

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

7 Facts South Africans need to know

The information in the following article is obtained from three main sources: *The New York Times*¹, SA History² and Anthony Butler's unofficial biography of Ramaphosa, published by Jacana Media³

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Amid chaotic scenes in Johannesburg on Monday evening, 18 December 2018, Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa was elected president of the African National Congress (ANC) by a margin of 179 votes over Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the former wife of the South African president, Jacob Zuma.

The decision by the ANC electorate means that Mr Ramaphosa will stand as the party's candidate at the next general election in 2019 and may even move to replace Mr Zuma before that poll.

With 4,708 votes cast, Mr Ramaphosa took 51.8% of the vote against 48.2% for his opponent.

“We declare comrade Cyril Ramaphosa the new president of the African National Congress,” an election official told party delegates. Thousands of raucous Ramaphosa supporters sang and chanted in the conference hall as backers of the defeated candidate sat silent and stony-faced.

“Cyril,” says Anthony Butler, a professor of public policy at the University of Cape Town who has written a very good biography of Mr Ramaphosa, **“is the Forrest Gump of South African political history.”** By this, Butler means that Mr Ramaphosa has been present in the foreground of virtually every important moment in the modern history of his country.

Scripture has more to say on this matter. Maybe not about Mr Ramaphosa as such, but about the appointment of leaders in the context of seasons. *“He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning”* (Daniel 2:21)

Matthews Henry⁴ writes the following, about this particular scripture:

“Daniel gives God the glory for what He is to the world of mankind. He has a universal influence and agency upon all the children of men, and all their actions and affairs. It is God that changes the times and the seasons, and the face of them. No change comes to pass by chance, but according to the will and counsel of God. Are those that were kings removed and deposed? Do they abdicate? Are they laid aside? It is God that removes kings. It is God that sets up kings; and the making and unmaking of kings is a flower of his crown who is the fountain of all power, King of kings and Lord of lords.”

If this is true, then those who follow Christ should make every effort to pray for our leaders and to seek to build on the platform that God has established in the hearts of those who are to lead in appointed seasons. Here are seven building blocks to keep in mind as we pray for the man who might lead South Africa in the near future.

¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/27/magazine/could-cyril-ramaphosa-be-the-best-leader-south-africa-has-not-yet-had.html>

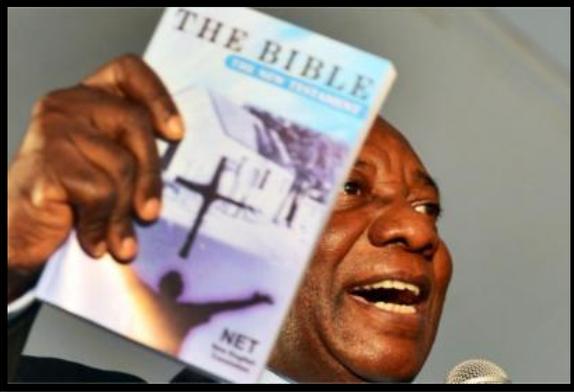
² <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/cyril-matamela-ramaphosa>

³ <https://www.biznews.com/thought-leaders/2017/12/07/ramaphosa-unofficial-biographer-anthony-butler/amp/>

⁴ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/daniel/2.html>

1. He has a strong Christian background

Deuteronomy 11:18-21 "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth."



According to SA History online: "Cyril Ramaphosa was born in Johannesburg, Transvaal (now Gauteng) on 17 November 1952. He is the second of the three children of Erdmuth and Samuel Ramaphosa, a retired policeman. He grew up in the South Western Native Township (Soweto), attending a local primary school and Sekano-Ntoane High School, Soweto. In 1971 he matriculated (graduated) from Mphaphuli High School in Sibasa, Limpopo."

Butler's biography elaborates on Mr Ramaphosa's childhood and education. "He was a hard-working student, very much shaped in his early years by his Christianity. That was something that came across strongly from all the people who knew him. Mr Ramaphosa

was described by his friends as perhaps more religious than political, although politics and religion were inextricably related.

