

Henk Schipper's testimony

Composed by Kenna Schipper and read aloud by Piet Heuvelman, board member of Boaz World Word Project

It was Henk's wish that this farewell service would be one more chance to witness to Who the Lord Jesus was to him and what the Lord Jesus has worked out through His Spirit in Henk's life.

There were three moments in Henk's life that had a tremendous impact on his spiritual life.

First of all, his conversion. At the age of 23, Henk got to know the Lord Jesus as his personal Lord and Saviour, and also shared his faith in public.

Secondly, the death of his first wife, Pleuny. The sorrow and the experience of the 'emptiness' beside him got him to surrender his life completely to the Lord. From that time onwards, Jesus was not only his Saviour, but became his Lord and the Master of his life.

Thirdly, the death of his only brother Jan, three years ago.

Henk was born in Giethoorn on 1 November 1928, six years after his brother Jan. His parents hadn't counted on having another child; to them, Henkie's birth was a great miracle.

Pondering on Henk's life, one reaches the conclusion that books had an especially meaningful influence on his relationship with the Lord Jesus.

As a child, he struggled with an ongoing illness, and several times his condition was critical. During those times, his unmarried aunt Alie, his father's sister, provided reading material. Not only exciting 'boys' books', but also books that fed and grew his childlike faith. She gave him a subscription to a Christian youth magazine – it is still in our bookcase, as a bound volume.

Henk had a devout mother; from a very young age, through her, he became familiar with the well-known songs of Johannes de Heer, a well-known Dutch evangelist in the early 1900s. His mother's name was Wilhelmina Kruis. Many years later, these songs were still called the "Mine Kruus Lieties" (Mine Kruus Songs) at the choral society in Giethoorn. Often Henk also mentioned that, coming home at night in his young years and entering the living-room, he would find his mother kneeling before a chair at the box bed.

When he was 23 years old, the fact that we are all sinners and inclined to all wickedness also became a fact in his life. He found himself in great spiritual need and darkness. Until the Lord cleared up his darkness by way of a sermon on:

Isaiah 1:18: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as now; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

He made Pleuny Meijwaard's acquaintance on the bus from Giethoorn to Zwolle. She hopped onto the bus in Genemuiden, a town along the way. Henk worked in Zwolle at an accounting company, and she at a ladies' fashion store.

They married in 1955 and started their married life in an upper floor in Amsterdam, where Henk worked for Ford Nederland.

Through Pleuny, he landed in another church environment, and thus got to know the books written by John Bunyan, Spurgeon, and the Puritans, which brought about a growth in his spiritual life. But as time passed by, other matters inadvertently became more important: growing his career, material things, his hobbies.

From a simple upper floor, they eventually ended up in a beautiful villa in Epe, built in Austrian style. Austria was Henk and Pleuny's favourite holiday destination.

After Pleuny passed away in 1992, the Lord used the book *A Path Through Suffering* by Elisabeth Elliot, a missionary whose husband was murdered by the Auca's, to bring Henk to complete surrender.

He sold his house, established a foundation for Gospel ministry and became a volunteer with the Dutch John Bunyan Foundation. This foundation focuses on reprinting John Bunyan's books, as well as on distributing the *Groot Bijbels Dagboek* (Big Biblical Diary) in countries like Israel.

In Israel, Henk started thinking about how to reach the Jewish nation with the Gospel. He was compelled by the words of the Lord Jesus, "The Scriptures are they which testify of Me."

From that moment on, Henk has worked for many years to sort out all these prophecies from the Old Testament and to write them down, and subsequently note their fulfilment and relationship with the New Testament. In 2009, *The Messiah Revealed in the Holy Scriptures* was published in Dutch, followed by a translation in English/Hebrew, which is spread in Israel through the Bible Society in Israel. Later, it was translated into forty different languages, thanks to a brother who developed a computer programme for this.

Meanwhile, Henk had made the acquaintance of Kenna Velema in the Calvijnkerk (Calvin Church) in Baarn. Kenna, 48 years old at that time, hadn't expected to get married anymore. But Henk came, saw and conquered: they got married in 1996.

Over the course of their marriage, it became increasingly clear that they could support and complement each other with respect to Henk's calling – to spread the Gospel by way of the written word. To the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Three years ago, Henk's brother died, and his death left a deep impression on Henk and caused much sadness.

During the Second World War, Jan had had traumatic experiences, and Henk too had very horrible memories of those days. Afterwards, he could never read books on WWII. Shortly before Jan's passing, Henk confronted him once more with the offer of love and grace in the Lord Jesus. Jan's reaction was, "I don't want to!"

Over the past few years, this experience convinced Henk even more of the urgency of including the Biblical message in his books. On our way to eternity, there are only two roads – which one do you choose?

God is not to blame. He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. He loves us and that's why He sent His only Son to this world to save us from eternal death. This message rings throughout the Bible, up to the very last page.

"And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life (the Lord Jesus) freely." The Gospel is for free. The question is: 'Do we wish to accept Him so that we are saved, and not lost?'

I (Kenna) am very thankful that the Lord brought Henk across my path. I thank Him for everything that I was allowed to receive in and through Henk, and for the fact that we were able to serve Him together for almost 26 years. A precious gift.

"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God Who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen."