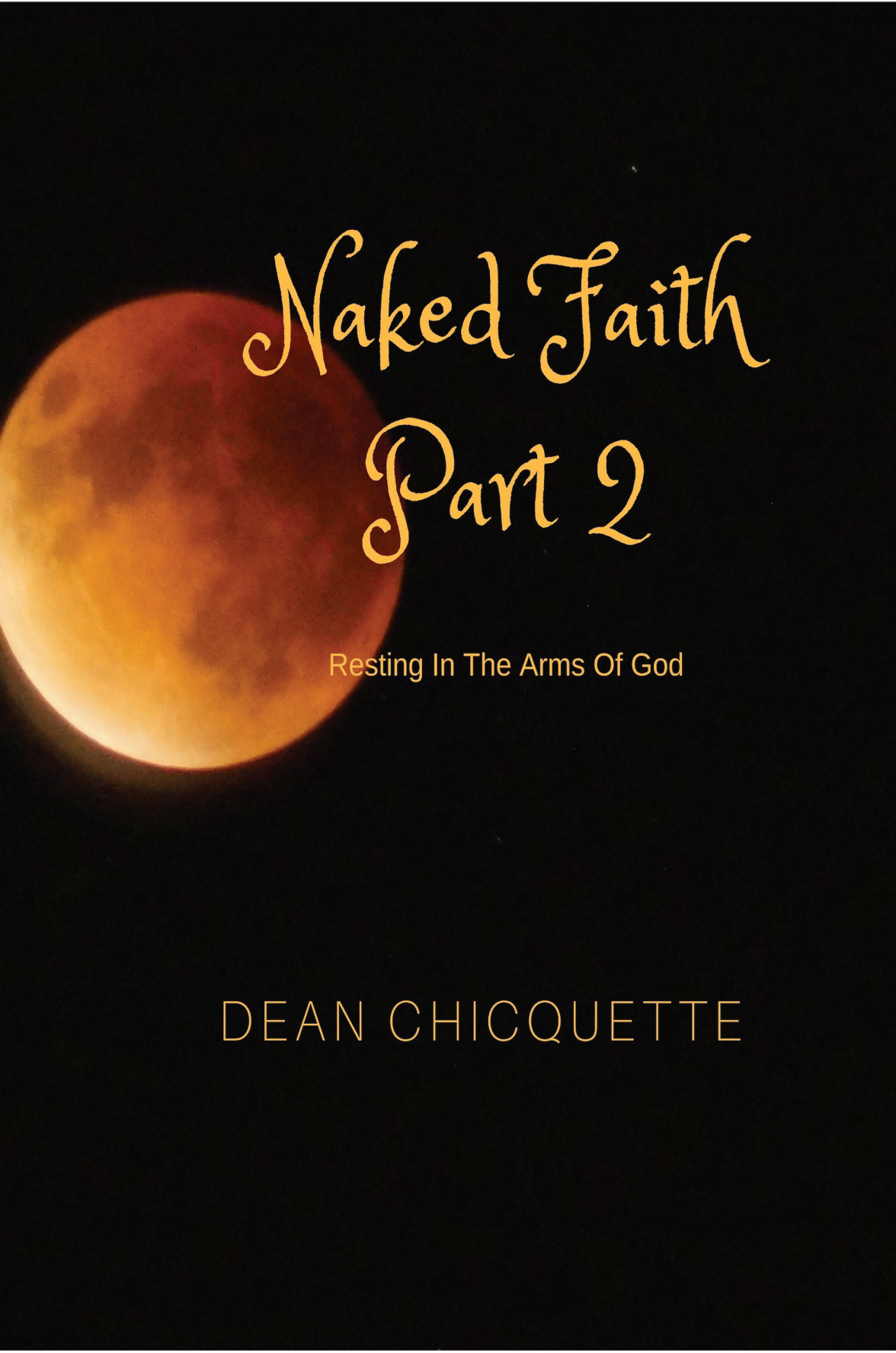
Naked Faith
Part 2
Resting In The Arms Of God
DEAN CHICQUETTE

NAKED FAITH - PART 2

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Resting in the Arms of God

By Dean Chicquette

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This book includes stories in which people’s names and some details of their situations have been changed.

DEDICATION

One Man's saga continues. Christ for others.

INTRODUCTION

"AND YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR SONS AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN AND WHEN YOU RISE UP."
(DEUTERONOMY 6:7 NAS)

I hope your seatbelts are tight and your trays and seats are locked in the upright position. You are about to begin to rest in the arms of God which to the contrary is but the beginning of an adventure that not only defines you but expresses Love Himself.

Blessings my friends one and all.

And a bigger blessing to my special friends, those who may hate, despise or even seek to harm me, because of my proclaiming Christ. I love You dearly. You are His special gift to me. Hugs.

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1
THOU SHALT KILL

ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS TWO, every time, except if…left to humanity. Then, nothing is consistent.

Just about every sermon I heard in church and at home instructed me to love people. With a modicum of surprise, I found a lot of opportunities to do so. At the same time, I had no love for myself and shared that instead. Jesus said we should love God with all that He has given us, and then love others with the same. When young, that sort of talk, when taken seriously, sounded like 'SHAME ON YOU!'

I grew up during the '50s and '60s in Normal, Illinois. It was a wealthy mid-west farming community with two colleges, one a state college, now a university, and the other a Wesleyan College in its twin city, Bloomington, Illinois. From Monday to Monday we were taught two great truths. First, we were all alike. Second, if you weren't alike, buck up, get in line, and follow.

From Sunday School to the Saturday Matinee, we all gathered, learning to mimic one another and demand compliance of those who lived on the fringes. Like a raft of Emperor Penguins clustered together to survive the cold winds of the Arctic winter, the ones on the fringes continually waddled around the raft seeking a way to belong. I was one of those. I never found a way in, but was always invited to be perfect, just as they were perfect.

Since the third grade, I had learned how to fight. I watched others learn the trade at recess. First, one would slander the other's father, then the character of the mother was invited into the verbal fray. Soon one pushed the shoulder of the other, though only slightly. The shove back was decisive and most likely knocked one off balance. Both became involved, and soon someone swung and perhaps even connected to a chin or shoulder. Now they danced and after some punching, someone would land a foot into the opponent's groin. Usually, that ended the fight, and the wounded fighter, after vomiting and catching their breath, put an arm on the shoulder of the other and they waddled away friends for life or until the next fight.

Being a conservative and having learned the dance, when my father was berated, I took the proper stance, skipped a few moves, and planted my foot into my opponent's groin. To my surprise, however, they did not become my friend for life.

Every time I won or lost a fight, I felt really bad in every sense of the word. Successfully hurting people never helped nor did having the willies (never really saw one) beaten out of me. After a fight, I thought less of myself and everyone else. Somewhere along the way, I discovered that loving others,

yes, even the bully, felt good and produced a huge opportunity to love even more people. Before I knew it, everyone was my friend, even those who liked hurting my body.

One day, just as I was coming to this realization and walking home from school, I spied a very young cottontail whose neck was deformed and it could not walk properly. I picked it up as the love of God flooded my soul. I had no knowledge of how to help such a beautiful creature, but notwithstanding I gently picked it up, and tucked it between my jacket and shirt to protect it from the wind. I do not know whose heart was beating the loudest, but they were in concert. Once home I placed it on the wooden step of the back porch with its grey, peeling, lead paint.

The love flowing through me for that needy beast was somehow the reflection of a greater form of living. After unsuccessfully trying to feed it some milk through an eyedropper, I realized I needed help. My father was working on a TV in the basement where I descended and caught his attention. When I informed him of my new friend and its problem, his wisdom lined up all the lessons on love I had imbibed, and executed each one shoving their lifeless bodies into a common grave of fear and despair.

He said, "Son, it may have tularemia, you will have to kill it."

You could have violently taken out my heart with a dull knife and stomped on it and I would have felt better. My father was telling me love didn't work while killing did. I was challenged to grow up, forget everything I had learned in church, at home, and school and kill something that not only

had never done me wrong, but had birthed God's love in my soul.

I suggested through tears, for I knew he meant it, that I just take it back where I found it and let nature take its course. Now it was a battle of wills. He wanted me to learn to kill anything that might challenge my way of living and to let others suffer for my good.

From the top of my head to the bottom of my feet, I was numb. From the furthest star to the deepest point in the void blooming in my soul, I ventured upstairs to my room, retrieved my pellet gun, loaded a CO2 cartridge into it, found a few pellets and returned to kill my friend the rabbit.

There it was helpless as before, and because it was helpless I was to kill it. It took minutes fighting the destruction corroding my soul before I was able to load the gun, pull back the gas release valve, put the muzzle to the back of its already twisted neck and…

Just minutes earlier this rabbit had opened up an eternal love for life. Now, out of pure obedience to my father, with waves of hate toward him and life itself, I was about to cross into adulthood, lose my innocence, and become a ready-made servant of fear, hate, and sin. Pop!

It was over.

Of course, I dug a grave and planted with the dead rabbit all my hopes and dreams of life being fair. After putting the shovel away, I continued trying to kill birds in the trees and soon I fell to the ground sobbing. I vomited up my trust in Dad, humanity, myself, and God. I began to walk in a daze.

Depression soon became my friend. Anger was closer than

a smile. Violence became my mode of expression, being congruent with my broken soul. I was genuinely caught between the truth and the lie. Fear of loss of self, however, defined, gave me the right to kill. I also learned I could never forget that this wonderful rabbit had birthed not only love but brutality in the guise of reason and self-preservation.

The call to be perfect as Jesus's Father was perfect became a joke. His demands laughed in my face. Sanity moved to another unnamed town with no receiving address. The numbness that cloaked my 'death providing' finger was a harbinger. Soon I became the finger of evil itself and worshiped myself over every other person, place, or thing. The more I hurt others, I more I punished myself. Yet, like the heart in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*, the God of love stood on my coffin, and with His stick kept knocking, knocking, knocking.

2
PRIDE GOES BEFORE A FALL

Pam sat to my left in 4th grade. Red hair, three inches taller than I, if I stood on my toes, verbal, determined, not so good looking with those huge brown plastic-framed glasses, but she was absolutely brilliant. While I was struggling with trying to see words the same way every time so I could pronounce them the same each time, she was teaching herself French and loved to practice on me. As I struggled to arrive at the same answer twice in a row on the same simple math problem, she was playing with something fun in mathematics that included letters, algebra?

Beyond these huge differences, we had a friendship. I had even visited her famous home just south of the tracks when traversing the downtown I had lived in years before. It was a two-story pre-Civil War home with a large Elm tree out front. In between our times of chasing each other around the front yard, which included that tree and a hill, we would sit together

on the unassuming front porch. The home was not famous for the tree; well, not yet. The home was famous for another reason. Abraham Lincoln, who frequented the town, stayed more than once in the upper front room, her room. Somehow that truth made me feel unimportant.

After a while, I eagerly looked for Pam. I even loved having her try out her French on me. During recess, we would venture to the edge of the school property near Sugar Creek where wildflowers grew and the boughs of the trees hung down over the chain-linked fence that circled the school property. There I was invited to dive into an ocean of knowledge that just poured out of her. For me, that flower was a 'yellow flower'. For most, it was a dandelion. For her, it was not only in the genus Taraxacum, but the kingdom of Plantae, the family of Asteraceae, the clade of Angiosperms, Eudicots, Asterids, and on and on. About then I'd say, 'oh look a tree'. Then she would begin again. I never retained much of anything she said, but I noticed one most strange thing. She seemed to like me. My heart was calmer and easier next to her. She was growing into a real friend. But then…

In those days teachers were encouraged to damn students from using their left hand to write. I was left-handed by nature. That means I was born with a natural propensity to use my left hand. Pam was right-handed. To fulfill her teacherly duties, our teacher forced me to sit on my left hand while I struggled to learn to write all over again. I learned to use my right hand for everything including throwing balls and eating. Okay, even picking my nose.

One day, after having struggled to write right-handed for

half a year, I looked up and straight ahead. Somewhere I had learned how to splice an 8 mm film. Afterward, watching the movie, the splice was noticeable, even annoying. As I sat there, something happened in my head. It was as if some spliced film was passing through my head from ear to ear, right to left. From that moment I was a right-handed person, only it never worked very well. Soon my left hand became useless. Even now as I type these words, my right hand uses my right thumb to press the space bar and my index and middle finger to type all the letters on the right side of the keyboard. The left index finger supported by the thumb fumbles out letters on the left side of the keyboard. Thank you 1950's for demanding conformity!

At the same time that I was forced to use my right hand, the teacher politely instructed Pam on how to learn to write with her left hand without sitting on her right hand. She even purchased a brace for her which positioned her left hand appropriately. As I became right-handed, she became ambidextrous.

Then too, I noticed the teacher fawn over Pam with her time, kind words, encouragement, and public praise. At the same time, I also noticed that I had become, for the teacher, a negative backdrop of comparison, helping Pam shine all the brighter. Soon I had no need to listen to French, take walks to the back lot, nor even spend time out of school running in her front yard. I harbored some hate for her and wished I did not have to deal with her anymore.

Even with all the evidence to the contrary, I accepted and nurtured an attitude that I was better than she. I skipped

becoming smart and became arrogant. I knew everything without so much as having learned the first thing about it. I proclaimed I knew Chinese, but unlike some, I was kind and did not speak Chinese in front of others to embarrass them. Pam became a weight on my left side as she sat there day in and day out. Soon she equally withdrew.

One Friday she informed me that our tree, the one we loved to run around in her front yard, had Elm Disease, whatever that was, and had been cut down. With a sad heart, I blurted out, "so what" and walked away. Monday I thought she was sick or something. Tuesday I became suspicious and asked other classmates what was up. No one knew. By Friday she was the talk. That afternoon, just before being released for the weekend, the principal and our teacher informed us that Pam, the Saturday before, had been playing on the stump of a tree in her front yard, had fallen, and broken her neck. She had something called a concussion and blood clots in her head. She was not expected to live through the weekend.

That evening I went out of my way to walk past her home and spied the tree stump about 18 inches tall. I was dumbfounded. I had seen her leap and tumble and fall from much higher objects including that front porch. I knew something bigger than life was at work, but could not fathom its import. She lived, but with both physical and mental challenges. She had to go to a special school. Apparently, her left side was paralyzed. She needed speech therapy and was learning to walk with a brace which she would need for the rest of her life. Her empty chair, still speaking French to me, disappeared with her memory.

I continued to pass through elementary school, junior high, high school, and first year of college without thinking of Pam except when I had to drive past her home. During the ten years since the accident, I had never seen her in town, at the theater, nor at church. Deep inside I was happy to be smarter than she, more agile, and better liked. At the same time, I held a respectful sorrow for her misfortune.

One summer day as I walked through the college campus to my brand new 1966 442-Oldsmobile I heard someone call out my name with great affection and enthusiasm. I turned to see a woman with a brace on her left leg riding a bicycle with metal baskets on the back, filled with books. It was Pam. Same glasses and homely face, but she expressed from her heart that I was important to her. Trying hard to communicate with this unfortunate person, struggling for small words and phrases and easily accessible concepts we chatted for a brief minute or two. Soon I was really uncomfortable trying to look past her scars, leg brace, and a pronounced slur. Seeing some big books in her bicycle baskets I asked what she was studying. With the biggest smile, she said she had just graduated that day.

Oh no! With all those challenges she had graduated from high school only one year after me. My hidden 'I'm something because you're not' was shaken. Within seconds that comparative way of thinking fell dead at my feet. Was I hearing right? I was left fumbling for a new sense of self.

No! She had not just graduated from a special high school for the 'dumb', but had just graduated from college with a degree in chemistry and had been accepted to a graduate

program in an ivy league university. In a split second, I said goodbye, said I was glad to see her, wished her the best of luck and retreated to MY BRAND NEW 1966 442-Oldsmobile.

I thank God for that encounter. It was the beginning of me growing a brain. Not chemistry smarts, but life smarts. I was humbled and remain humbled to this day, but it took years to dig up all the roots from that life of pride which I had nurtured since the 4th grade. Now and then it can still raise its ugly head and shout out a thought or two like, 'I'm smarter than you because…'

Some years later and over a thousand miles from that encounter, I came across a strange vehicle close to the railroad tracks on the west side of Salt Lake City. I loved its paint job. Being red-green color blind, I was pleased to see this vehicle with a paint job I could see. The paint color was undefined to me but very visible.

I pulled up next to it and began a chat with the driver who was also the owner of the vehicle. He and his wife sitting across from him were about the age of my parents. Soon I learned that he too was red-green colorblind and had developed this special paint job for emergency vehicles and was marketing the concept as he traveled across the nation. Of course, as always, the conversation came to the question of where they were from. To my surprise, they were Pam's parents whom I had only met once before as a child. I asked about her. I was informed that she was a professor of chemistry at some insignificant college I'd heard of in

California, named something like Stanford. Really, I blanked out right after the word Professor.

I had not found my place in life and was still doing insignificant odd jobs. The conversation was over and I bid them the best. Within a few years, many cities' emergency vehicles had adopted his paint as their required color. I was still looking for my place in life.

3
THE ETERNAL EMPTY

AFTER THE EVENT, there is no way to explain what it feels like to jump out of an airplane at 10,000 feet without a parachute. Most of the time no one comes up to you offering their parachute as you descend toward earth. Why would this experience be hard to explain? Because very few have ever tried it and lived. Therefore the outcome of the experience ends up being indescribable. Surviving a similar thing can leave an emotional tattoo. I have several such tattoos. One such tattoo began with a ride across the central Utah desert toward Delta, Utah beginning at a town in Utah near the Nevada border on Highways 50 and 6. I was just about to plunge into oblivion.

It was in the fall of 1969 around 9 pm just after we began descending to the desert floor one mile beyond Skull Rock Pass on our right. The 'we' consisted of my brand new and only to date wife, Linda, one of her brothers, a male friend,

and his girlfriend who became his wife shortly afterward. They too are still an item as I write this story, but that is not the oblivion I am talking about.

I was driving my 1953 six-cylinder four-door Chevy with Linda, her brother and me in the front seat. For those of you wondering how three can fit into the front seat of a car, I'd like to have you think of an armless couch used as a front seat. If the driver needed to adjust the seat everyone's position changed accordingly. The lovebirds were in the back seat behaving themselves.

As I sped through the desert at 65 mph, a foreboding came over me as a half-moon just off to our left danced in, out, and around some translucent, wispy clouds. The whole desert was bathed in a light gray tone except for the stark contrast near the light of the headlights.

As for myself, I felt as if the moon were losing its luster and an insidious darkness was closing in. It was approaching like a thief creeping in through the tightly closed windows. Soon there were four people in the front seat and another in the back. Not real people, just a darkness closing in ever so slowly.

In order to break through the banter dancing from the front seat to the back, I forcefully blurted out, "Hey guys, ever since we were coming over the top of the hill, I have felt like we should pull over and pray." Instantly from the backseat came a positive response. I could sense the urgency in his voice as he said, "I felt the very same thing."□

Within moments I pulled the car off the road, passed over a slight embankment and drove a little way out into the desert.

I shut the car off and everyone swiftly left the vehicle. As was common in this desert, there were fairly large, almost circular, areas with dark pebbles surrounded by ankle-high sage and other desert foliage. In one such place, we quickly gathered in a circle, kneeled, took hold of each other's hands and began to pray.

As the first person began to pray, the darkness became more intense. I do not believe anyone else within the group sensed what I sensed. Now and again someone would say the name 'Jesus' and after saying the name Jesus, the darkness would subside slightly. As soon as people began praying for this or that other thing, or making mention of God's goodness, the darkness once again began its encroachment upon my person.

During one such hiatus from calling upon the name of Jesus, I became one with this darkness. Know that what I have to say next is as impossible to describe as jumping out of an airplane without a parachute. But I'll do my best to drag you unwillingly into one of the most frightening experiences of my life. Think of yourself collapsing into a darkness that is both tangible and palpable. Now consider that darkness as yourself. I do not mean that this darkness isn't an experience, but your very self.

Now this new thing you call yourself begins to expand and as it expands each part of yourself begins to disengage from itself or dissolve, even disintegrate. Imagine you're coming apart, but each part is equally conscious of itself and especially of its coming apart. This made me think of Jesus' saying when He declared the outer darkness to be a place

where there would be gnashing of teeth. Why gnashing of teeth? Because when you gnash your teeth you have a sense, ever so slight, of being united. So, I gnashed my teeth.

Then someone, while praying, mentioned the name of Jesus. Each time the name of Jesus was verbalized the disintegration started to become an integration. Whenever someone would start praying and not mention the name of Jesus, the disintegration would start again. I blurted out from this abyss, in my most demanding way, "Just say the name, Jesus. Repeat the name, Jesus."

Someone complied. As they said 'Jesus' I began to become whole. To the best of my recollection, two people said the name of Jesus at least three times. Then someone would begin praying again in the most eloquent way, but not mention the name of Jesus. With anger welling up in my soul, the disintegration returned with its echo of darkness dancing off the walls of the void that has no boundaries nor substance other than the act of disintegrating.

I expect that right about now you would like to grab a parachute, put it on and pull the ripcord. You can imagine what I wanted to do. I wanted to run away and hide, but wasn't that exactly what I was doing? Even though I did not know what I was running from, the hiding was itself the disintegration.

Once again I blurted out my request for people to speak the name 'Jesus'. After a few minutes of compliance by most of the people, I was once again whole. It seemed as if the Lord were saying, "That was hell." Years later I came to understand

Jesus jumped out of that same airplane, caught up to me, grabbed me with all His strength and pulled His ripcord.

About a week later, when back in our apartment, we were visiting with a friend. As Linda continued to chat, I felt I should go to our bedroom, kneel by my bed, and pray. While I was praying, that same darkness began to ensue. When I called upon the name of Jesus, a light, up and off to my left, began to shine as if I were on an absolutely dark stage and someone turned on an aircraft landing light spotting me. With this experience came a promise that one day I would understand these experiences.

With confidence, today I can say that I do understand. The name of Jesus, which means 'Jehovah saves', became my experience as I called upon His name. That's all we are asked to do. I have come to know there is only one Person in this whole universe that goes on forever. If I am found in Him who is eternal life, I have eternal life. Apart from Him, there is no life.

In fact, this is the very record God has given concerning His Son Jesus the Christ.

"9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that He has borne witness concerning His Son. 10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son. 11 And the witness is this,

that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the ***name*** *of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:9-13 NAS bold added)*

4
A 40 BELOW CHRISTMAS

WAR IS UGLY, especially when it starts at home around Christmas time. One year, when we were supposed to comfort one another, Linda and I were at war. I was working and living in Salt Lake City while Linda and the boys were living some four hours or 200 miles south and west of the same.

If you had peeked behind my skin down into my heart, you would have seen a man craving to snuggle up with Linda and with our two boys under one big blanket and take several of those deep breaths that rejuvenate one's soul. I needed hope for the future and had none. So I turned to Linda.

"Why don't you skip teaching this week? I'll take you and the boys into Salt Lake and we will have a Christmas to remember."

"I can't do that!" she replied with more intensity than I was prepared to absorb. It was as if she had said, "I don't want to make any memories with you."

Not knowing how to broach the words and energy pushing and crackling between us, I just began to cope, and blamed her for everything except my birth. Soon there was no need for me to spend the night. There was no makeup time coming and my soul was trembling with an alphabet soup of fear, hate, self-loathing, and hopelessness. No matter how I arranged the letters of this emotional soup in front of me, it spelled ‘doom’. In a rush, I dashed into the snowy dark night, jumped into my tiny, tinny Dodge Colt and drove away.

For the next seven miles, it was hard to see the road. Not because of the tiny, icy snowflakes covering my window between each slush of the windshield wiper, but for the tears trying to release my broken heart that clouded not only the road directly in front of me, but all my tomorrows.

Some 90 miles later I ventured out into the cold to fill up the car with gasoline, check the oil, and relieve myself in a somewhat warm room on the side of the gas station. Then, in some myopic trance that could no longer look inward at the pain, I imagined a grand end to the pain that would make people love me. You know what I mean.

I drove out of town across a 60-mile road toward the next town with nothing ahead of me but the wind gusting up to 40 miles an hour which made the car heater almost useless. Did I mention that it was 40 below zero outside?

About thirty miles from the next town the car stopped. As it coasted to the side of the road, I thought to myself, ‘this is a fine Christmas Eve and I’m going to freeze to death.’ On a busy day in the 1970’s, a car might come by every hour or so. I expected nothing on Christmas Eve.

Within moments the car began to chill. Considering the consequences, I opened the door, faced the world's largest freezer, shut the door behind me, ran to the trunk of the car and extracted an unused oil can. Yes, it was a metal can, not a plastic container. Once back in the driver's seat I found a matchbook, some cardboard, and a knife.

In my early teens, I decided to renovate the space below the back porch of our home. With nothing other than cardboard, some old carpet and a little wood I enclosed the space making a boy cave with a latched door. Inside it was pitch dark. When troubled, I could escape by creeping into this holy sanctuary and repose in the dark, imagining I was floating in the middle of the universe far away from any harm.

Come winter it was cold. A friend stayed over one night and lit a fire in an old iron skillet. Then he took a used, clean tuna can and began feeding it crayons that slowly melted. It was mesmerizing to watch the colors swirl and mix. Once the can was about 2/3 full, he doused the covers of a couple of matchbooks into the melted wax, then bent the bottoms and inserted them into the wax as it cooled. We soon left our cave, as we decided there was more to do outside than inside. However, next time we entered, we lit the makeshift paper wick and had light. Soon the small crawl space was toasty. It acted both as a lamp and a furnace.

Almost remembering this adventure, I opened a portion of the oil can and placed the paper of a matchbook in the oil. I opened the window ever so slightly fearing both the cold and the potential noxious fumes. I had forgotten to drench the paper with oil first.

Within moments the paper extinguished itself. After some half an hour later and with several failed attempts at getting an oil lamp burning, I realized that without someone coming down this road on this Christmas Eve, I was going to freeze. I put the can of oil outside by the side of the road. Soon the only difference between the outside and the inside was the wind. The token of a coat I was wearing was not going to save me.

Digging through the glove compartment, I found a pencil and some paper and wrote Linda and the boys a goodbye letter, pouring out my love for them and a prayer for their best.

The Dodge Colt had an oddity concerning the car light switch. All I had to do, without even turning the ignition on, was flick a switch up and down to turn them on and off. I tested it and placed the brights on as well. After shutting off the lights, I repositioned the driver's chair, in which I sat, so I could lay back a ways and die in comfort, but also able to simply raise and lower my left hand across the light switch to activate it.

Hoping a car would come through and that I would hear it in time to flick the lights, I talked to God about our soon meeting. It was beyond cold, and the windows, which had fogged up earlier, were now frozen with the condensation of my breath on the inside.

With what seemed like a dream, I heard a car approaching. My left arm, as if automated, flicked the light switch vigorously. The car passed me and then pulled to the side of the road about 100 yards away. It was then I realized I had been asleep. As I was exiting, I looked at the car clock. I

realized it was about 3:30 in the morning. I had been asleep for three hours and stranded for four hours.

Running as fast as possible to the passenger side of the car which had stopped, I'm sure my movements looked somewhat like a gazelle on some nature show in slow motion, I arrived at the passenger's window to see two women returning from a last minute shopping spree in Salt Lake City. I asked for a ride to town. Being visibly frightened, and rightly so, because of the history of Utah and hitchhikers, the driver said she would send someone out to help me.

Shaking like a leaf in the gale winds, I told them with as much vigor as I could muster, I had been out there for four hours and would be dead by the time anyone returned. They, reluctantly, invited me to sit in the back seat while asking if I had anything to retrieve from the car. I could have had a billion dollars in the car, and I would not have ventured back for fear they would change their mind and drive off.

Within seconds, now sitting in a very warm car, I began to shake violently from head to toe. This was the second time I had all but frozen. Hypothermia was becoming a 'friend'?

Once in town, I called my father-in-law telling him what had happened. He said he'd pick me up the next day on his way to Salt Lake. I woke up a hotel clerk and rented a room. Once in bed, I shook so violently I spent half the time in the air above the mattress. With no sleep and now exhausted from the shaking, the next morning I found my way to the diner, shoved some food into my mouth now and again as my hand moved first this way, then that way and my face that way, then this way.

Hours after I had expected his arrival, my father-in-law showed up with a common friend. To my surprise, he had driven to Salt Lake City, and on the way had seen my car sitting by the side of the road. Picking up our friend, a chain for towing, a propane heater, and a tire to place on my bumper, he rescued me from the diner. We drove to the would-be coffin. To my surprise, they, being in the front seat of the car while I was in the back, said nothing to me, nor did they even mention my violent shaking, but just chatted with each other about inane things of no consequence.

I expected that I would be able to stay in the warm car and one of them would steer my car as it was being towed back to town. After arriving at my car, I hooked up the chain and tire. My friend placed the propane heater onto the passenger seat and lit it. He told me it would only heat whatever it was pointed towards. Also, it was loose and should not be allowed to touch anything. Without gloves, I was supposed to balance it when stopping and accelerating. ME? Yes, I was the designated driver.

For another three hours, I virtually froze all over again. After pointing the heater at the windshield portions of the window, the heat would defrost it, but then I was freezing and aimed the heater at myself. Soon the windows were once again freezing. This dance continued the whole way into town while always trying to keep my car from running into the car ahead and the heater from catching the seat or floor on fire.

We dropped my car off at a gas station around 12:30 in the afternoon. No one was there because of the holiday, but I obtained the phone number of the gas station, and since the

owner was a friend of my friend, I was assured of good service.

Now it was Christmas. I jumped into a warm bed and continued to shake myself into exhaustion. Monday I called the service station expecting I'd have to find another way to work that afternoon. The owner of the station said he could not find anything wrong with the car. Apparently, he brought the car into the garage Sunday and let it heat up. His best guess was that water had somehow found its way between the coil and the wire to the spark plug wire housing and it had frozen causing a short. In fact, he had heard of this being a problem with that year of Dodge Colts.

I hopped a bus, found the car running and warm, paid the $25 bill (like $150 today) and shook my way to work. I continued to shake inordinately right up until today. It took years before my feet stopped 'icing up' in the slightest cold weather.

Now some 45 years later both my father-in-law and my friend are asleep in the Lord. Linda has warmed up to me and warms me up. My younger son has children older than he and his brother were when this event happened. Our other grandchild has now been married for a few years and is in her mid 20's, about the age I was when this happened.

I praise God I lived long enough to enjoy them all and have had many happy Christmases in their presence.

5
HERE COME THE JUDGE

DONNING ourselves with faith and hope, Linda, the boys, and I ventured to live in central Missouri. I had just been called to pastor a small country Methodist church. It rested on a grassy knoll with a gravel driveway going up a somewhat steep hill. The quaint white church was on the left and capable of holding some 60 people or so. On the far back of the property was a forest in which lay the bodies of three black men who had been lynched some twenty-five years earlier by the fathers of the men who were the church elders at the time we arrived. I'm still trying to get my head around that. My heart cannot even begin to address the insanity of such behavior.

I discovered this truth when I suggested we cut down some of the trees in the back of the church, send them to a mill, and use the wood the following year to expand the church. After talking around the issue several times, one poor fellow was picked to privately explain the problem.

Now some 40 years later, the bodies of the three men have been released from their violent grave, properly carried and buried in the public cemetery.

Often we, like this congregation, are so ashamed and afraid of the possible results if people were to discover our sins, that we bury them somewhere out in the woods hoping they are never excavated. This all leads me to ask this, 'Who's your boss, Fear or Love?'

One of the ways to discover which, is to become aware of your prejudice. But before we continue, let us define this word prejudice. Let us agree that it is a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience. It is an emotional reaction to a half-baked thought or prematurely acting on limited information. Given that, let us continue.

One of the things I had learned concerning this Methodist church was that there were close to 350 people on the books listed as members. Yet on any one Sunday, we would have an attendance of approximately 50 people including children. During the week I would try to visit three or four people from the congregation and encourage them to become active with one of the churches in town or come visit 'us'. Some committed themselves to other congregations and some came back to 'our' church. Most were polite, but many vocalized their prejudice.

One such man lived across the street. He was about three hollers away. Well, the road from my front door to the graveled country road was about a tenth of a mile and another two-tenths of a mile to my neighbor's front door. Often I would see him out on the farm and would venture over to help

with whatever and, of course, continue to put in my plugs for Jesus.

About a week after one such attempt to light the fire of Love in this man's heart, he spoke of his pain. He and his wife had opened their home to a young man in all good Christian faith and love, only to have that boy, over the squabble of a hopeful potential love of a young woman in the area, drive the truck he had been gifted onto the chest of this couples' biological son and left him for dead.

He was dead, and though everything pointed to the short description above as being true and accurate, no legal action could be taken. My neighbor had then, some 25 years previous to our conversation, sent this young man away never to hear from him again. At the same time, he turned his back on the church and equally on God. Within a week he had lost two sons, a sense of belonging in the community, faith, hope, and God himself. His boss had changed. He no longer trusted in the God who is Love, but instead harbored the very loneliness, fear, and hate that had driven the young man to murder.

About a month later, I walked into a restaurant in town for lunch. At the back of the restaurant sat this man and a few other men who were not willing to come to church for one reason or another. I was excited to see them, and headed for their table to fellowship with them. This man, as soon as he saw me exclaimed in a loud voice for all to hear, 'Behave yourselves, here come the Reverend. Here come the Reverend!'

In an instant, I was something other than a man with a message. I was a thing with a title. The respect due the title

had been made into an icon of his prejudice, fear, and hate. By the time I sat down with them, I was an object of open ridicule. Every word from their mouths poured out slander and defamations of the Person I served. Had this been the first time I had suffered hate for being a messenger of Love, I would have feigned an excuse to exit their company. But I stood my ground and finished my lunch with them. But it still left a deep wound which needed healing.

Within a year we began a new life in Washington State and I gained a career in data processing. Ten years later this church was celebrating its Centennial, and we ventured to the same. After the gathering, I went into town to that same restaurant. We sat at a table in the back where I had suffered that prejudice so many years earlier. With a group of other people, my family and I ordered some lunch. Who should walk in, but that same man.

Since seeing him last, he had become a judge at the County Courthouse in the center of the town square, just across the road in front of the restaurant where we sat. Before I could help myself, I exclaimed with a loud voice, 'Behave yourselves, here come the judge. Here come the judge. Here come the judge.' As the whole town turned to see who it was, he exclaimed, 'Enough! You are right. You've got your payback.' With an act of revenge, I had become him, and he me.

I wish I could say revenge was sweet, but it was not. He was kind enough to come sit with us and we made up the best we could considering he was still having a war with God over his losses. A few years later we learned he was suffering

Alzheimer's. When we last visited, he was at peace. He had forgotten the pain of his losses and simply lived moment to moment. As life offered him a chance to embrace the moment, he took it, and after his death, I continued to admire this cleansing of a heart by the removal of memories. Even today, I am challenged to meet people where they are, right in that moment, instead of meeting their cloaked memories, good or bad.

6
CHARGE!

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, nothing could hold me back from rushing to the base of the Christmas tree on Christmas morning. Immediately convinced that the biggest wrapped package had to be mine, I tore into the paper with the unbridled vigor of a half-crazed child, expecting it to reveal love and acceptance in the form of some specific gift. I loved the feel of the paper as it was ripped off from around the item. There was a symphony of odors coming from the paper, box, and my own breath filled with the excess of adrenaline during those moments of intense excitement.

More than once I had to learn that not every gift under that tree was mine. Even then nothing deterred my rapid reduction of the gifts, seeking that one thing that would fill what lay behind the veil of a yet undiscovered life. As I grew, I was forced to pause, read the 'to and from' labels, and relinquish the gifts to the ones for whom they had been assigned.

Misery could have been defined then as watching others be blessed at the expense of my narcissistic quest for self-satisfaction. I did not care what I found under the tree, each item promised me some sort of completion. The gift put substance to the intangibles of love, joy, peace, and hope. There, as those intangibles began to be unveiled, I was captured by the 'thing' itself. For a fleeting moment I had what I needed, but then darkness began to press in like a menacing Arizona haboob, ready to rip away what little I had gained.