It all started from a pretty young age. When he was in his early teens he was already politicised, but he was always an impeccable student. Smartly dressed, always striving to be top of his class and not quite succeeding but being always in the top three or four. A perfectionist.

He went to Sekano Ntoane High School, which was a little way from his house and was not ethnically exclusive. According to Cyril's friends, one of the most wounding elements of his early school experience was ethnic prejudice against people of Venda descent – particularly from Zulu-speaking teachers, but also from children in the school who expressed a good deal of prejudice. At that stage there was limited opportunity to experience racial prejudice because there was almost no interaction with whites. When that did happen for Mr Ramaphosa, it was largely through church-associated organisations.

When Cyril got to the age of about 16, his parents decided he should attend high school as a boarder in Sibasa, his father's place of origin (in Venda in the far north of South Africa). That was quite commonplace at the time and one of the motivations was to take him out of a very volatile political environment in Soweto, at a time when black consciousness was emerging as an important phenomenon in the politics of Soweto.

There he began to show unusual characteristics: he arrives and immediately he's elected head of the Student Christian Movement, a position that is quite important in that school at that time, as a major body organising students to do good works. By convention that position would go to a senior student from the previous year, but people excitedly came to the head teacher and said: 'We've decided to elect this new boy.'

Cyril used that position in a variety of ways. One of them would play a major role in future relationships in the disadvantaged communities. He was involved in evangelism in the very poor, rural areas around Sibasa. There he learnt to interact with people in poorer areas in a way that he would never have been able to if he'd spent his entire school career in Soweto. He became familiar with the problems that people faced."

The Mail and Guardian, in March 2013, records how the then ANC deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa, while addressing a congregation at the Pentecostal Holiness Church's centennial celebrations in Rustenburg, said "Christians needed to 'become the moral conscience of our country' and that '**this country cares for the Lord**' and recognised God's importance and supremacy.

Strangely, he did not mention any other religion or faith-based groups whose belief system might be different from that of Christianity. In a phrase, the clarion call was "Christianity to the rescue."

2. He has a strong sense of justice

Isaiah 1:17 “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.”

As a young student, Cyril Ramaphosa and quite a number of his fellow students went on to different leadership positions in the Black Consciousness Movement, but Cyril was always the leader among their group. It was his sense of justice, combined with his ability to talk to a variety of religious groupings that allowed him to retain his relationship with groups of different convictions.

His strong sense of justice also led to him registering at the University of the North (Turfloop) for a BProc (legal) degree in 1972. He became involved in student politics and joined the South African Students Organization (SASO) in 1972. In 1974 he served as the chairman of the branch. In the same year, he was chairman of the Student Christian Movement.

After the pro-Frelimo rally at the University in 1974, Mr Ramaphosa was detained for 11 months under section 6 of the Terrorism Act. Upon his release he joined the Black People’s Convention (BPC), holding positions on various committees. He obtained articles with a Johannesburg firm of attorneys while working for BPC.

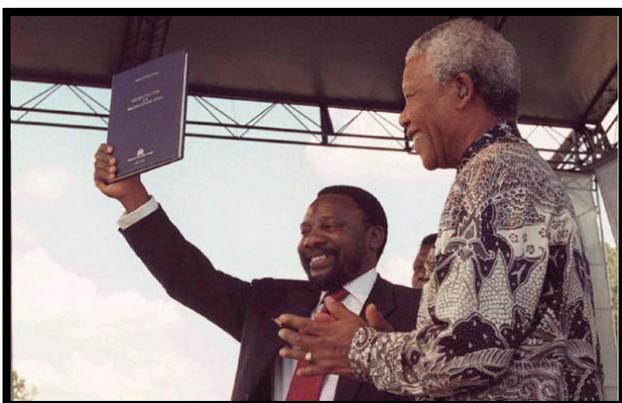
In June 1976, following the unrest in Soweto, Mr Ramaphosa was again detained under the Terrorism Act for six months and this time held at John Vorster square. After his release he continued with his articles and completed his Bproc degree via correspondence with the University of South Africa (Unisa) in 1981. He completed his articles in the same year, and joined the Council of Unions of South Africa (Cusa) as an advisor in the legal department.

