I've accomplished my goal.

**Brad Kirsten:** Let's talk a little bit about the nudge. I know you've got forty points, as it were, to help those who read 'The Good Book', to get a better grasp of the Bible. How have you set it out? I mean, what was your plan, originally, to say, if we can get these parts down, we'll make the overall picture a lot easier to understand.



**Deron Spoo:** Right. So, I grew up on top forty radio, so that number has just kind of stuck in my head. And, I used to listen to a radio program every weekend with the top forty hits, and really, those were the best of the best songs. So, I would say that I have not been writing this book for five years - I've been writing this book for twenty-five years. As I've been teaching, throughout the Scripture, and I say if I had to point to forty chapters that are absolutely essential - not that these are the most important, but they're a place to start - what chapters what I choose? And so, each chapter picks up on a different part of the grand theme of God's love for us. And I would say this: that, if we're reading the Bible just to understand the Bible better, that's stopping short of the goal. The goal is to read the Bible, so we can know and experience the love of God.

**Brad Kirsten:** And this would create a hunger to read the Bible more and more, because - as soon as you start to understand different parts of it - it completes the picture and, hopefully, creates a hunger. Because, let's be honest, I think we could all read our Bibles more than we do.

**Deron Spoo:** Oh, absolutely! And so, one of the sections - I only take one chapter from Proverbs - Proverbs, Chapter One. And, of course, it's a fantastic chapter about the importance of wisdom in our life. But, I set it up so that now a person can read the entire book of Proverbs, and have a context with which to understand it. I think the greatest barrier of people reading the Bible is just the decision to do it. You know, it's like being on a diet, or having a health plan, say: 'I'm going to do this' and, if we do this long enough, we're growing our understanding and love for God.

**Brad Kirsten:** We often get lost in the type of translation. I can't speak for how it works in the USA, but I can tell you, here in South Africa, we're very big on which version of the Bible the pastor reads from the pulpit, every Sunday. I think people become almost a bit possessive over this; that this is 'our' version of the Bible. The one that you've used for 'The Good Book' is one that we're not really that familiar with. How did you make a choice?

**Deron Spoo:** So, this is a brand-new Translation and, let me say, just very quickly, I have read multiple Translations, over the years. The first Bible I owned was a New Revised Standard Version, and then I read the King James Version. For years, I've used the New International Version. About a year ago, I was exposed to what's called the Christian Standard Bible, and I must say, and working on this project, they sent me the forty chapters. I got a chance to study those forty chapters, but not only that the words that they chose, that I thought were very accurate and true, but also the way it sounds to the ear. And so, I would read some of it out loud to, say, if I were communicating this from my Church. You know, I love Psalm 139, you know, 'Lord you have searched me and you have known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up'. Just the beauty of the way it rolls off the page, into the ear. So, I love this New Translation. I know it's being introduced to South Africa, as we speak, and, can I just say as a Pastor and as a Jesus follower, I highly recommend it.

**Brad Kirsten:** That's good to know. I know you started, 'in the beginning...' but would you recommend starting at the beginning of the Bible, if you were to pick it up for the very first time, and follow the outline that you've used, or can you jump to and fro, not only in the Bible, but also in your 'The Good Book?'

**Deron Spoo:** I think you can, but I would encourage people to start at the beginning. Because, you know, let's take Genesis One - that's the place to start - and that's the very first Chapter I've chosen. And I just make one simple point in that Chapter, that I think is important for all of us: that you and I are more like God, than anything else God created. You know, theologians call it 'being made in the image of God' and then, we wrestle with what that means. I just say we are more like God, than anything else God created. So, there are days when we feel less than human, but really, we are the most Divine thing, in all of Creation. So, when we embrace that identity, it has the potential of changing our destiny. If we just understand we are made in God's image.

**Brad Kirsten:** And, without knowing that identity, you don't know who you are and you'd wander around aimlessly, so understanding that first would be key.

**Deron Spoo:** Absolutely! So, in the first chapter, I talk about the sin that I wrestle with. I wrestle with fear. And I know a lot of people do - there's a lot to be afraid of, in our culture. And, I've heard this, that there are 365 events in the Bible where God says: 'Do not be afraid.' Even though it's said so many times, I'm still afraid. I'm not perfect yet, but I'm in progress. And so, it's important for me, even on days when I'm afraid, to remember that I am made in God's image, and he loves me, failures and all.

**Brad Kirsten:** Well, that's something to get your hands on 'The Good Book.' Pastor Derron, great spending time with you. Welcome to South Africa, all the way from Tulsa, Oklahoma.

**Deron Spoo:** I appreciate your hospitality, and thank you very much. ▣

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