Because of these gifts, like the 'Polar Express' only going to some unknown destination, I was eager to leave my warm bed, dash into the darkness and explore the unexplored. As I matured, I realized that in reality, I was exploring the duality of heaven and hell, full and empty, life with meaning and nothing in particular. As I watch people living on the 'Decision Express', many wander to the back of the train desiring to postpone a decision concerning their destiny. Every day they fear the conductor will come to punch their tickets. Yet life continues to demand a verdict. One by one, newcomers take comfort in traversing to the last car, hoping to postpone the inevitable need for a decision. Others, just before their last breath, claim they hope God is love.

Not long ago I had an epiphany. If there were a physical day of judgment where everyone ever conceived were placed in a field before the Throne of God and instructed to line up for His decision concerning their destiny, things would go something like this:

All the children, like people lined up in the great 1889 Land Rush, would charge toward the only destination they

desired, God Himself. Until reaching Him, they would feel the need to stake their claim on eternal life. Once in His lap they would try to cuddle closer than His clothing.

The rest would begin to line up as instructed, but an ocean of seemingly polite people would insist that anyone wanting to go first could do so. Those, having trusted the word of God saying that in and by Christ they have a home with Him, would eagerly proceed to the front of the line. Then God, walking down the line and once having found the first cowering soul, could invite everyone thereafter to go to the eternity of their indecision. He would, out of justice, give them what they wanted, an eternal time out. His allowing them to avoid a decision to trust Him, leaves them as unopened gifts still laying under the Tree of Life. Those trusting Him walk away decorated with the body and light of His Son, the gift Himself.

And those children, similar to me as a child attacking the Christmas tree of hope, attack the Christ tree of Life, and having opened the One present, find their identity so altered that they never need another present. They have become one with the Gift and are the packages left for others to eagerly open.

7
GOD AND A PINE CONE

I LOVE READING THE BIBLE, especially those places where God talks directly to a person or group of people. Each time I am challenged. Not that I do not believe God can talk to humans, but it is sometimes difficult to realize that ordinary people who have never before heard God, not only can hear Him, but know that He is the One speaking. At times God speaks through events, like floods, fire from heaven, or a burning bush that speaks and is never consumed. Such things are both a puzzle and an everyday occurrence.

One day, pressed from the inside to chat with God, I had someone drive me about 40 miles from the community in which I lived with all I needed to set up camp for a few days, except bottled water. In those days that meant several canteens, but I had only one, one-gallon canteen.

Once I said goodbye to my wife and my best friend, I found a semi-level plot of grass on which to set my tent. Once

erected, I set up my lawn chair, yes lawn chair, when communing with God, one must be comfortable. Night came quickly and as usual, many creatures investigated my camp including a cougar. Up early the next morning, I opened a can of victuals, beans to be exact.

I explored my new surroundings and my somewhat disarrayed insides. I found a creek from which I replenished my canteen. I listened to the birds, looked for fish and found none, then ventured back to my lawn chair at camp to rest from my arduous duties of the morning.

What was my purpose for this venture? To find out if God was for real. I set my lawn chair near a pine tree and began to read the Bible and 'chat' with what I hoped was God.

"Hey Man, if You are for real, please prove it! You talked to men of old, how about a word or two with me? I'd have no problem trusting You for whatever, if I knew You existed in some way directly related to life here on earth."

Nothing!

For an hour or two, this continued. By now the sun was high in the sky. Then I had a bright idea. While eating lunch, a banana, I thoroughly examined the pine tree, scouring it for a pine cone. I encircled it from the outside, first one way, then back again. From underneath the tree, I looked at every branch. No pinecones were to be seen. Once satisfied that there were no pine cones in the tree, I said, "If You are conscious of me and have a mind and heart for me, cause a pine cone to fall from the tree."

I returned to my lawn chair, sat and sat and sat. Soon I began to read the Bible again. Within less than a half an hour I

had my answer, NO GOD! Sad to the core and now nursing a wave of anger for having been born to such an existential dilemma called life, I rose from my place of 'rest'. No sooner was I a few feet from the chair, than a huge pine cone fell on it, bouncing off the upper portion where my confused head had just been residing.

Well, that settled it for me. God not only existed, but He had my exact address.

Just a few years ago I related this story to someone, expecting them to experience faith bursting alive within their soul, just as I had experienced that day when I asked for a pinecone. Instead the person asked, "Why didn't you ask for a banana to fall from the tree you were under?"

I was saddened and even cast into some, not too little, doubt. Had I just missed a pine cone that had been in the tree? For days I was challenged by this one simple question. Yes, my faith was shaken, until I realized that my lawn-chair had been some six to eight feet away from the tree. That pine cone had fallen out of heaven, not off the tree. Even if it had come from the tree it had to have jumped some ten feet up the valley, against the wind, in order to land on the lawn chair.

That day I began to know how Gods speaks to me.

8
STREAMS IN THE DESERT

AFTER I KNEW there was a God and that He had my exact address, the lawn chair I had just been sitting on, I concluded that I had no need to camp out another two nights. I policed the area and put everything except the lawn chair into the tent. I even left the pine cone in it thinking I'd keep it for a souvenir. After filling the canteen and without anything more than an apple, I began the descent from the mountainside to the dirt road that led to the valley below.

The wind had picked up and by the time I arrived at the mouth of the canyon, I realized I was going to be walking, for the next 18 miles, right into the face of 35 to 40 mile an hour winds at a temperature of 105 degrees F. More than once, the thought of a blast furnace simmered past my consciousness.

As I rounded the last bend in the road opening up to the valley below, I was able to see my community looking like a dot on the horizon. It became evident that I should leave the

road and try a direct route across the desert. By doing so I was teasing death. I knew of no watering holes along this route. I would traverse the main dirt road once on the way, but no more. There was a ranch I would have to trespass, and I was hoping to find a well or two in operation supplying water for irrigation.

After a couple of hours and having seen, at a distance, a pickup or two barreling down the road, I began rethinking my decision. The canteen was empty and I had not even arrived at the main road. Somehow the most curious thing happened. I came upon a small concrete ditch with clear running water. It was just the right size for my canteen. I filled the same and marveled at the engineering of the ditch. First of all, I had never before seen it, nor been informed of its existence. It seemed to have been there for years and yet it came from no water source I knew of, nor was it going to a field or homestead. After emptying about half the canteen down my parched throat I filled it once again and struck up a course to the road, hoping to catch a ride to the community.

Having arrived at the road which was so low in the valley I could not see the community, I knew that I'd lose my bearings if I chose to follow it. Then too, if no one picked me up, I would triple the distance I would have to walk back home. With more than a prayer, I decided to continue across the desert. The wind was now whipping sand across my face with such ferocity that I was sure it would be bleeding by the time I arrived at my cabin.

A couple hours later, I realized I had not seen one snake, jack-rabbit, nor lizard. Even the birds were grounded and

hiding. As I walked right into the wind which howled around my ears and the heat challenged my every step, my mind began to wander. God and I had a couple of hours to chat.

With head down and cowboy hat blocking some of the wind and sand, my eyes spied a dark rock no bigger than my thumb. It seemed as if I should pick it up. Having done so, God showed me a portion of my future. After pondering this revelation I again slipped into several minutes of a forced walk. With the water rationed, I rejoiced knowing that if what I had just been told were true, I would live through this experience.

Some five more times I picked up a rock and was given some insight into Linda's and my future. Some five hours into the venture I was about five miles short of home. The water had been exhausted for some time and the wind had become steady, along with the heat of the day giving no respite.

Just before I plodded over the southernmost fence of our property, I looked down to see a quartz stone about the size of the others. I picked it up and somehow knew that later in life, when almost everyone else's financial situation was going to become difficult, ours would be the best it had ever been. So it has come to pass.

9
NOW HE SPEAKS THROUGH ROCKS

REMEMBER the rocks I picked up in the last story? Each time I picked one up it seemed like this pine cone tossing God wanted to talk to me about my upcoming life. Every rock I picked up was an opportunity for me to pause and listen. No voices, just a blast furnace of invading dust. Yet, I knew this was different. I knew I might want to pay attention to these thoughts which were so divergent from my normal internal chatter. I took a leap and trusted that God was talking to me.

In all, He addressed seven events or stages of my life. I long ago discarded the stones for they were but advertisements of upcoming events. The events were important, not the signs. The first stone was a small, round, smoothed, black volcanic rock. With it in my hand, I felt its insignificance and 'heard' God say, "In my hand, you are not insignificant." At that time in my life, I was only hoping to know whether or not God existed, much less whether somehow my life fit into His hand. Honestly, I was

too numb to even begin to embrace the us of that statement. Even today, and day by day, I become a candidate to once again 'understand' the significance of being in the hand of God.

After half a mile or more I saw a smoothed piece of black and white granite, which once in my hand was judged to be about twice the size of the first stone. As I continued walking, I eagerly waited for its significance. I was not disappointed. God 'spoke' and said, "Though this stone is made up of two stones it is a single stone. So it is with us."

What? He defines me and I define Him?

He spoke again saying, "I define you by your remaining in and with Me." Now I had heard something like that before in some of Jesus' teachings.

I thought, "Dean, you're making this stuff up."

Throughout my life, as I have related these stories to numerous people, they too echo that thought with some vigor. "Dean, you just like to tell stories. You're making these things up." Even now as I try to recollect my distant thoughts and experiences, I am troubled concerning their accuracy. But, being a storyteller, I know the point of the story is true and worth pondering. Even so, Linda will testify I told her this story when I arrived home that afternoon.

The above lesson has stuck with me throughout the past 46 years. I have come to see that the importance of relationships, is the 'us' which is created. As people gather, exchange dreams, declare their specific hopes, voice 'their' opinions, the 'us' appears. Soon, even when chatting with individuals from a group, I am chatting to and with the 'us'.

With this rock of two that was now one, God was letting me know that the 'us' we are, is as different from any other 'us' as the difference between any two stones or snowflakes. I was not precious by myself, but exceptionally precious as one of this peculiar 'us'. I become an equal part of this particular 'us'. Like freezing water dressing a speck of dust and creating a specific snowflake, so this Holy Water of Life dressing this speck of dust creates a specific 'us'. Jesus knew this so well that He declared that if someone rejected His 'dusty' doings, they were rejecting the 'us' and thus rejecting His Father authoring the 'dusty' doings.

While pondering these things I spied a smooth reddish rock. Even before it was in my hand I knew God was reminding me that man was His property, not God man's property. God owned the earth. Not just lifeless dust and mud, but that type of mud which could forget the other part that caused it to be animated. A man could become hard and as good as lifeless by dissing the Other, without Whom the 'us' would be destroyed.

Adam and Eve decided God was holding out on them. God had qualities, like knowing good and evil, which He had not shared with them. They were aware of their difference and wanted to be more like God. Well, to help things along, the serpent, who had already abandoned his created 'us', decided to be like God. Oops! That did not work out so well. Now he helped this couple decide to try being godly or more like God. Ever since then, every soul, in one form or another, decides to take matter(s) into their own hands and become like God or

reject Him completely and live as a single entity undefined by God.

That lie comes from the father of lies and challenges every one of us even today. Looking at ourselves, we judge ourselves not to be like God and so desire to be like Him. Some, having given up trying, but still hating Him for not making them something else, just give up on the whole thing. Others, keep trying, keep eating from the tree of trying, asking God to help them try, and they not only try again, but unrelentingly so.

Well, it was some time before I spied the fourth stone. God's agenda changed from teaching me about our relationship to foretelling my upcoming life experience. I cannot remember the stone, but He seemed to want me to know that for some time to come, my life would not be as rosy as thorny. That was that. What! Really!?!?

SILENCE

The next stone came soon after. I do not remember its size, shape, color, or message.

The sixth stone told me that Linda and I would suffer financially while those around us became 'stinking rich'. In the early 80's I was part of the budding Cellular industry. Five of the people I worked with became billionaires, and several who worked at my level became millionaires. I, however, through life events, became financially challenged.

The seventh stone I consider my Sabbath stone. It fit in the palm of my hand and was at least an inch and a half on two

sides and an inch on the other. It was a very cloudy white piece of quartz. I remember, as I grasped it, I did not want to know what it meant. The last revelation of impending financial difficulties was enough. I was ready to get home, now some six miles away.

After some silence, I mustered up enough courage to ask, "What does this stone represent?"

Instantly He said, "Financial as well as soul and spiritual prosperity. As others will be losing what they have gained you will have enough." So it has come to pass. We have enough and can share now and again. Our souls, though our bodies are aging and suffering age, are prospering. Our spiritual dance with God has become far beyond anything we could have asked for or thought of in our youth. We have become whole in body, soul, and spirit, like children playing in the front yard of Daddy's cabin.

10
TIME TO HEAL TEETH

Brother Nay was a focused man. He had a mission. His coyote-hunting excursion business financially carried him through his praying for teeth. Yes, teeth filled with silver, gold, amalgamates or just downright new teeth.

He showed up in our community with another wild bunch of young people and a man named Harry Deckert. We had a few gatherings listening to some teachings, singing of course, and some simple prayers here and there. Then this short, elderly man ventured to the platform and began sharing stories.

Just that week a man of the Mormon faith had asked him to take him coyote hunting in southern Utah, close to George's home. They walked, talked, and hunted all day.

By the end of the day, his client had had enough. Not of George, or hunting, but of trying to please God by human efforts. He asked George what he should do. George said it

was really simple; just take the trust out of your hands and put it into Jesus's nail-scarred hands. Give up trying to be like God, and let God live out your life. Get ready to do something amazing like receive God's life within His Son, and as you get on with living, you will now live a God-directed life.

The man knelt right there in the desert, gave up, gave over, got up and asked, "Will you baptize me in water?" George said, "Yes." They went to George's modest home. He filled his bathtub with warm water, and right there the man was dunked.

Now that was odd, but what was about to happen was even odder. The man, coming up from under the water 'decided' to speak in some unknown language, shouting out something with great enthusiasm. During the late 1960s and up through this time, around 1974, things like this were happening everywhere around the world. Older church organizations like the Presbyterians, Baptists, and even the Catholics were seeing people instantly transformed and their spirits renewed. Some dubbed it the time of the Holy Spirit Renewal.

But now, in Utah, the same thing was happening. I say, 'now in Utah' because up to that time Utah was basically LDS (Mormon). For a man to give his life to God with evidence that God received it, and then begin doing Book-of-Acts-New-Testament things like speaking in other tongues was phenomenal.

As George traversed around the pulpit, dynamically walking us through his normal week of events, I literally sat on the edge of my chair, excited to hear of others having had experiences similar to mine. They had given up and found God's Holy Spirit more than willing to take over and express

freely the things given to us by just trusting Jesus. Jesus, God's Son was all we needed. The whole auditorium was filled with possibility.

George was dressed up for the occasion. He was wearing a light blue dress shirt and dress slacks. The outdoorsman was out of dress, but not out of character. His dress shirt had the proverbial one pocket on the left side. For whatever reason, I had noticed how nicely pressed it was and fit so well on his aged, yet muscular chest. Suddenly, right in the middle of a new story, he looked down at the pocket of his shirt. Before he said, "I guess it's time to heal teeth", I noticed a yellow plastic dental mirror in that pocket. I thought that especially odd, not because it had not been there a moment before, but because it was plastic. To date, I have never seen one made of anything but metal.

Reaching down to the pocket, George pulled it out, quizzically looked at it rolling it between his fingers and asked, "Does anyone need their teeth worked on?" Well, that fast, a young lady who had come with Harry, ran to the front of the room and onto the stage.

I had overheard her asking some people earlier that day if God could heal teeth. Apparently, she had gone to a dentist and who had diagnosed her and suggested a set of procedures to rebuild her back molars, quoting her some $5,000 for the work.

Today, many people from California and Arizona go to Mexico to get their teeth worked on, several root canals, removal of metal fillings, new teeth on a post, etc. for around a magical number of $3,500. Now the purchasing power of

$5,000 in the ’70s would equal about $30,000 in today’s money. This young lady was as good as a homeless Hippy with constant pain which almost laid her flat. When George Nay made the call, she decided this was the answer to her prayer.

George placed his hands on both sides of her face and simply stood there quiet for a moment and then said, “Thank You Father for healing her teeth.” Others were going up for prayer as she left the stage and went to back to her seat somewhere in the back of the auditorium. As I was eagerly watching people get prayed for, I heard raucous shouts coming from where she had been sitting. I looked back to see her dancing for joy and shouting out praises to God. I thought she had just been filled with Holy Spirit, but once I was close I heard people rejoicing. Some were demanding to see, while others, stunned, just stood by shaking their heads.

Linda recalls, “I had seen the girl’s teeth before the meeting. One of her back molars was so decayed, there was hardly anything left of the tooth. After Jesus finished healing her teeth, I could see a whole molar which appeared to be metal, about the color of stainless steel. I don’t recall what other healing took place, I just remember her saying how thankful she was to be free from the horrible pain she had been experiencing.”

Apparently, God did the $5,000 worth of dental work for

nothing and instantly. Okay, all together now! One big thank You to Jesus!

I turned to go back to my seat and saw a young man venturing to the platform. Now I knew this man and counted him unworthy of any of God's graces. He had no desire for God in His life in a real way, but now was so bold as to want his teeth healed by someone he did not want to have a relationship with. Odd to say the least.

I caught Linda's attention and suggested we go up and see if anything happened. Poor George, as he placed his hands on both sides of this man's face, Linda and I stuck our heads up and in between his arms looking into this man's open mouth. That fast, three teeth on the side of his mouth, upper or lower I forget, were filled with silver. The man left the stage remarking how he previously had three cavities on the side of his mouth and how he was spitting out little chunks of teeth. Apparently, that lasted for an hour or so.

Years later I mentioned that event to my friend, a dentist. He, a Christian, got angry saying God would never do that. Now I was confused. If God would never do that, then who or what did do it? I asked him why he was angry. He said, "What? Do you believe God wants to put me out of business?" Well, what can you say to that? I know I thought, "God has every intention of putting morticians out of business." but I said nothing out loud.

Later after a short examination, my friend, the dentist, wanted to fill a small cavity. Rebelliously, I declared that God would fill it and that my friend would still have enough work to keep him employed.