In July 1986, after the declaration of the state of emergency, Mr Ramaphosa went into hiding after security police swoops on the homes and offices of political activists. He travelled to the United Kingdom and appeared with NUM president, James Motlatsi, at a conference of the British National Union of Mineworkers. Mr Ramaphosa was refused a passport to travel to Britain in September 1987, but when he became the recipient of the Olaf Palme prize, was permitted to travel to Stockholm to receive it.

Mr Ramaphosa was a visiting Professor of Law at Stanford University in the United States of America in October 1991.

3. He has a strong voice of reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:19 “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”



In January 1990, Mr Ramaphosa accompanied released ANC political prisoners to Lusaka, Zambia. He served as chairman of the National Reception committee, which co-ordinated arrangements for the release of Nelson Mandela and subsequent welcome rallies within South Africa, and also became a member of the international Mandela Reception committee. He was elected General-Secretary of the ANC in a conference held in Durban in July 1991. In his capacity as a General-Secretary he became the head of the negotiations commissions of the ANC and participated in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA)

CODESA, regardless of its failures and successes, became a beacon of hope for South Africans who desired reconciliation and change. The first plenary session of CODESA began on 21 December 1991, at the World Trade Centre in Johannesburg. Chief Justice Michael Corbett opened the Convention with Petrus Shaborn and Ismail Mohamed as presiding judges. About 228 delegates from nineteen political parties attended and pledged their commitment to negotiations by signing the Declaration of Intent.

Mr Ramaphosa became a familiar face in the CODESA meetings and a prominent figure in reconciliation negotiations. There is no doubt that his desire to seek peace opposed to a violent solution made him a major role player in the peaceful transition of leadership in a very volatile South Africa

4. He is an accomplished negotiator

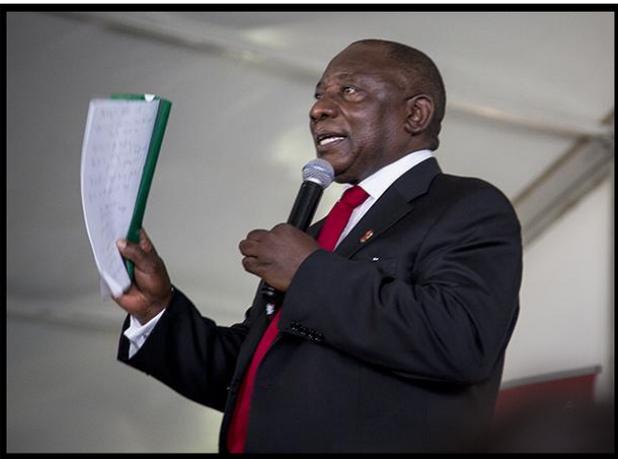
James 3:18 "Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."

Mr Ramaphosa became the chief ANC negotiator in talks for democracy, both locally and internationally. Not only did he negotiate peacefully at CODESA, but he was also appointed by President Jacob Zuma in 2012 to the position of Special Envoy to South Sudan, to act as a mediator in the conflict between the different factions. As of 2017, Mr Ramaphosa continues to act in this capacity.

In September 2017, Mr Ramaphosa also headed the South African bid for the 2023 Rugby World Cup in London.

5. He is an extremely successful businessman

1Timoth 6:10 "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."



According to Bill Keller (*The New York Times*): "For most of the past few centuries, there were two prevalent methods of enrichment in Africa: colonial plunder and indigenous kleptocracy. South Africa is no stranger to either method, but Mr Ramaphosa's wealth derived from another source.

Mr Ramaphosa is the Executive Chairman of Millennium Consolidated Investment (MCI) and non-executive Chairman of Johnnic Holdings, MTN Group Limited and SASRIA. He is the past Chairman of the Black Economic Empowerment Commission. His directorships include South African Breweries, First Rand Limited, Macsteel Holdings, Alexander Forbes and Medscheme Limited.

On the Forbes list of the richest Africans, Mr Ramaphosa is No. 21. His worth is estimated at \$675 million.

What this means in African politics is that Mr Ramaphosa is less susceptible to corruption than his forerunners. The obvious question, asked by sceptics and admirers alike, is how much a Cyril Ramaphosa can do to fix a system that is festering from top to bottom. 'It's not about Cyril being corrupt,' his friend James Motlatsi says. **'You can't corrupt him.** But now people will focus on Cyril, not Zuma. Expectations will be too high again'. And, he adds, 'you know, that sea has got a lot of sharks.'

Mr Ramaphosa acknowledged the corruption, describing it as 'a cancer' and 'a monster,' but said he was confident it could be 'reeled in.'

But Mr Ramaphosa is not only a self-enriching businessman. In 2009, he began a concentrated effort to 'incubate' small and medium black businesses by giving them seed money, training and mentors. There are currently 73 new entrepreneurs in the Shanduka program — in construction, financial services and other businesses. 'It's small,' he said, 'but it is a very good example of what can be done on a broader scale.'"

6. He is a loyal confidant

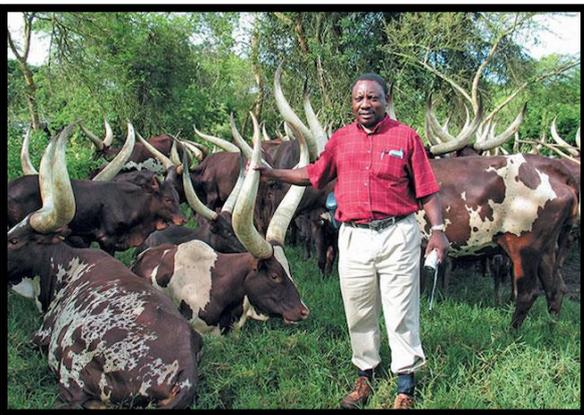
Proverbs 27:10 "Do not forsake your friend or a friend of your family, and do not go to your relative's house when disaster strikes you— better a neighbour nearby than a relative far away."

Loyalty is a scarce commodity in African politics. When Nelson Mandela came out of prison in 1990, Mr Ramaphosa was constantly by his side as head of the National Reception Committee. After Nelson Mandela's release, due to make his first ever public speech in thirty years from City Hall in Cape Town, Cyril Ramaphosa introduced this veteran politician to the people. Mr Ramaphosa was chosen as secretary-general of ANC. This was the second position, next to president Mandela.

One of the major criticisms against Mr Ramaphosa in his term as deputy president was that he was not outspoken enough against Mr Zuma. It was admirable though, that even though he was aggressively outspoken against corruption, he seldom addressed his leader by name.

Returning to the forgotten convictions of Nelson Mandela and reminding South Africans of all races and cultures that we share a common heritage could be well preserved by a man who still believes in the principles of Nelson Mandela.

7. He has strong links to agriculture



One of the greatest concerns of most white South Africans is the systematic attacks on farmers and land-claims that could cripple the farming community, causing South Africa to follow in Zimbabwe's footsteps. Mr Ramaphosa, contrary to his predecessors, places a high value on sustainable agriculture.

To prove this point, Mr Ramaphosa just published a book on his cattle. He has Ankole (originating in Uganda), Boran (from Kenya) and a variety of Nguni cattle on his very large farm and reportedly pulls pictures of his cows out of his wallet and shows them to people. He has named all of his cows, so one option for him could have been to devote more time to what seems to be a real passion for him, had politics not worked out.

Conclusion

It might do South Africans well to remember how the Lord has already saved this nation from a certain revolution, a looming civil war, hatred, fear and many other internal and external threats. The future is in the hands of Him who appoints leaders for seasons, and seasons for His glory. Those who follow Him need to trust, believe and pray.

Maybe the words by Bill Keller, of the *New York Times*, provides the final thought: *"This may all be magical thinking, but South Africa's young democracy has a resilience, a limber quality that has taken it this far. Everything about South Africa is negotiated, including the terms of coexistence across lines of language, race, ideology and class. Maybe the country is ready for a negotiator in chief, a man who brings, among other things, an instinct for the sufficient consensus."*

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