Six months later I had another exam and the same cavity was there and growing. Though invited, I refused my friend's offer to fill it, restating my belief that God would fill it. Another six months later it happened again. Just before the next exam, now 18 months from the first discovery of the cavity, I said to God, "Father, this is about you, not me. If You fill this cavity, it is filled. If You don't by the next exam, I'll have the dentist fill it." During the next checkup with the dentist, he became way too silent. Demandingly, he asked, "Who has been working on my teeth?" I asked him what was up, to which he replied, "You know. That cavity is gone." I asked, "Gone?" He got up and walked away. I went home thanking God for George Nay and healing teeth and still letting my friend make a living.

When I met George, God was healing teeth with silver fillings. Later He was using gold. I heard that later He was using amalgamate or whatever looks like a tooth and just before George died, God was simply restoring the tooth.

11
JOURNEY TO SOME ANSWER

One evening after leaving my work at the University Hospital, I decided to go to the top of a nearby hill, the one with the 'U' on its side. That night, on campus, they were burning a huge bonfire to celebrate the upcoming homecoming football game.

Not liking crowds, I thought I'd venture up the hill. It was growing dark by the time I reached the top. Salt Lake City glistened below. Soon I realized that I had no coat, and it was quickly changing to a desert cold. Being tenacious or not too bright, I decided to stay on the hill until I could see the bonfire. As I shivered in vain, I decided to descend from the unprotected hilltop down few yards into a ravine and then up into a small scrub oak forest. Out of the wind, I curled up into a fetal position and quickly fell asleep.

Soon I was experiencing a very vivid dream. It was more

of a nightmare than a dream. I was still hunkered down in the same brush fighting off the cold, but all around me were soldiers speaking Vietnamese. With bayonets poking into the brush, I concluded they were looking for me and had every intention of ending my life. Fear overtook every cell of my body. Even as it was happening, I knew I was on the hill above Salt Lake City. I knew I was not in Viet Nam, yet it felt real. They were out there, trying to find me in here, and ready to do their worst. As they talked to each other and combed the area, I realized I was taking every breath with caution, dreading they might hear the evident sign of life. As they continued down the hill, I eased my vigilance, but I had a new tattoo. Once they were gone, I awoke from the dream.

Lingering as if the dream were true, I felt that they could return at any moment, I decided to make my way to a lower ridge toward the West and then descend to the avenues below. I was shaken. The war games I had played as a child, the war stories I had heard from friends returning from Viet Nam, the gut hate, fear, and mental anguish caused by the night news broadcasts concerning the endless war chewing up hundreds of my brothers every day, had caught up with me. I was as traumatized as someone who had been caught facing a fierce enemy. From the time of my youth, we all knew that someday we were going to suffer some nuclear holocaust, simply because people loved hating and distrusting each other more than loving away the pain from each wound as it was inflicted.

Even the social narrative had changed. The heroes had become as bad as the villains and several movies had our heroes failing to accomplish their righteous tasks and dying

right in front of our eyes. As our surreal lives became the reality of our bedtime stories, everything began to embrace change for change sake. No soul was ever to expect life-giving nourishment. Children born were special simply because they had not been aborted. Being alive was proof you were loved and after that…

The trauma I suffered that evening on the mountain grew and many years later was given a label, PTSD. Yes, just living in exceptional times had proven a trauma. With one huge voice, the youth demanded a hearing before being given their death sentence. They were given the right to vote and drink or was it to drink and vote? The sons of heroes stood up to be counted and demanded sanity over politics. Democracy proved itself deaf and dumb. What the kings had declared could not be repented. More children would have to be sacrificed to the gods of fear. All the Sunday school truths of God's love for all humanity were cast aside as myths. Instead, we stood cheering and jeering as a parade of fear, terror, and murder passed.

The call to manhood and maleness was publicly defined as brutality. The gentle-women in need of protection became equally and openly cruel. What had been up was now down and right was now wrong. Like some clinical hypnotherapist bombarding their client with too many options, the truth had become a confused, overwhelming, and exhaustive story. That night, as I descended the hill and reached 'safety', I realized God had just shown me that the enemy of our hearts lives just beyond our best disguise.

Later in life, it became ever so clear that every event we

experience becomes a part of the new day as we deludedly think we can shed it off with the close of yesterday's light. What a lie this is. As we live in the world which we believe we are creating, every night the past haunts us, our parents' rules define us, and our hate for God intentionally energizes us. Unless…

It has become ever so clear to me that as long as we continue to honor the determined authors of our destinies, we fall into the inescapable pit of having to suffer a world made of our own hands. We have no one to blame for our predicament other than our own efforts to change whatever. For only in despising what we do, do we find the energy to try to change. Our addiction to change demands creating that which we hate, so we can try once again to change. Don't you just hate that?

Like a skilled actor, with practice one can reinvent their person, only to find that even with the greatest of industriousness, we have only clothed the old servant of sin with a new garment of sin. After all, sin is nothing more than deciding to do it our way.

Even now, as I remember that night, my shoulders become tense, my breathing guarded, sadness dresses my face, and my heart does laps in a pool of despair as I think of the state of most humanity. Is there is no way to strip this self-worshiping humanity of its clothing and put them to such shame that they all fall to their knees confessing that we are not GOD? The very evil humanity does is the nakedness that should have shamed them to repentance ages ago.

Jesus said He came to bring life and that more abundantly. The majority of humanity says, "To hell with that. We are doing just fine."

12

WHERE'S THE COKE?

EVEN THOUGH I lived in South King County in the early 1980's and worked out of an office in Kirkland, Washington, I had to travel weekly to Washington, D. C. while working on a significant acquisition by the company by which I was employed. Soon I learned the comforts of home did not necessarily follow wherever I went.

I loved my coke, that is my diet Coca-Cola! For whatever reason, the East Coast was bereft of diet Coca-Cola. In that part of the country people loved something called diet Pepsi which looked something like Coca-Cola, but it was not what I needed. I decided to see the concierge on a very cold, somewhat snowy evening to discover where I might acquire my diet Coca-Cola.

Venturing downstairs dressed for the evening in my full length tan double lined woolen dress coat, matching fur-lined

leather gloves, dark dress slacks, black wing-tipped leather bottom shoes, white dress shirt ,black blazer, woolen hat, and a woolen scarf wrapped around my neck to cut the blustering wind, I met up with the concierge.

"Hi Rick, how are you doing this evening?"

"I'll be honest with you, Mr. Chicquette, it's not very busy this evening. I'd like to stay busy. Is there something I can do for you?"

"Well Rick, I'm looking for my Coke!"

Silence…stare…looking left then right…more silence…

I continued with a smile, "I mean my diet Coca-Cola. Where can I find some 16 oz bottles of Coca-Cola?"

The sigh of relief.

I continued, "I know the restaurant has none, and we have only Pepsi in the vending machines."

Still wearing a puzzled look, Rick looked behind his podium and found a city map. Within moments, I knew where to go to find my Coke.

He finished with a warning, "Be careful out there, it gets pretty dark in that neighborhood."

As I left the hotel I wondered if I needed a flashlight. Now let me pause and give you a working definition of a word: prejudice—acting on limited information. I was soon to learn what that word meant on multiple levels.

Turning left I began walking, what was going to be a mile journey with no turns. As I ventured down the street, I noticed Rick had been correct. There were two cross streets with streetlights ahead followed by darkness.

Not only was I constantly slipping on the newly fallen

snow, colder than I liked, I was beginning to feel desperate to get back to the hotel even before I had accomplished my mission. I also noticed I was afraid of something. I had the sense that I had left Kansas, and was without the Yellow Brick Road to guide me. Inside I felt like the Scarecrow, Lion, and Tin-Man all put together.

The sidewalks were uneven from tree roots driving them up into miniature mountain ranges like two tectonic plates smashing into each other, only happening much faster. As I passed the point of no return, I noticed a street light up ahead. No one was visible in the whole distance between me and an otherwise deserted intersection which had a Circle-K across the street on the corner to the right.

Victory!

Not so fast. I noticed a man straight ahead on the corner across the street looking to my right and giving a head nod to someone in my direction. Before I knew it, a young lady, way underdressed for the weather, sidled up to me and began courting me. She had no poodle, but I knew I was in trouble.

In a flash, my life had turned into an impossible situation. If I chatted with her, I could be warming a jail cell. If I didn't, the man across the street might decide to use me for a punching bag, before relieving me of everything I owned. I had absolutely no interest in the lady. I was after my Coca-Cola.

Somewhere between seeing the man's nod and this lady casting out her bait, I began one of my very desperate prayers that apparently went right from my silent lips to God's ears.

I said, "HELP!"

Just as she traveled to my left side, a man came out of nowhere on my right walking faster than I could run, and with full intention his bare left hand grabbed her right buttock. In a flash, they went to the corner, turned left and disappeared. The man across the street looked happy. Seeking refuge, I turned right and entered the Circle-K.

Once inside I realized what Rick meant about the area being dark. Everyone in the store looked at me the way an orthodox Jew would look at a huge ham lying in his shopping cart at Passover. I went to the back of the store, pulled out two bottles of diet Coke-Cola, went to the front counter, smiled or grinned with fear, I did not know which, checked out and left the store.

Instantly, I knew one of the bottles was a weapon and decided I'd die before I forfeited the second bottle. Listening to reason (prejudice) trying to be heard over a very loud heart beating in my ears, I turned right deciding to go back to the Hotel a different way.

Just like the previous street, the lights were either non-existent or out of service. Ahead of me there were some streetlights, a lot of light and people of the same color as myself. Knowing that I was safe, I began to slow down and breathe deep. Upon discovering that I was sweating, I even opened my coat a button or two and loosened my scarf.

To the left, across the street was a five-story 'historic' apartment building. To my right and on my side of the street was a similar three-story building with some people out front chatting. Yay! I was home.

Just then I heard a commotion from the apartment building

to my left and a scream for help. As fast as my savior near the Circle-K had traversed my path, a lightly clad woman ran right in front of me, tried to jump up a two foot high, somewhat dilapidated retaining wall, and fell face down in the snow and some protruding grass. It was odd. The grass was green, like happy, so odd.

Then a man jumped on her legs so she could not escape and began plunging the five inch blade of a knife into her back. By the way, both these people were white. She was screaming and showing signs of pain. He was cursing and informing her how much he hated her, both with words and his continual stabbing.

With every ounce of genuine concern, I helpfully yelled at the man, "Run! The police! Run!" He did.

I think I was really screaming at my legs which had not stopped moving, but had only one gear which did not include run.

He returned to the left and took off. The people who had been to my right by the front door of the apartment complex were already there helping the woman, but like a deer in headlights or some zombie, I continued putting one foot in front of the other. My inner voice was scolding me for not staying to help or letting the police know what had happened. However, another voice said, "Get home now! It's not safe out here. Besides, she knows who stabbed her. You don't know first aid. Have you noticed how cold it's getting? Look at those snowflakes. Button up your coat. Wrap that scarf around your neck."

Back in my room at the hotel I opened one of the diet

Coca-Cola bottles and wished, as I took my first sip, that I loved Diet Pepsi.

13
VISIONS ARE HARD TO DECIPHER

AROUND 1973 I decided to jump on my Honda CB 350 Motorcycle and ride to San Francisco. At that time I was living in the Utah community aforementioned. The ride to San Francisco was sad, cold, rainy, snowy, lonely, and desperate. Once there, I found the Zen Monastery easily enough, a place to park my motorcycle for a week, and settled in. My bamboo mattress did what for me?

After a few days, with the weekend coming, the whole Zen Monastery community entered a bus and proceeded to a piece of property north of the Golden Gate Bridge, left past a huge home, and down a steep dirt road. We parked next to a large barn of sorts with a hardwood floor and a stage up front. I learned that the property had been donated to the Monastery by the man who owned the home we had passed just moments before.

Some of the people followed a path out to the ocean. I

stayed close to the restroom and any food I could find. It was a regular San Francisco day, sunny but cool. The weather was indecisive at best and as fickle as the San Andreas Fault. In an hour or so people came back from the ocean and we all took our mats and sat on the floor facing the stage upon which the priest and Roshi sat.

During the first round of sitting, I stayed awake. As we began the second sitting, I had a strange 'vision?' I saw my younger son getting married on the stage, but knew he was already married and that he didn't get married on that stage nor would he. Weird. He was about one year old at the time.

No other significant event happened that day, but there is a joke I heard later that always makes me think of that place.

Interlude

Some Jewish Rabbis were having a serious meeting. They were discussing a hot theological topic. All were in agreement except the head Rabbi who claimed he had heard from God.

After failing to convince them to agree with him, he finally said, "I quit talking. Let the waters talk for me."

Well, the stream outside the building backed up like the Jordan in the days of Joshua, and after a time crashed down the valley flooding the same.

The other Rabbis said, "Wow, now that's a miracle, but we don't listen to the waters."

The head Rabbi said, "Then let the wind speak for me."

Just then a gust of wind came down the valley, ripping up the trees by the roots and casting them into one big pile of broken sticks.

Another Rabbi said, "Wow, now that's a miracle, but we don't listen to the wind."

The head Rabbi said, "Then let God speak for me."

Just then a voice came out of the heavens shaking the building and everyone in it saying, "Listen to this man, he is my Rabbi!"

The other Rabbis said, "Wow, now that's a miracle, but we don't listen to God."

Back To The Story

Some 31 years later that young son of mine was dating a lady, okay living with her. For Christmas they went to San Francisco, so he could meet her parents. Upon their return home, Linda and I picked them up at the airport. He invited me to step outside with him as he smoked a cigarette. Once outside he said, "Dad, that was an awful trip." Filling me in on all the details I had to agree. He continued, "I don't think this is going to work out."

He told me that her parents loved him and showed him every kindness, but the more they did, his lady friend became anxious, angry, and verbally abusive toward him. He

continued to tell me about the parents and their summer home just north of San Francisco.

Yup!

Apparently, it was his lady friend's father's father who had given the property to the Zen Monastery, the very place where I had sat and seen the vision.

He explained that they had been planning to get married there on the stage in a large building which the Zen Monastery used that was below the house, but it looked like that wasn't going to happen.

I said, "You know son…breaking up with someone after a relationship this close is like getting a divorce." His face put on shock, colored with pale.

As we re-entered the airport terminal to pick up the baggage, I noticed his lady friend was uncommonly quiet, but expressively terse.

I remembered the vision, but it did not fit. I pondered why the vision said they were married first. A few weeks later he informed me that they were getting a divorce.

Wow! Now it fit. They were married, were going to have a large wedding ceremony right where our Roshi had sat, but now they were not going to go through with the ceremony in the barn.

I have to conclude, as with all of my life, that the hand of God is non-prejudicial and kindly informs, instructs, corrects, protects, and downright hugs each of us while we bump into every wall we can find and a few invisible ones too. He knows our end from the beginning and sometimes lets us in on a few of the events we have yet to experience.

Looking back at all the 'whatever' of your life, there is a theme. It is most likely the theme you either least expect or downright hate. I say this because only those who live in the moment, knowing the Author of the same, have not only purpose in what is happening, but His very skin is in the game. Our skin! Many of us can claim a life of Job, but without the graces of the same. Some seem to have the proverbial Midas touch. I have concluded that we all have meaning beyond our existential leaps of faith.

Again, back to my son. I love this man. Not just because he is my son, but because he is today a hard working, faithful, loving father and husband. As with every human, I pray God's hugs rule not only his end, but capture the essence of each moment with the ferocity of his designed destiny. After all, to become a fingerprint of what God is doing leaves an eternal impression on everyone.

Go ahead, be impressive!

14
GIVE IT AWAY

It was a bit too warm for me as I drove a bus filled with 40 friends and family into the parking lot next to a little Church in Stockton, California where we had come to minister. As soon as I opened the door, several of the men jumped out to inspect the back driver's side tandem axel. On the way there, while descending a mile down a winding road, we discovered that when turning right, the axel would actually slip out so much that the wheels were halfway into the lane of the oncoming traffic. It was a two-lane road. When turning left, it would retreat back to where it belonged. With a lot of prayer and learning to ignore such things as screams and spirited commands concerning my driving, I was able, not only to safely descend the mile to the valley floor, but back up another mile to level ground.

Later I learned that the mechanics in the group discovered that a simple little cotter-pin had broken off and disappeared.

After catching a ride from one of the people in this little church, a new pin was purchased and inserted. But for some reason no one let me drive the bus again. Like I had removed the pin just to liven things up a bit…no way!

Several ventured into the church. I too, but not until retrieving my guitar. I loved that guitar. It would give me an emotional hug every time I held it, and things got a bit passionate as I played it. At that time, I was practicing finger picking Joplin Rags. I was impressed with myself. A couple of other people were also impressed, but I took their compliments as an insult. It made me think of a parishioner exaggerating about how awesome the preacher's sermon was that Sunday after 15 years of preaching. What, it took 15 years to get a good sermon, and we have another 15 years to go?

Being somewhat uneasy in crowds, I found a secluded spot to the right and down a step from the podium. It was a bit dusty and dirty. There I practiced playing the acoustic guitar. Did I mention I loved it? I think it loved me too. I had saved for months to purchase it. It was 'only' $350. Some phenomenal acoustic guitars were just coming out of Japan in the mid '70s for $4,000. In today's money a $4,000 guitar would be around $16,000. That made my guitar worth $1,300 in today's money. Earning less than $2 an hour made that a big investment.

Soon several people were sitting down and waiting for the meeting to begin. The music team began to play. I joined in the best I could. Others of our group came to the platform and joined in singing our favorite Christian choruses. Even though I had just met the pastor, I liked him and counted him a friend.

He sat to my left on a chair and after about 40 minutes, he got up and started sharing the love of Jesus and how it changed his life.

Knowing all I needed to know about Jesus, I basically ignored him. But within, God was speaking. I knew it was God, because I would never have thought what I was thinking. In fact, what I was thinking was so offensive I decided to listen to the pastor. But it was too late. My rebellion had turned into physical shaking. Mentioning this worries me today, for I have been shaking for years. Hmmm?

Anyway, even though I knew about Jesus, I had no assurance that he really loved me and wanted to hang out with me. But somehow I knew this voice going off in my head must have been Him. Why? What was he saying?

"Offer your guitar and music to anyone who wants it. Anyone! I want you to give it to anyone who will take it."

Say what? You want me to give MY guitar to anyone who wants it? Just anyone? You know this is a bunch of California hippies looking for their next high. They're not going to play worship music for You like I do. Down deep enough so He could not hear what I was thinking, I whispered a thought like, "What makes Him think it's His guitar?"

He replied, "Yes."

Yikes! He heard my silent thoughts.

"Just anyone?" I replied under my breath. As I asked that question, I came to see the lesson he had for me. This act of love was like the Father's act of love. By giving away what makes me happy and fulfilled to just anyone who wants it was like Father giving His Son to just anyone who would take Him. This act even had a name. It was called love.

By this time, the earth was shaking from my shaking. The sermon was just hiking up, and it seemed most impolite to interrupt God teaching his people. So, I said I'd ask people later if anyone wanted MY guitar. That did not work…my soul was in agony. As I looked to the podium, the pastor looked back at me. Later he told me that the Spirit had told him I had something to say, and after looking my way, seeing me shaking like a leaf in a gale, sweat rolling down my brows, pale, and sad/mad, he did not know what to do. Apparently the word 'emergency' went off in his head.

Just as he looked my way, my mouth opened up and said, "God wants me to give my guitar to anyone who wants it." My declaration was a whisper. In a moment it became a half-hearted declaration from the pulpit.

I watched the crowd and no one responded. Whew! I'd obeyed and no one wanted it. Yay! Lesson learned. Jesus is for anyone. No hoops. Awesome! And I still had my guitar. Great LORD, that was a good lesson.

Then He said, "Okay. Now that you know how to obey, give it away. Don't just offer it. Lose it."

Now I was sure I had entered some cult, and the devil sounded like a god or something and wanted to hurt me really badly and steal MY guitar. Determined to exit with the guitar,

I decided I needed to go to the restroom, so I looked for an exit, but I was pinned in. The only way to exit was to get up and walk across the stage in front of the pastor. He was back to preaching and traversing to the other side of the room past the majority of the congregation. No problem, and I'll take the guitar with me.

So I stood with the guitar in my hand, walked a couple of steps and I was next to the pastor who turned to me and with eye to eye proclaimed to the audience, "Folks, I think he really means it. God wants to give this guitar to anyone who wants it." I froze. The crowd kept looking this way and that, seeing who would take the guitar. By then I just wanted it to be over.

More loud silence.

Then, with tears in his eyes, a young man came up from the very back of the church. I vividly remember the French paned windows running the length of the back of the church. On that wall were a couple of pews. He had been sitting near the the center of them. The sun glistened on his shoulder as he rose and began slowly making his way toward the front. I realized I had been holding the guitar up and out in front of me toward the congregation. Before I could give it one more hug or strum he had retrieved it. I gave him the case, music, and my two picks.

My heart was very sad for my loss, but very happy for his gain, because the very moment he took hold of that guitar, his face lit up! His heart was visibly encouraged. I ventured back to my corner in which I had no purpose. I traded in my emptiness for anger at God for wanting so much from me and giving back so little.

Then He said, “Yes it hurts to lose something you love, but remember the joy in that boy’s eyes. It comes from his heart. It screams to me his Creator, ‘thank you’ and that makes me really, really happy. I rejoice in seeing the life of my Son in ever so many people who are willing to take Him as their very life, as the very thing they have always wanted. I am also eager for all to receive him. He is my life, and He is given freely to them, any one of them.”

That little speech didn’t help much, not for another year until I took His Son just like this boy had taken my guitar. After grabbing Him, I just sat down with Him and smiled from the inside out. He took me as much as I took Him, and where He sat on the throne of my heart, He remains today. Every time I turn my attention from believing this lying flesh or the lying world and simply receive Him again as if it were the first time, He is enough. There I can rest, not needing a guitar to hug me nor fulfill me in any way. I have found Jesus to be sufficient and I rediscover that truth every day.

As I look to Him, I see Father right behind him, with hand on His shoulder, declaring to everyone, “Here He is. I give Him to you.”

After the boy sat back down, and after a prolonged silence, the pastor sincerely asked, “Why is it that only this one could leave his seat, walk up here, and take this guitar?”

Instantly the boy stood and simply said, “I have been praying for a guitar.”

Years later I read a verse in the New Testament that said.

"And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." (Mat 21:22 NAS)

Through prayer (asking), this young man had built up his receive muscles. Through prayer (seeking), he had gained the right and ability to stand up, walk up, and receive.

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name," (Joh 1:12 NAS)

Even you have the right (authority) to be a child of God, right now, right where you are, just receive this truth. God saves you, no, saved you, and holds out His Son for you to receive, take, grasp, hold on to, walk away with, and own.

Take him and he will take you.

How to live after you have taken Him is easy. Just take Him again and again and again. Turn to life and let life live you, hug you, walk you, and bless everyone else, with that with which you have been blessed.

You have a trillion opportunities to continue to receive everything He is and to give it all away.

15
SURPRISE

ALL I SAID WAS, "Jesus, if You are there, You can have me. But here is the deal, I give up trying to please You." Before I could say, "I give up trying…" my life changed. Christ Himself had entered through my desert cabin door, walked over to the chair in which I was sitting, and slowly entered my heart changing everything. It has taken me 45 years to better realize what happened in only a few seconds at 7:30 PM August 10th 1974.

I had been slave to my fleshly and 'soulish' life. After that moment, I never needed to be slave to the lust of my eyes, flesh, nor to the pride this life offers. That does not mean I have not lived there for long periods of time, it just means I didn't *have to* live there.

Within seconds after the Spirit of Christ had taken residence in me (reading the books of John in the New Testament will help you understand what I mean), I had my

own Pentecost outpouring evidenced by an overwhelming desire to praise God for all the joy in my heart. English apparently was not good enough, and I found myself speaking in some other language which seemed to capture and express the overwhelming gratitude that was welling up inside me.

The Book of Acts became real. The life Jesus had begun during His pre-crucified life He continued through His Spirit resident in His disciples. Now He had found another body through which to continue His works. I was so happy, I invited Linda to the party, but she kept watching me for two weeks and then said, "I want what he has." Before she could say, "… he has." She had *it*. I watched my wife pass from death to life right before my eyes. Now that was a surprise. Why?

Well, I lived in a small community that claimed to be Christian. I thought everyone else had already experienced this, 'whatever it was'. As I, with great enthusiasm, ran around sharing what had happened, I was surprised at their blank stares. To my surprise, one by one, people found themselves yielding to Jesus' love and receiving Him into their life. Some just wanted His help, but many wanted His life lived through them.

Within a year most of the church family, which included not only the community, but several people living outside that community, had either surrendered their lives to Holy Spirit or condemned the whole thing as divisive.

Within a few years, the dynamics of this otherwise stoic group of people changed. Their lives were transformed, in an instant. Many, like myself and Linda, proclaimed the praises of God with some unlearned language 'of their own'. People

were healed of hate and began to run to those they had hated the most and hug them crying out with a loud voice for all to hear, "I love you. I love you."

I'm hooked on the 1990 movie called *Dances With Wolves*. The part that gets me the most is where, at the end, *Lieutenant Dunbar* and *Stands With A Fist* are leaving the community while *Wind In His Hair* is on a bluff crying out for all to hear and see, proclaiming Dunbar as his friend. They had been enemies, but now they were friends. The whole community was made to know they were friends forever.

In my own community I watched souls who had considered God to be their enemy cry out, "See! See! God is my friend. God is my friend. I want everyone to know, God is my friend."

For them, the lie "God hates me" was broken. God was ready for their hugs, a playful joke, even a strong disagreement and ready to change their mind of the same, *if need be*. They took some unknowable leap from fear to faith, from disbelief to trust. They began to see the love of God in the very Bible that moments before had only condemned them. Jesus was on their lips, because they knew He was in their hearts. God had called to all of them, and many responded to His love and acceptance with a "Thank YOU!"

That in itself was a surprise to me. I was blessed every time I watched tortured souls drop the lie which had been chanting in their hearts and minds saying, "God can't truly love me until I do this and that and do everything without flaw." The lie was replaced by the truth that Jesus loves every one of us just the way we are, and He came to bring us a new

life which can only be lived by the Spirit of God, which He freely gives to all who ask.

Just by agreeing with God's Spirit pressing in and wanting to take permanent residence within their spirit, body, and their soul, they were born of the Spirit of God. They knew they had passed from death to life, because they had. They now knew Who had them, the One Who had His hand on them all along. They had Jesus the Son of God, and having Him was and is forever Life Eternal. They had not only changed positions, but exchanged Persons. Each of us, as we accepted Him, took residence in the house of God's will. We became His children of peace, soldiers of love, champions of charity, and messengers of truth.

Now, for the second surprise. Those not willing to let God be the cause of their desires, determine their destiny, direct their behavior, nor become their eternity, claimed that those who did were divisive. Those clinging onto self rule called those who obeyed the will of God 'bad people'. A division was birthed by the children of disobedience. Those wanting to be the authors of their own destinies decried, yes, even condemned those now openly declaring the benefits of submission to God through Jesus His Son and His Spirit resident in them.

No surprise, for those not willing to submit to God's love, have since the day they crucified Jesus, declared war on but one statement, which is God saying…

"I love you so much I have given you my very Life.
Just say thank You."

That is all there is to it, nothing more and nothing less. He gave His all to you. It is free. But it will cost you everything you ever thought you had. His living Himself through you, costs you the you, you thought you were. But don't worry, that insurmountable act was taken care of on Calvary, where you, in Jesus, were crucified and separated from bondage. Sit a while with that reality, then take a walk with Jesus out of the tomb of fear, despair, and self rule. Stand there and take the breath of Life, Freedom, and Love.

LIVE!

16
GO TO THE PARK

WHAT DO you do at 3 A. M.?

I, when awakened from an otherwise uninterrupted sleep, love to go to my office and do whatever. Sometimes, as I am walking down the hall toward the office, I sense it is time to pray or just lay sprawling before the Lord. After a time of mixed prayer, praise, and silence, I either compose, play music, study the word, read books, or return to bed.

This morning was different. Just to the right of our bedroom is the stairway leading to the kitchen. This one morning, and for the first time, I wanted to kneel on the steps. Before I was settled I had a picture of a 'bald' man in a blue shirt out by a lake in a nearby park. I knew I was supposed to talk with him. So I enquired of the Lord what time I should go.

"Anytime." was the answer.

I thought to myself…"What! Any time?" He then put in His unasked for two cents.

"Yeah, I've got it covered. Just do whatever, and when you go, it will be the right time to meet up with him."

Right on top of my confusion was this warm blanket of peace filled with trust. That was it. I went back to bed, woke up late, and putzed around most of the morning.

Linda was near me when I said, "God told me to go to the park and talk to a bald man in a blue shirt."

She asked, "When?"

"Anytime" I answered.

I continued, "I think I'd like to go after we finish cleaning up the house a bit."

We did our tasks and then with no anxiety wandered off to the park. After parking the car we meandered to the lake. We enjoyed the lake, green trees, birds, and some late flowers, then walked to a bench next to the lake. Because it has no back, you can sit watching the playground or look at the lake and fields to the East. I chose to watch for fish activity and sat watching over the lake. Linda joined me. A thought went off in my head, "Unless this man is coming to me walking on water I'll miss him."

After turning around, Linda soon did the same. It was a joy to see a child on the playground equipment. I was taken back 65 years to when I was a child. There I sat, free from care and watching for a bald man in a blue shirt who was somehow going to show up at whatever time I chose. A wave of doubt smashed against my mind, hoping I was not just making things up. Then too, what if he did show, God forgot to tell me what to say to the man.

Now, hoping he would not show, I became uneasy with

excitement when a woman rounded the corner of a building. Well, not her. She entered the restroom. Then a youth came around the building and ran to a tire swing.

Nothing…

Just as I was going to suggest to Linda that we leave, he came around the same building and meandered toward the young man on the swing and just stood there in the wood chip ground cover looking past us over the lake. Yep, bald head and blue shirt.

Now what? No, I mean, "God, now what?"

I knew I was supposed to talk to him, but for some reason it felt like I was going up front to an altar call with thousands of people watching and with no one else responding.

I turned to Linda and said, "Stay here. If things go wrong save yourself."

Next thing I knew was that my feet were not listening to my fear and were joyfully walking toward the man. He looked really tough! In fact, the closer I got to him I could not help but think of one of my uncles. Yep! He reminded me of Kenny.

Now close to the man, I began an unsolicited conversation with him. "Man, you remind me of my deceased uncle. Are you from the Midwest?"

"I'm from Kansas City, Missouri." He replied with a big smile.

Well, out came my stories of Kansas City baseball and soccer games, zoo, swimming, museums, and Danny Edwards Boulevard Barbecue. He parried with his stories. Soon the woman I had seen earlier was standing next to him. I

introduced myself and called for Linda to come over. We had a grand visit. We discovered they were Christians and had just looked at a house which they thought they might buy, and they felt like they should move from Kansas to Arizona.

We suggested a church they should visit and shared a few more words. Wow! That was fun!

About a year later, after writing our first book, Simply Grace, I was with my Saturday morning men's Bible study group and handed out the book to any that desired one. The man who had been sitting next to me and with whom I had chatted several times over the last month took a book. Upon arriving home, he showed it to his wife who looked at the back cover noticing the photo of Linda and myself.

"You do know who this is, don't you?" She insisted.

"No…" he replied.

She informed him, "This is that couple we met at the park and who encouraged us to come to Arizona."

What a laugh I had when he reintroduced himself to me the next week. A year before I had never seen the man and knew him the first moment I met him. Now a year later, I did not know him at all though he sat next to me just about every week. He didn't even look that much like my uncle anymore. Some people call these events Divine Appointments.

Things have worked out that their move to Arizona has brought their son into a strong living relationship with God through trusting Jesus the Christ.

17

A PLACE TO MEET GOD

ONCE GOD SHOWS UP, you realize nothing is yours anymore.

In the small cabin where we lived (okay, rickety old 1930's shack) God would show up. Of course, He is always everywhere at all times, but sometimes His presence becomes distinct and personal. In those moments we experience Him in such specific ways that our flesh becomes some type of God-designed clothing, like a Divine T-shirt which reads Jehovah-Shammah (The LORD is Present).

One night, a friend with about 12 others came to our home. In one of the rooms (really it was our bedroom with the floor bed folded into a couch of sorts) we gathered to praise the LORD. Things happened. Things I hardly see anymore. Besides an unrehearsed chorus of praise, a voice began to stand out proclaiming the glories of our God. Curious to know who was prophesying, I opened my eyes to see my friend standing almost against the wall right next to the doorway

which led to the adjacent room. His arms were reaching out and upward in surrender and praise.

I had seen things like this before, but not for three hours straight and without a rest. Yes, arms up for about three hours as he praised God and proclaimed all the glorious works of His hands and His promises to His children. As he stood there, everyone else continued to praise and pray as led. Some turned to pray for one another and specific needs. Others watched on…right…that was I.

My eyes and ears wanted to be baptized and imbibe this smorgasbord of Spirit dancing out through flesh. My insides would travel from one hope to another, from one praise to another, from peace—total peace, to so much energy I thought I could, through a single word, move mountains.

After about an hour and a half I needed to use the bathroom which was adjacent to the bedroom. As I began to wash my hands, I heard my friend speaking in Hebrew. I thought that odd knowing he had never studied Hebrew. I had studied it at the college level, but my vocabulary and grammar were, as they are still today, in their infancy. Leaping over these limits, I totally heard and understood what he was saying. I will repeat, to the best of my ability, what he said. Remember, he was prophesying so he was speaking in the first person "I" but it was really God speaking through him to those in the room and now to you.

I will not try to write out the Name as I heard it, but simply write the English equivalent of the tetragrammaton, *YHWH*.

"My Name is YHWH, and everyone who hears my Name YHWH and resists bowing to it shall be felled like a tree, and he will fall face down like a log before Me, and as his face hits the floor, dust will roll up around it."

When I heard this I was washing my hands. First I was astonished at the pronunciation of His name. It made sense in every way. It is the shout of victory both as God shows up on our behalf and after the battle is over. But the rest of the word was a puzzle. I could only recall that somewhere in the New Testament it says that, sometime in the future, everyone would bow their knee to Christ. As I rinsed my hands, my friend repeated the very same words he had said previously, and still in Hebrew.

Then it happened…

As I reached for the towel to wipe my hands, my friend paused and then with a shout called out the name of God and the pronunciation of YHWH. In that split second, I said to myself, "I guess I should bow my knees to the LORD."

Well, I was busy wiping my hands right? I was in a restroom which is not the place to bow down to the LORD, right? Those thoughts did not stop God from having what He wanted. I went down like a felled tree, flat on my face and literally, dust rolled up around it. The word had become true. I,

unwilling to bow to the Name of our LORD, was cast down to my face and humiliated to dust.

For some odd reason, and stemming from this event, to this day I have had a suspicion that God always gets His way. People may seem to be doing their own thing, but just as in the Old Testament proclamations, even the kings of barbaric nations were under the hand of God to be used of Him to accomplish His purposes. Cyrus was told how the LORD was going to raise him up to chastise the LORD's people. He did just that. The interesting thing was that God proclaimed His intentions 150 years before Cyrus was born, yet He called Cyrus by name and accomplished His intentions through that Persian King.

The proclamation I heard was fulfilled in moments. I had no intention to bow, in that restroom, face to the floor, just because I heard a name.

But**…I did!**

18
HIDDEN WARRIORS

THERE IS an unsung hero in my life; he knows who he is. He discovered Christ as all-sufficient a year or so before myself or the rest of the community. Unlike me, he did not talk it up, but went to prayer and when he could, he would travel to different places to be encouraged in his faith. Before long he was inviting people to come to share Christ with us, like Brother Nay, Harry Deckert, and Jerry Owen. He knew a man by the name of Bob Mumford, what a character!

Because of him, we were being exposed to the idea that God through Christ was living in us. We became aware that the whole world was exploding with this fresh outpouring of God through His Holy Spirit. In the ’70s People began openly praising God, with new songs and even did New Testament, Book of Acts things.

All the names of all the people who genuinely embraced Christ and invited me to do the same escape me, but they were

the heroes of my youth. They said in so many ways, "One moment with Christ will overshadow all your good days satisfying the flesh." Here are a few.

Bob Dylan, B. J. Thomas and the Mason Prophet brothers, Terry and John Michael Talbot, and others went from secular singing and began to sing to the glory of God. Awesome! Some stayed the course. Some musical artists began their career praising God and then migrated to a career of singing secular music. At a distance, it is easy to judge and I openly repent for being one of those who have judged those who began and then seemingly drew back. After some intense personal persecution, I discovered how easy it is to sing a song which the masses applaud.

But to all those who step up and stand face to face with the enemy of our souls, I declare that they are our modern day heroes. These are our valiant men and women who neither faint nor fall back when they are pursued by the priests of disobedience. They persist in marching forward while taking blows from the those who hate even themselves. These are the modern priests of despair, who must share their self-loathing with those declaring God's eternal love for them.

Worse, many of our Christian kin fall wounded, only to find their brothers and sisters ready to condemn them for stumbling under a barrage of distress, insults, and hate. Most of us will not leave the comforts of our home, yet we are ever so ready to persecute those who risk all, stumble, and fall. Those who bravely follow God and lose all…these are my heroes.

But I also have hidden heroes, like the women who stand

their ground, keep their children from the hands of death, put self-advancement aside, and through daily sacrifice nurture their children before God, trusting them to be wise enough to do the same. I applaud the men who find their life but a service to care for their wives, children, aging parents, and if any time or money is left over, find some homeless person, widow, orphan, or prisoner to encourage.

Anyone ready to declare God, not only as their creator but as their Father, is open to public ridicule and often declared a fool by people worshiping their own thoughts, and the works of their hands. On the flip side, there are people who, by the Spirit of Christ in them, will not hate, cannot hate. These are my heroes. All too often they have been publicly castigated as cowards. Yet, with open hands and hearts to love, they willingly receive the blows from those who say they serve love and yet birth death by killing those who decidedly won't hurt them.

One day, I was called upon to watch after a man whom I knew needed assistance to get from his couch of sickness to the restroom and back, fix him a bite to eat, and be ready to meet his needs at any moment. As usual, I sought to know his life story. Let me segue. This man is short and physically unimpressive, yet he had been a Navy Seal. Talk about proud! He loved his ability to do the difficult thing, to accomplish the impossible, to drive himself on, after his human tank of emotions had run dry. Hearing his story was fascinating. I expect he is still alive today, just because he is too stubborn to die. Yet, at the heart of his hope is the desire to lose all this and again see Jesus.

Yes, he had seen Jesus twice before, while in two horrific car accidents some 10 years apart. That is a story in itself, but it is his story. I will let him tell his story when and where he wants.

My story concerning this man follows.

Once he learned that I believed the heart of Jesus' teaching, evidenced by his life and death was that His Spirit has no intention for us to justify killing, I was no longer welcome in his home. For many, this belief cannot fit around a fearful heart, nor can it squelch the logical thoughts that simply say, "God wants me to live, at the expense of another who deserves to die."[1]

With him, I reiterated that Jesus died so we could become orphans from fear, hate, and killing. We have been adopted as children of the Most High, and through Jesus' Spirit of Love in us He once again loves those who are seeking to kill. In just a few moments, not with few words, nor any lack of emphasis, I realized that he too was one of those people who strongly opposed me for believing that my highest calling was to love him.

There I was standing open-handed and open-hearted. I was giving up my wants, time, and agenda. I was praying for him, serving him, and ready, to this day, to do more if needed. Yet, he turned on me and called me weak and cowardly. I shamed him.

I asked, "Is it brave to desire to kill those who are unable

or unwilling to defend themselves, to abort life in order to hide one's own craven fear?"

I was '*invited*' to go. He has never asked me to come again.

To end this gentle diatribe, let me say to all those who have found God's love worth dying for, instead of killing for…you are my heroes. You, oh Lord are my greatest hero!

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1. See "The Climax Of The Risen Life" by Jessie-Penn-Lewis Chapter 3 *The Sacrifice Of The Cross,* The Overcomer Literature Trust, Distributed by Christian Literature Crusade

19
WHAT HAVE YOU TO DO WITH ME?

DURING THE REVIVAL in the community where I lived in the 1970s, for some unknown reason, I was asked to give a Sabbath morning talk to the community meeting of the church. My invitation to speak came on short notice so I decided to believe Jesus' teaching concerning being brought before a magistrate and just trusted Holy Spirit to speak through me the right words.

Well, at that point in time, most of the adults in the community were not caught up in Holy Spirit's outpouring… many came later, so this was more of an opportunity for them to hear from one person's perspective what was happening. I was as eager to hear what Holy Spirit had to say as anyone was. There I stood, looking out over a crowd of over 100 people, most of whom were under the age of 25. I was 27 at the time.

The auditorium had a vaulted ceiling and it was longer

than wide. I do not remember if it had been carpeted yet. We had a mix of chairs arranged toward the front near the pulpit and several old, whitewashed wood benches in the back with no backrest attached. Most of the teenagers and young adults were sitting in the back.

It was a warm day, so we left both the back door and the front door open. After a few songs and a prayer, I was asked to the pulpit by the presiding Priest. At this time in my life, the name of Jesus was always on my lips. After meeting Him in my cabin and now being resident in my heart, I wanted to share Him by name, with everyone. That name, Jesus, says it all. It says, "Give up! I save you. You cannot save yourself. I have not only saved you, but I will keep you. The struggle is over."

Having forgotten exactly what I actually said, we will go with the above. I had said little more than that and I was already asking people to trust Jesus. As I began to strengthen and clarify that call, one of the teens, sitting alone on one of the benches, violently fell backward knocking the bench over as well. The thud caused most everyone to turn and see what had happened. As he fell to the floor, he cried out with a loud voice, "Dean, what have you to do with me? Have you come to torture me before my time?"

With that, he jumped up like a dog being chased by a mountain lion. He as good as tucked his tail between his legs and ran out the back door faster than I had ever seen him move before or since.

Instantly I announced something like, "Well, it looks like my comments are at an end."

I tore out the closest door, and spying a pickup ran toward it. While doing so, several young men came out of the meeting hall and one said he had seen the runner heading North and out toward the fields below. Before I could jump into the drivers seat of the truck and start it up, some five young men were in the back of the pickup, and one other youth in the cab with the runner's Uncle sitting next to me.

Within moments, we were on the lower road next to a long row of alfalfa. There, a surprising distance ahead, was the young man, still running like his life depended on it. He looked back, and seeing the truck made a sharp right, ran up the 10-foot embankment heading toward the chicken coups which housed several hundred chickens.

I had to go down a bit further to find a road leading up the embankment. Having done so, I laid the gas peddle to the floor. Something inside me said I needed to catch him before he got to the desert. It was as if this was his moment to be delivered of the lies that bound him. I did not want him to miss that moment.

As I rounded the southernmost chicken coup, some of the boys who were standing up in the back of the truck, proclaimed with anxiety in their voices that our runner was headed towards the grain bin. The bin was really a large Behlen Building with two huge sliding doors. Inside there was room enough to store and later extract a grain mix we used to supplement the diet of the milking cows.

I saw the young man as he headed toward the southern corner just to the right of the doors. I knew that when he

rounded that corner he would be out in the desert, with the next closest town some 90 miles to the East.

Just as he began the turn and we were still some 100 feet away, I pointed my finger at him and said, “I bind you in the name of Jesus.”

Down he went, as limp as if I had shot him dead. I feared he was going to be riddled with gravel after dropping so hard onto the desert floor at the speed he was traveling. But in a moment and now some 50 yards closer, I was astonished to see that he had just fallen on, not one, but two queen size mattresses.

As a side note, I had never seen those mattresses before nor since that event.

There he remained protected, thrashing as if trying to unbind himself. As I slid the truck to a stop nearby, we all jumped out and ran to him. Now we all had the privilege of hearing many exclamations concerning Jesus and His Father in the negative.

Prepared for a fight, I stepped close to him and declared that in the name of Jesus, the demon which had him was to let him go and be gone, never to return. As I was speaking these things I was also learning something profound for myself. You don’t need to read books, take classes, nor do practicums to cast out demons. All you need is to be born of the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, obey the Spirit, and watch what happens.

After a few more forceful commands, the young man became quiet and calm. I knelt next to him, and asked if he wanted Jesus to be His LORD, Savior, and God. Then I asked if he wanted to abandon his life to Jesus from that moment on.

He said, "Yes" and called on the name of Jesus. He was then, right before all of us, transformed. I put out my hand and he was truly raised up a new man. That old flesh-bound bundle of hate and fear was gone. His soul had been united to the LORD. He was a new man bound to the Spirit of God.

I asked him, "Where is Jesus?"

He pointed at his heart, smiled, hugged me and the others. Then as we drove back to camp, he began to talk to Jesus only it wasn't English nor Hawaiian.

Today he teaches Theology at a Christian College.

20
DREAMS THAT CAME TRUE

While pastoring in central Missouri, I had a dream with three distinct parts. It was one of those vivid dreams that sticks to you after you wake up. Parts of this one stuck to me for 37 years. The last part of this dream was completed in May of 2017. The first two parts came to pass within months of the dream itself.

The day before the dream was nothing special. The sun had been out most of the day. The breeze was gentle, our home was quiet and stress-free, and I had spent hours preparing my sermon which, because of stage fright, I would not be able to see and in the end, I'd wing it. Sometimes I could wing it with both wings. I knew when that happened because as the people filed out of the church, shaking my hand, most of the comments echoed the theme of, 'Wow! What a shock. That was a good sermon.'

Back to the dream. We had two dogs at the time. One was

a German Shepherd we called Beau. Okay, take a moment to get past a German Shepherd with a French name. My last name is of French extract. The area in which we lived had been settled and many parts named by the French. Our church building was named Moniteau Chapel. So the name Beau (pronounced Bo) was an effort to help the dog fit in, not the French. Of regular black and brown coloring and as smart, loving, and strong as could be, he also was a hunter of large prey such as sheep, pigs, and cows. Living on the farm was a grave invitation for him.

The other dog was a little black, nervous mutt we called Mary Lou. She was, for me, a problem. She loved to get up before dawn, gather the neighborhood dogs (four neighbors within a mile from our home) and hunt.

The first part of this dream consisted of these two dogs having to be put down. In the dream, I could not shoot them, but they were executed for some inescapable reason.

Not long after the dream and early one morning, our landlord pounded loudly on our back door demanding their death because they were eating parts of his live hogs.

In the past, we had tried to post, chain, and pen Beau with no success. He would never live in town and he loved fresh meat. His doom was sealed. At breakfast I informed our two boys of the impending doom and that they were not to expect to see their dogs again when they came home. Late that morning, close to noon time, I said my own goodbyes, went to town and to a restaurant for a sorrowful lunch, ran into two parishioners, a father and son, who, after some persuasion

took on the task for me. Later they reported the gruesome details which still cause sadness for me.

Part one of the dream was fulfilled.

In the second part of the dream a young girl lay dead and a group of people, more in panic than faith, gathered around her and God heard their cry and re-breathed life into her. Even though she was just fine, there was an uneasy sense that something else went wrong. I had no idea as to what that was.

Some months after the dogs had 'died', three strangers showed up at our back door. A man, his spouse, and an elder of their church asked if they could come in and share a story with us. We invited them in, and they told us that during a birthday party at the couple's home for their granddaughter, she had wandered off alone and drowned in their pond. After having apparently laid in the pond for some 40 to 45 minutes, she was found face down by her uncle, who dove in after her and swallowed some of the pond water in the process. They pulled the girl out, and with the whole birthday party entourage of family and friends looking on, pond water gushed out of her mouth each time her chest was compressed. Soon she was just fine and finished her birthday party.

Her uncle, however, caught pneumonia from that one gulp of pond water, landed in the hospital, and almost died. To top this all off, the woman and her husband had a dream in which the Lord told them 'go visit Reverend Dean Chicquette who pastors a church outside Fayette, Missouri'. After some searching, they found us and drove over 150 miles in obedience to tell us this story.

Part two of the dream had happened. The first part had my handprints on it and could easily be dismissed, but this?

Part three of the dream was as follows.

I entered our home, a home we had not yet lived in. As I walked straight ahead toward the kitchen down a darkened hallway I smelled beef stew. Now beef stew is my favorite meal. In the dream, I was salivating before the joy to be experienced as advertised by the odors of meat, potatoes, onions, and carrots cooked to perfection. I vaguely remember a man with a white goatee living with us. I called out for Linda without an answer. I was extremely hungry and seeing no one, I determined to extract a few bites before she showed up. Eagerly, I opened the oven to retrieve the roasting pan. As I knelt down to look in and find the handle, I saw Linda's head baking in the oven. I fell backward into the wall of the hall and collapsed into insanity.

Well, after having the first two dreams come true so quickly I lived the next 37 years waiting for this tragedy to become a reality. Of course, and almost daily, I prayed this cup could pass. But for the rest of the story, read the chapter titled Three Prayers Answered.

21

INSTANT HEALING

It was one of those mornings. Before me sat 11 people who would rather be doing something else. Five brothers, two other young men, a young woman, two sisters-in-law, one about to get married to one of the five brothers.

Linda was in another room trying to finish the wedding dress for her youngest sister. The boys were being cared for at the home of a friend.

The meeting was serious. Of the 11 people before me, four were gainfully employed and three of those were contributing to the household finances which included $600/month rent for the mansion in the photo, and all the other extra expenses needed to keep it up.

Within days one of the incomes would be leaving with his new wife. This was one of those ‘buck up, pitch in, dig deep’ meetings. On top of it, I was going to miss my bus to work which would put me an hour behind schedule. So, with the proper amount of angst, I proceeded to exercise my Type A personality, declare the problem, dictate the answer, and expect enthusiastic buy-in from all.

NOT!

Things were not going well. In fact, the writing was on the wall. Another of the young men said he was going to move to southern Utah and had plans to marry a young woman who had caught his heart. He did. They are still a number, and Lord willing, in a couple weeks we will meet up and renew our now 45 year friendship.

Two of the brothers declared they planned to move back to the deserts from which they had come. Another had been sporting a lady across the back yard and over the creek. We just had lunch with them earlier this week. They, with a son, just opened a new business.

One young lady who was working but not adding to the support of the home had decided to move back with her family there in Salt Lake City. Another of the women was

moving back to the community. And so it went. In the very midst of these revelations and with my head reeling with disastrous thoughts, Linda came up to my right side whimpering, 'I don't feel good. Something is wrong with my stomach.' Instantly, with more annoyance than faith, I poked my finger into her stomach and said, 'be healed.' She turned, went back to making the wedding dress and the meeting concluded with people willing to chip in and finish paying the lease.

Well, that was that. The big beginning from the mass exodus from the desert community was at its end. The dreams of pulling together and announcing to the world the joy and peace we had found in Christ Jesus and all the opportunities to praise Him together had failed. We were a bunch of people who lived together, ate together, fought together, and most of the time forgave each other.

We had started a meeting in a Murray, Utah storefront which had some 75 people attending each Sunday morning. Three outsiders had come in and taken charge. They ran the finances, and soon dismantled the fellowship and merged with another group in town.

I was learning a big lesson, which when summed up is simply this, 'every earthly beginning has an end.' The same is true with friendships. Even marriages that stay true to the end, end. Dogs come and go. Cats find warmer windowsills on which to bask. Even the neighborhood squirrel finds a better tree.

I ended these musings as my bus pulled up in front of my work. Later that day, I called Linda to discuss finances and the

impending exodus. But before I continue, let me relate a statement by a family doctor of my wife's father's family.

One day, one of that family walked into his doctor's office and in quite a calm voice said to the new young doctor, 'my guts are hurting.' He was pointing to his lower right side close to the groin. The young doctor mirroring the calm demure of his patient continued to ask questions. Soon, the seasoned doctor of this family walked by, saw this man and asked with grave concern, 'What brings you into a doctor's office?' He replied with another point, 'it hurts about here.' The seasoned doctor took fright, declared to the young doctor, 'If anyone of this family comes in saying they hurt they are about to die! This man's appendix is about to burst. Get him into surgery NOW!' They did and were able to clean up the mess, and save his life.

Now why this detour?

Remember, Linda said, 'I don't feel good. Something is wrong with my stomach.' I should have screamed 'call the doctor.' But instead I called The Doctor. Later that night Linda related to us all how deadly sick she had been and when my finger went into her stomach area with the command to be healed it was. Instantly the pain was gone. She recovered her strength, and finished three loads of laundry, cooked two more meals for the group, watched and played with the boys, cleaned the mansion, and finished the wedding dress.

To this day she is like that. Never a word about discomfort until it is really bad. When she delivers the news to me, I instantly deliver the 'news' to God. Most of the the time her healing is instant. Sometimes it takes a few days.

In reflection, I guess she follows her family rule which is, ‘you cannot have anything until you have wanted it really, really bad for a long time.’ Coming from a family of eight children that made sense. By the time you got it, it was most likely a hand me down. But I have been trained: if she says she wants something, it is time to deliver.

22
THREE PRAYERS ANSWERED

AROUND DINNER TIME, Linda died.

She was cooking dinner while I was at the table learning how to do woodcuts on YouTube. Over some obnoxious music, I heard her say, "I'm not feeling well." I turned to see her leaning on the kitchen counter with her head down and slowly sinking. I ran over, got behind her, and placing my hands under her arms, asked, "Should I lay you down?" She whispered, "Yes."

As I laid her down, I carefully placed her head on the floor. She stopped breathing and turned her head to her left. With her right arm straight by her side, her left arm bent at the elbow and contorted over the right arm. Her body twisted. Her mouth was partially open and her eyes open and fixed.

Her body went limp. She was gone. I concluded she was not going to finish making dinner, which, by the way, was beef stew. Her body was devoid of life. I checked for a heartbeat,

none. I checked for her breathing, none. On the verge of insanity, I fell back against the wall in the darkened hallway. I was in a dead panic and crying out to God for her life. I tried to revive her, but her chest was like concrete and would not budge. After rearranging her and making sure her airway was clear, I tried again. No change, her chest was a rock and would not budge. Our 'us' was over.

My normal shaking turned into a 10 point earthquake. My life, full of meaning, vanished. I heard myself crying out to God for help. I picked up her limp body, hugging her and kissing her face and forehead. With my heart, I said goodbye. After respectfully lowering her body to the floor, I tried to dial 911, but I was shaking so badly, the smartphone turned dumb. Like a freshly caught trout, the phone flopped around in my hands trying to escape. Just as I came to the speed dial for 911, the phone turned off. Utterly beside myself, I cried out with my whole being and in a loud voice, "God! Help me!" I meant for Him to help me dial 911.

Before I had finished that short prayer, I heard Linda inhale enough air to fill a couple of good sized tires. Looking down, I discovered life in her eyes and a smile on her face. Bawling, I embraced her and asked how she felt? She reported she was weak and dizzy, but feeling okay. I asked if she wanted a pillow and she even told me which pillow she wanted. She was back! But I was facing the ever so real truth that I had made Linda my ultimate good. God gave her back for me to learn how to live with her, but not make her my goddess. Today God is my eternity. If He died my very

existence would vanish. Also, I discovered that each breath is the breath of God, God Himself with us.

Within moments I helped her sit up and found my hands rising up to clasp the sides of her head on both sides from the back. Something alive was between my hands and her head. I said something like, "Jesus, please heal her in Jesus name." I thought it a strange event as well as a strange prayer.

For hours I was befuddled and kept hugging her and checking to make sure she was breathing; apparently that does not always happen. To the best of my ability, I fed her dinner and ate some stew myself. Later, when she felt normal, we took a walk around a park in town. The whole time, I was praising Father for sending her back.

She reported her experience was that she had felt weak and dizzy, and like life was slipping out from her. She did not remember my asking if I should help her lie down. She just remembered herself getting weak and then waking up. She did not know of her passing.

Okay then, what three prayers were answered? First, that I would not lose Linda as in my dream some 37 years earlier. (Read the chapter titled 'Dreams That Come True.')

The second had just been voiced not four hours previous to the incident. While chatting with a stranger at the coffee shop, I mentioned that some six years earlier I had seen someone raised from the dead with efforts of resuscitation. I openly declared that I would like to see God raise someone from the dead without resuscitation. Okay…watch what you pray for.

The third prayer I had been praying for years. I had been

asking God to remove any idols I may have set up to protect my fearful soul from Him. When Linda expired for those three or so minutes I realized she had become just that. Her love and charity protected me from having to go directly to Father God, and maybe find out He wasn't that happy with me. But now, the pain of having made Linda an idol that would someday corrode was greater than any lingering fear that God might still want to take a belt to me. Since then He has become my all in all because He has taken it all. Every fear of Him disliking me has been transformed into friendship. He is my only idol (GOD). If He expires, I have nothing. He did that once, but won't do it again.

Remember the life between my hands and Linda's head when I prayed for healing? We wondered if Linda had had an aneurysm or something like that and God healed her. How would we know? Well, the next day, while coming home from the coffee shop, we came across a young woman who had fallen off her bicycle onto a busy street. We pulled over, jumped out, moved the bicycle to the sidewalk and then attended to her. She was writhing in pain, rubbing her left knee, whimpering back her tears. I asked if I could pray for her knee. She said, "Yes!"

As I placed my hand on her knee, I sensed once again that life which had been between Linda's head and my hands the day before. It was now between my hand and this woman's knee. I said about the same prayer. Not because I thought it was eloquent, but because I didn't know how to pray.

I got up, went over to the bicycle and began to right things that were out of place and remove some damaged pieces. Before I knew it, the woman was standing next to me and

without a limp or whimper, she jumped on the bike and rode away as if nothing had ever happened. I'm sure she got a God-sized blessing from the experience. We did.

No doubt, God healed Linda. Oh, there is one other thing I want to mention. When Linda came back, she came with a sense of humor which included the ability to crack an original joke. Now that is a miracle!

23
PRICE TO SUCCEED

PROBABLY ONE OF the very best jobs I ever had was working as an Engineer 3, drafting new water main constructions for the Salt Lake City Water Department. That was around 1976-77.

Three of us were hired on the same day. As we were given introductions and a tour of the facilities, I tried to chat it up with the other two. They were distant and cold. Unknown to me, we were in a competition. Within six weeks, one of us would be gone, and within 12 weeks another. There was only going to be one survivor of this new hiring and the previously existing six employees were settled in for the duration.

The first full-time employee to whom I was introduced was Rick. He was vigorously cutting stacks of paper. Like some guillotine, he would come down with such ferocity that, even if the blade were dull, it would have cut what was before it. During our introductions, he continued to chop away at the

stacks of paper. Just as he turned his head to acknowledge me and with his right hand on the lever and his left holding the paper snug to the cutting surface next to where the blade was approaching, he slammed the lever chopping off the excess paper.

No blood…

I immediately gave instruction saying, "Watch out. You might cut off a finger."

Instantly he lifted his left hand's backside to my face and pointed to what was left of his ring finger, one joint short of the finger God had given him.

He replied, and most matter of factly, "I already have."

Noticing it was completely healed I asked, "How did you lose it."

"While grinding up some meat at Pizza Hut," He replied, then continued, "I pressed too hard trying to force the meat through the grinder and my finger slipped into the auger. When I extracted my hand I found the tip was gone."

Okay, I was in shock. Things were way too tense. I had to loosen things up, so with a bit of levity I ventured to say, "That was expensive. How much meat did you have to throw away?"

Because of his reply you will know why I have forgone every potential visit to a Pizza Hut.

"Oh," he began, "we didn't try to retrieve it. No one complained about their pizza either."

Yikes!

Ignoring the beginnings, my future looked good at the office and I dearly loved those working in the Drafting Department. We all, except our boss, worked in one large room. I sat somewhat in the middle of the room and my drafting table faced North with a desk to my right.

One evening, just before quitting time, I finished a three-day drawing and was ready to send it up the line for inspection. One of the newbies exited past my desk and with one more snide remark violently shoved my drafting arm down toward me. The sudden motion caused one of the metal points of an instrument on my desk to puncture the middle finger of my right hand. As I withdrew my hand, I was speaking French or something. It was too late. My drawing was pooled and dotted with blood and the paper soaked it up instantly. My supervisor had seen the event and the next morning the man was absent. Only three weeks into the job and one of the competitors was gone. It was then I remembered asking God that I'd be the one to stay. I did not know I'd have to shed some blood to move in that direction.

My momentary relief was challenged by the question, "I wonder what other body part will have to suffer in order for me to be the last man standing?" And in just a week or so the Water Commissioner came down to our room proudly announcing we were both the newest members of his drafting team. That felt good.

24
DART IT

WITHIN SIX MONTHS I was settled in to this water main drafting experience. I noticed that about 11:30 A. M. I'd get bored. Sometimes I'd just take a bathroom break or a walk around the building and visit one or two people. I enjoyed conversations with everyone from Water Commissioner to janitor. But one morning I decided to change things up. I looked up to the far side of the room, and over the heads of two people I could see David, a quiet, polite, and dedicated worker. He had placed a calendar over his head dangling on a string from the ceiling some 25 feet from where I was sitting.

While taking a break, I played with the idea of making a blowgun out of an old vellum map. One side was slicker than the other, so I rolled the smoothest side to the inside then taped the ends and middle with masking tape. Okay then, what should I use for a dart? Maybe just a spit-wad I thought. Then another voice suggested making a velum cone with the end

taped and cut to perfectly fit inside the vellum tube I had just constructed.

I soon learned that I had made a prototype of a depleted uranium armor-piercing anti-tank round.

After inserting the experimental dart, I sensed something was wrong. Ignoring things like common sense, I continued. I aimed it at my fellow worker's right shoulder, gauged the distance and the breath needed to launch it and just tap him. I thought that once I had his attention, I'd ask if he wanted to go play ping pong during lunch break.

Now, with a couple of draftsmen watching, I took a deep breath and as if someone struck my stomach, I let it all out at once with ferocity. It traveled so fast it was a blur and with the slightest arch it slammed into and stuck through his calendar. Literally! Like half of the six-inch dart was sticking through all 12 months and a cover of the calendar. The thud was profound, and as he spied the dart penetrating his now violently swinging calendar, he put his head back down and continued to work.

Instantly several things happened. Beyond my sweating, hyperventilating, envisioning my potential cellmate smiling coyly at me as the Judge declared 10 years for involuntary manslaughter, I lost a friend…he never wanted to play ping pong with me again, and everyone in the office took weary note of my creativity.

I instantly apologized, trying to explain what had happened, but I expect adding that I had hoped to only hit his shoulder did not help. Now next to his desk, I saw that the tape

had slid back as the dart had penetrated the calendar. Reaching up to extract it I heard him say, “Don’t touch it!”

Even though I continued to work there another year, the dart remained in the calendar reminding me daily to take heed to that voice, well any voice that said things like,

“DON’T DO IT!”

25
BY A MIGHTY WIND

GOD TAKES care of His own. How do you know if you are His own? You trust. Yes, there is a one-time great big trust for eternal life through His Son's work on the cross and raising Him up from the dead, but the trust that counts is the moment by moment trust. That trust turns into the present tense verb 'trusting'. We live our union with Christ through trusting.

When you can trust Him for all things, not only when you get the things you want, but the things you get without asking and may not want, faith in God transforms into praise and thanksgiving. Your life becomes a walk of His glorious walking out through you what you never knew was within.

Someplace, in the Bible, it reads, "He has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness."[1]

The 'everything' means that at every second we are but receivers of His gifts. We thank Him for all things, yes, even those kidney stones. Other than the pain, I have no idea what

those are about. But out they come like tiny plowshares after having turned the lining of my ureter into fertile soil. In the midst of the pain, we give thanks and praise Him for His gifts as well as His gifting.

After leaving the Salt Lake City Water Department, we moved to Logan, Utah. I had been called to co-pastor the growing church. One of the stipulations was that I was promised no salary, which is like promising I'd get to trust God for everything.

We ended up renting a home for the first year for around $250 per month. We owed monthly payments on a dining room table, six chairs, and a Dodge Colt. Then too we had the regular needs for the utilities, food, gas, and clothes. We had neither life insurance, nor health insurance. We needed about $400 per month to live.

Well, people just showed up and gave us money. We never mentioned our needs except to Father, and always right on time cash would arrive to pay the bills or provide transportation back to Illinois to visit my parents. We simply lived like everyone else, and better than many, without asking humans to take on our financial burden. Of course, God put burdens on people's hearts to share with us as they were led, always late, which means right on time. We thank each and every person who listened and shared.

Here is an example of a daily conversation with Linda, "What do we need today?" Linda's reply, "Groceries: Some ground beef, milk, potatoes, and bread." Dean to God, "Linda's going to pray now. Please hear her prayer."

By the day's end either the items were gifted or the cash

needed or both. Each day we kept the accounts and promises balanced by simply asking, waiting, receiving (accepting the help), and giving thanks to both God's agents and Himself. What was fun was watching how naturally and creatively He used His abundance to meet our our needs through the hearts of so many.

I am forever grateful that twice in our lives we were placed in positions to simply trust God and that He had ordained every need as well as every provision to meet each need and orchestrated it all so it always appeared right on time.

One night, after serving at the church, we arrived home to a gusty, cold evening. As I approached the darkened front door, I noticed something flapping in the breeze. Upon closer inspection, I noticed a single bill of some sort trying to free itself from having been stuck between the screen door and the door jam. Just as I arrived, the bill looked like it was about to leap out, jump across the porch, over the bushes and out of sight.

I grabbed it, handed it to Linda and instantly ran around the front yard looking for the rest of it. Greed had popped up its ugly head. The negative always seemed to shout out before I could choose to praise. With an un-godly attitude, I was determined to find what must have blown away. Through the bushes, around to the back yard, into the fence line separating us from our next door neighbor. Nothing! I was even praying, "Please help me find it." Find what? Why did I think there had to be more for me that night. Wasn't it enough that God had by some agent, placed a $50 bill between the screen door and

door jam? Could I not have simply said thanks and walked into the house.

I'll bet you all are thinking, "Okay, now we know he's telling us a fib. There are no $50 bills." You are right. Today in 2019 there are no $50 bills being printed. But, there were in 1978. Not many. Back then nothing cost $50 except big ticket items. The 'only $19.95' craze hadn't even arrived.

Colder than exhausted, I went into the house. Linda was busy getting the boys ready for bed. I asked if I had seen right, that it was a $50 bill. "Yes," was the reply. Then my faithlessness jumped out of my lips asking, "Were there two bills?" "No." She said matter of factly.

I discovered once again that my praise for what Father has given, only comes after I trust that what has been given is enough. Of course, it is always just right, but as my sour friend Greed, says, "Really? There has to be MORE!"

But because of those years of discovering how He supplies, I know I can trust Him not only for what we need, but to wait for how and when He sends it. I have worked for some fantastic companies, some rotten bosses, like myself, for 20 plus years, and never lost sight that our lives, much less our finances, are in His hands. I didn't always like that truth, but I recognized it.

That one, simple, wind-tortured $50 bill not only paid our bills and fed our children, but it has during these past years become for me one of the touchstones of trust which reminds me that Father knows best. Today I can say that I have everything I need, and what I cannot afford, I don't need and mean it.

Today, in my own way, my life has become for many the $50 bill blowing in the breeze. They too are learning to look over the shoulder of Greed and see Jesus smiling, as He exposes a lemon drop in His hand. They smile, take what is offered and often, as with myself, start looking for the other lemon drops.

So then, we are always in prayer and giving thanks, yes even for kidney stones. But I must admit. I don't look for another one of those blessings.

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1. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: (2 Peter 1:3)

26
INTERCESSION

INTERCESSION…I have a friend exercising that ability right now. While going through a painful recovery from knee surgery and continually praying for some relief, he is also facing a root canal. So, he just prayed concerning the root canal procedure scheduled for today. While praying that the root canal would go on without difficulty, he tagged on, "Oh, and don't forget the leg, Dad." Praying like this is ever so childlike, I am sure Father loves it.

"Say Dad,
since we are going for a ride
we should get a hot fudge sundae
right?"

But this is not intercession. Intercession is not a *prayer of petition*. Okay then, how does intercession work? I don't know

how it works for you. For me it seems like everyone has their own take on what intercession is and how to go about it. With this attitude I gleefully add my own definition of what, when, and how of intercession.

First, prayers of petition are asking Father for what you want. Father has what you want, so you get, ever so politely, in His face and just happen to mention again the thing you wanted that hasn't shown up. In your next conversations with Father, you might sneak in the same request for which you have been praying many years. We can call that pork-bellying. I've often pork-bellied the same request onto any new request.

Here is the surprise. Intercession is more about what you do than what you want or ask for, it is the action of intervening on behalf of another. Let me say that again, intercession is the ACT of some intervention on behalf of another. What does this act look like? Well, every day when we put our agenda aside for that of another, we intercede. We might pray, but the act of putting down your time and desires to fulfill another's needs or desires is the intercession.

Jesus's life is, for Christians, the prime example. Laying down His occupation as a carpenter, He obeyed His Father and began building a potential eternal home for everyone who trusts Him. His intercession was not just an interruption, but a transformation. He did what we all should do. He stepped in, stepped up, and trusted Father to do one impossible thing after another. Finally, He stepped into our death and took the bondage of our fear and killed it. Then, the impossible became miraculous, He was raised up from the grave and simply said, you too will have this experience because of what I have done

for you. Join me and you have what I gained. You have Me and you have what I have.

So then, intercession is doing what others cannot or will not do for themselves. It is freely giving them the fruits of your labor and letting them own the results as if they had done or gained the desired end themselves.

Around 1977-79, I was serving as a co-pastor of a small church in Logan, Utah. The founders were very mission oriented. Living in a college town, they saw the opportunity to proclaim Christ to the world by making a place in their congregation for foreign students to fellowship, learn of Christ's intercession, and take their new found life in Christ back to their homes upon graduation.

By the time I showed up, many of the founding fathers had passed on. A new set of people were warming the pews. Within a year, a couple hundred more people joined the group on a regular basis. Many of these were college students and some from foreign countries, but there was a problem. God had shown up in this missionary Baptist church much as He had on Pentecost with the 120 disciples in the upper room. All sorts of things which we can read about in the Gospels and the Book of Acts were happening. Now, for the newcomers, that was great, but for those founders of the church who still remained in the congregation, that was not okay.

Tensions grew and finally a cross-section of the members agreed to meet once a week for an hour at the head pastor's home to discuss the issues related to… That was the problem. Up to this point, the group did not know what the problem was.

During the first meeting, I suggested we all put aside 15 minutes each day at the same time and journal the thoughts and issues that came to mind. I encouraged them to be brave and have faith that everything which came to their minds was God-directed concerning the church and had nothing to do with them personally.

The next week, we gathered the thoughts and wrote them down on a flip chart. Amazingly there was a theme. The first week was about this issue and the next week that. Finally, with one more week to go on our commitment, we had a very good picture of what God was up to and how we could speak the same thing and join our desires to form a new and living way to reach our city. Literally, stepping into the church's life, as if it were ours individually, brought such clarity that I was just about to suggest a statement of faith to speak out, much like Reese Howell, the intercessor, had taught many years before.

As I began to speak, the head pastor and his second, I was the third, did a sidebar in the next room. Within a few minutes, they returned and declared to the group 'their decision'. The junior pastor would take the college students who were not inclined toward Holy Spirit things and the founders of the church to the college campus and start a new effort there. The property adjacent to the church, which was owned by the church, would be sold for the startup group.

The remaining group would own the church building and parsonage and should change their name and affiliation.

Result, Church Split

Okay, what just happened? Another church split over Holy Spirit coming to church had just occurred right before our eyes. Just when Holy Spirit was ready for us to declare a new way we ALL could continue together and reach even more people, the founders were ready to pull the financial plug because of the Holy Spirit things now 'dividing' the church.

A side note: I have always found it weird how those who distrust or even hate Holy Spirit things call themselves Christian. The God of Israel, the God of the disciples, and the God of the apostles, and the early believers knew God was alive, and that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Okay, back to intercession.

1. Get the mind of God on a subject by walking in it for a time. I've spent up to three years interceding for a single church and now some 40 years, on and off, for the body of Christ in total.
2. Treat the problem as your own.
3. Once you have His mind, then it is time to get and speak His word concerning the person or group for whom you have been interceding.
4. Publicly declare the word. Reese did so concerning Hitler. Purchasing a full page of the newspaper and in bold letters, he declared God had defeated Hitler

and he would no longer be a problem. The next day Hitler began bombing London, shortly after named the Blitz.

Oops?

No, for after several million joined in the intercession by giving their time and bodies to the effort, Hitler was visibly defeated. The word, though invisible, is the truth while the process is very earthy.

About 6 B.C. a big add was taken out in several hearts concerning Jesus declaring He would save His people from their sins. After 33 years of nothing and then 3 years of Holy Spirit stuff, there was this public defeat. Not really, for over 500 people saw Him alive after His death, and many watched His ascension. A group of 120 experienced His return as Holy Spirit with them and in them. Within minutes 3,000 more joined the ranks of intercessors whose lives were fit for their own crucifixion. The eternal gift of God's promise of saving His people from their sins had begun. He, here now, and in His faithful saints, continues to unglue people from thinking they are slaves to sin.

That's all there is to it. When God comes to intercede you will listen, discover, understand, get the word of faith, declare publicly the truth and let it go. Walk in, walk through, speak out, and walk out.

Mike drop!

27
BLUE EYED BLACK MAN

HAVE you ever wanted to meet Jesus under a freeway overpass? Most people go to churches to do that, but Father, being very creative, sent Jesus to visit us one afternoon. It was a child's prayer. Newly awakened to what the living Father had given us in His Son Jesus, and having a childlike attitude, Linda and I began asking Jesus to show up, so we could ask Him some deep theological questions. Okay, I wanted answers, but Linda just wanted to be with Him in the first person.

We were in a large Lincoln Continental Station Wagon which sat nine people, heading back to Utah from a conference. North of Vegas and about to catch the Great Basin Highway, 93 north, passing through Dry Lake, our prayer to see Jesus was about to be answered.

As our driver turned left to go under Interstate 15, I spied a

man hiding from the late morning sun and emptying the sand out of his right cowboy boot. He had on a white t-shirt, jeans, cowboy boots, but no socks. Instantly, my heart went out to him and I asked the driver to stop.

"Why?" he retorted.

"That man needs help." I insisted.

No sign of stopping.

"STOP!" I demanded in a loud voice.

Once stopped, it took some effort to extract myself from the vehicle. Linda followed, two brothers from another family, and then Linda's sister. Four others stayed in the car pouting.

As I approached the man, I sensed something was different. He was a black man with blue eyes. Taller than any of us and fearlessly gentle from his core. Here were five white folk before him and he stood there as if he were a gift from God to us.

"Hi, where are you headed?" I asked.

"New York City." He said.

"Oh, that's a bit of a distance. What are you going to do there?" I enquired.

He almost whispered, "I have some work to do for my father."

In my soul, I knew that the word 'father' needed to be capitalized.

Holding out my right hand to him I asked, "Can we pray for you?"

He held out his left hand and we all joined hands and after bowing my head and closing my eyes (just a custom) I began

praying. Linda to my left picked up where I left off, then the two brothers prayed followed by Linda's sister. Then silence. I was hoping he would pray. I think he did, but even his silence was greater than any prayer we had just prayed.

In my prayer, I asked Father to give this man everything he needed to continue his work for Him. Of course, I had read the book of James where it chides those who say, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled", while doing nothing. James was teaching us that words alone do not express love of God. In just moments, we witnessed acts of love generated from Holy Spirit within. Father, through His Spirit, was looking after His Son through His other children.

"Just a minute," I said to him and left the others to chat with him. I had little to share, but retrieved a pair of clean socks from the car and returned with them. He received them without a word. Soon everyone was finding something for him. One gave him a coat to cut the night chill. Another found $10 to share and another a sleeping bag. He refused nothing and said just as much. Lastly, I asked, "Are you thirsty?"

"Yes," he matter-of-factly replied. Bottled water was not a regular commodity in those days and we had no canteen. The nine of us had been sharing right out of a large bottle of orange juice. I ushered him to the back of the car and let him imbibe from the jug. After a few gulps, he was finished and returned to the underpass. We said our goodbyes, but I had one more question and inquired.

"When do you have to be in New York City?"

He replied, "Very soon."

I peered back at him as we drove away. He smiled and turned and began walking. It was then I suspected our childlike prayer had been answered. I looked at Linda and asked, "Do you think that was Jesus?" Instantly from the front two seats came a resounding, "NO! and the castigation, "Why did you let that black man drink from our jug? Now we have nothing to drink!"

My soul went from soaring to sad. Even if he were only a black man on his way to New York City, even if he were the least we would ever meet, He was Jesus, for Jesus said, "In as much as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto Me."

I have met Him a few times since, and I always know Him because He fits, not only in His skin, but in the situation. Nothing we experience, when together, is a surprise. Now some 44 years later I realize, maybe even right now as I type these thoughts, that quiet, assured, confident, humble soul is alive in me. From the moment He walked into my heart and now 45 years later He has never changed. I have changed, yes, but He has not. Just like that man under the overpass, He is gentle, patient, kind, non-judgmental, accepting, truthful, present, and if need be forgiving.

These days this man in my chest gets out more often without the tapestry of fear, regret, anger or greed. He simply waits and having waited does what is next. Also, His very heart is to serve, share, and give you your space. In His presence, there is no lack. The probing questions go away. The theological debates fall into silence and those close by reach out hands, accept mine, bow their heads and say, "Thanks."

Just a few weeks ago in a room of 24 men studying the Bible, after having been encouraged just to rest in Him, we discovered we all agreed and silence fell on the group for what seemed to be 15 minutes. Jesus does that. His very presence answers questions we don't know how to ask and silences the need for a definitive word.

28
PROPHECY

CONFERENCES ARE STILL the craze for Christians. In the 70's it was no different. The newest converts of secular singers, preachers with books, movie stars with testimonies of how they came from shameful lives (the more shameful, the better it seemed), and teaching series on cassette tapes which taught people how to beat up the devil were what people expected. At the Charismatic conferences, there had to be a prophet, if not two. These little 'gods' seemed to pop up overnight.

I remember hearing some participants saying things like, "Did you hear! B. J. Thomas was saved last week. I hope he is at the conference." "Yeah, I want to see Bob Dylan too."

Linda and I personally met Dale Evens on an elevator one day and had a great, but short chat. She was a real, loving, genuine Christian lady. My childhood time spent watching Roy Roger's show wasn't wasted. During that same conference, we also met a very famous female brunette

country singer in the same elevator. She was fun to talk with concerning her life and faith in Jesus, but I have forgotten her name.

About 1976, during a conference in or around Salt Lake City, I found myself in a line going up to be prophesied over. We had met before at some pastoral group meeting in Salt Lake City and we met again in the mid-1990s at a Church in Lynnwood, Washington.

As I waited my turn I listened to what he had to say to the people before me. I would comment to myself, "That sounds good, traveling the world, proclaiming Christ. I'd like that." Then I'd listen to the next and I'd muse, "Writing books of fame and preaching, that sounds just as good." One after another and another, he prophesied over the people great and glorious things. Boy, did I want to be special, this was going to be great. One thing I had missed, but which became clear as I approached my moment, was that not one prophecy was the same as any other. Apparently, all the good prophecies were taken up by the time I got to stand before this man.

"Hi," I said with a big smile hoping our previous encounter a few months earlier would bring up a 'better word,' like if he were a true prophet he had anything to do with it.

He just looked down, then up, then down and then up again and continued to do this as he proclaimed, "Evil shall flee from you. I see evil people fleeing from you. The protection of the LORD is upon you and evil people will run from you," and so it was repeated about 10 times and then I was dismissed.

Hmmmmm???

No world traveling, no proclaiming Jesus, no healing gifts, or prophecy or whatever, just all this running from me. Well, was I disappointed. I felt so evil, I wanted to run from myself.

After returning to Logan, Utah where I was co-pastoring, I simply forgot the useless prophecy and went about my schedule which included a Tuesday morning Bible Study with five other ministers on the campus of Utah State University. One of the ministers, younger than myself, was so good with Greek that he just read a Greek Bible. Like for real. It was fun to hear him read (translate) the Greek and stumble here and there and retranslate it. Sometimes we'd pick a single word and dive into it. So it was that day.

λαμβάνω, pronounced (lam-ban-o) was the word we studied that day. At the same time, it means both given and received. The profundity of this realization has stuck with me ever since, directing much of what I love to share. At that moment, I understood we can only receive from God what He has already given. Jesus was given so we can receive. The gospel is that simple and that profound. We have a choice, because He has given us a choice. We are free to accept what He has right now in His open hand before us. It was a glorious moment and has been, ever since, 'a lamp unto my feet'.

As we ended the meeting, I was still basking in the life-changing 'aha' moment. Even though I had received Christ years before, it was in the grasping the import of that one word, λαμβάνω, I became aware I had plucked Jesus from God's open hand. Then too, His hand is still open. Just receive. Trust His gifting by taking it. Wow! Like simple!

"Hi, Ken!" I heard that young pastor shout. Looking up at

him, I saw a big smile, his right arm high in the air and his hand waving wildly. As I looked to see who was being greeted, the other ministers joined in the greetings with unbridled love and acceptance for this young man. As he approached, he greeted each person by name starting from my far right. By the time he was about 10 feet from us, his eyes focused on me. To my recollection, I had never met the man. With one glance at me, he froze, turned pale, and with wide eyes, screamed so loud that everyone was at the same time both shocked and embarrassed.

With that, he made a 180 and took off running while continuing to scream. The group stopped and turned toward me and in unison asked, "What did you do!?"

I replied, "I never saw him before in my life."

Some asked, "Then why did he scream and run?"

I quickly concluded this was that prophecy at work and said, "I guess he is evil. Evil runs from me."

Quickly, each person found a reason to escape me, and to my recollection I was never again invited to the Bible Study. Remembering that Jesus, Peter and Paul had similar problems with special people, I felt in good company, but soon found a horrific downside to the 'blessing'.

Before the prophesy, just about everyone I met, who had not yet received the gift of God's Son, had received him by the time we parted. Now, people simply avoided me like the plague. I not only lost some friends I had, but it was getting increasingly harder to get close to any potential new friends. This 'blessing' grew more intense and followed me for years.

About a year later, Linda, a dear friend, and I were

walking down 1300 South and West Temple in Salt Lake City. As we approached a Jack-In-The-Box, we noticed a Moony in the parking lot trying to sell flowers. He was smiling, singing, swaying, and looking ever so divine. I decided to chat with him. He turned our way as we approached and fixing his eyes on Linda, asked if she would like some flowers to brighten her day. She said nothing, He then turned his attention to my friend. I knew what was about to happen.

The instant he looked at me, fear scared away his happiness. His body almost contorted and he began to turn to run. Now ready for such behavior, I tried something new in hopes of being able to chat with him. With a strong voice and my finger pointing at his feet, I demanded, "In the name of Jesus Christ, STAY!"

He did, but not standing still, no not at all. As I shared God's gift for Him, like my own flowers of happiness only without charge, he wiggled, squirmed, groaned, and grunted. After asking him if he wanted to receive Jesus as his Lord, Savior, and God, he began to whimper and cower.

Like speaking to a dog on 'heel', I said, "Okay", meaning he was free to go.

Before the flowers hit the ground, he was out of the parking lot and running down the sidewalk into the dark night.

I was sad again. Evangelism was getting harder. This 'blessing' followed me for years, and one day I had a serious chat with Daddy, asking if my 'blessing' could be modified to 'read' something like, "Evil will flee from you, when it intends to do you harm, but those needing salvation won't scream, much less run."

He heard my prayer, but it was yet another 20 years before He allowed me to watch Him again in the birthing room of His saving love.

Just a side note, I haven't gone out of my way to receive prophecies these past 40 years.

29
FEAR TACTICS

My life is not that colorful, but my life has been blessed by knowing many colorful people. You know, like the top 10 most wanted men with whom I watched Jeopardy and shared popcorn. Well, here is another one of those people who has colored my life. We'll call him Joe.

Imagine meeting this six foot 225 pound man whose voice, when talking, competed with Caruso. He was the embodiment of tense, intrusive, and demanding respect.

Place this meeting in the Salt Lake City Airport around 1976. No TSA or limits on where you could go. Over there was a Moony, over there some Mormon Missionaries, and in that corner some military recruiters.

He and I stood in the middle of the entrance foyer. Soon we saw two young ladies walking toward us, chatting it up.

They caught a glimpse of Joe heading right toward them. They, in unison, quickly stepped to the side. One rescued her

friend from a collision with Joe. They expected him to pass by. No such luck. He boldly squared off with both of them making firm eye contact and somehow communicating the idea that they should stay put and listen to what he had to say. Fear caused them to stop like a deer in headlights. With no more ado, he began his testimony.

"I have been in jail 16 times and prison 3 times, worked for the mafia as an enforcer and embezzled $1,000,000 from the airlines by holding a plane ransom, ready to bomb it if I did not get my money."

He then paused ever so slightly to take a huge noisy breath.

Seeing a chance, they broke the eye contact he initiated and had not altered. Thinking they could skirt around him proved useless. They noticed, for the first time, some guy next to him looking as frightened as they, that would be me. Then, once again, they looked at Joe and with some resolve hid much of their terror.

Joe continued, "I set up the money drop on a deserted 'one way in and out' road. My friend was on the hill behind me with a fully automatic 50 caliber machine gun. We knew the feds would come and his job was to shoot them. When they drove up and exited the car with the money bag, I dove for cover, but nothing happened. They arrested me and I have never seen nor heard from my friend since.

Soon I stood before the 'hanging judge' who threw the book at me. I was sent to federal prison for an uncontested, no early release, 25-year sentence. I found myself in Walla Walla with the hardened of the hard. One day, three years later, while

walking in the yard, a man I had seen came up to me and held out a small book saying, "You can leave this place as messed up and feeling as bad about yourself as you do today, or you can read this book and not only have peace, but purpose. I took the book just to get rid of him."

Just then they looked for a book that he might be offering and that might release them. No luck, no small book.

Joe continued, while holding up his huge leather bound Bible, "I read this book and came across Isaiah 6:8 which says, '…I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me.' Well, for years I had daily cursed that judge, but I found myself praying for him. I mean I was face down on the ground calling out to God to protect him and save him and keep him. I found peace. Then I learned he had experienced a very bad heart attack and had even stopped breathing for a while, but was spared."

With that, instead of searching for an escape, they decided to listen to the end of the story. After another big breath, he continued, "Months later my lawyer called me saying that the judge was calling me back to his bench. I asked why he was calling me back, but my lawyer did not know. He suggested that he was probably going to lengthen my sentence."

"I was transported back to Salt Lake City and found myself standing before this man I had once hated and now desired the very best for his life."

"The judge looked at the prosecuting attorney asking, 'Do you know why you are here?' To which he replied, 'No, your Honor.'"

"He then looked at my defending attorney asking, 'Do you know why you are here?' To which he replied, 'No, your Honor.' "

"He looked at me and asked, 'Young man, do you know why you are here?' To which I replied, 'No, your Honor.'"

"He responded, 'I just found it in my heart to release you. You're free, go.'"

Joe took one last big breath, gazed on them and then asked, "Would you like to know the Judge who has freed you from a life of sadness here and an eternity of regret?"

Finally seeing an out, they said, "No, but thanks," and they all but ran to the front door without so much as a cordial goodbye.

Joe began looking for his next victim. I found my own escape. Later, I had a heart to heart chat with Joe suggesting a few things that might help when sharing his testimony.

He liked the ideas I shared. The next time we went to the airport, I realized that what I had said was still in his head, but had not found an escape.

30
OLD JEWISH CURSE

A FEW DAYS after we had been ceremonially extracted from our home and dropped onto the streets of Salt Lake City, Linda, our two children, our friend and myself found ourselves sleeping on the floor of Harry's home…the minster I had met in Stockton, California a couple of years earlier. Remember the time God gave away my guitar? He had moved to Salt Lake City, not God, but Harry, and began a ministry to the youth living on the street. Soon, they were housed and employed, and most continued with the Lord serving Him in and around Salt Lake City.

It looked like we were the next to be rescued. They gave us a week to stay with them. We had nothing to share. Every meal was a sad event, knowing I was not contributing. About the third morning I was awakened by their youngest daughter, then 7 years of age, standing over me singing, "Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah..." with no end in sight.

I politely interrupted, asking her to go back to bed. She replied with, "Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah... Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah... Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah..."

Now perturbed, I insisted she go to bed. Up went her volume with a perfect repeat of "Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah... Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah... Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah..."

I had had it. Out of the blue, an old Jewish curse came to mind, and I retorted, "May the fleas of ten thousand camels infest your armpits!"

She got frightened and left me to another hour of sleep. Some 20 odd years later while visiting Salt Lake City and the many friends we have there, we happened to visit Harry at his home. His lovely wife Jean had passed away. He mentioned that his youngest daughter (I'll call her Joyce) was just out of a bad marriage and was living in the basement. He ventured to the doorway leading to the basement, called out to her saying she might like to come up and visit with us. She did, for a while, but was very uncomfortable. We learned she was a nurse. As soon as possible she went back to her residence.

I commented to Harry how she seemed really uncomfortable with me, and that I really didn't remember her. He smiled and then with a glint in his voice said, "Joyce is the little girl you cursed with fleas."

I had never mentioned the event to him, so I enquired how he knew of the incident.

He replied, "The morning you left our home, Joyce woke up with flea bites. We found several in her bed. Not having

pets, we could not guess how they got there. Saying as much out loud to Jean, Joyce piped up and told us that you had cursed her with the fleas when you had said, 'May the fleas of ten thousand camels infest your armpits!' She has been shy of you ever since."

Just then I remembered the other Jewish curse that I had thought of repeating, but now was ever so grateful I had not. It goes like, "May your great grandmother be barren."

31
PHILIP SAID WHAT?

With an old acquaintance and now a brother of faith, we, over the past few months have been meeting and reading the Bible. Last week we were reading about Philip going to Samaria and many of the Samaritans responding to the good news of Jesus the Christ. They were so taken by what Holy Spirit had to say through Philip they received the message, were baptized in water, and then, after Peter and John came to them they were baptized in Holy Spirit.

As we chatted, my lips framed a question for which my brain had no answer. I passed on the question to my brother saying, "What do you think Philip said to a bunch of know-it-all anti-Jew Samaritans that they would want to hear?"

The silence became uncomfortable. I broke it by admitting I had no idea but could only guess.

Our meeting place is my favorite coffee shop. To my left, one table away sat a woman I have known for years. Just last

year she heard a story of Christ that so captured her, she too was baptized in water and is very active in a local church. She did not seem overly occupied by studying to be a nurse, doing her real estate business, keeping a husband and children happy and preparing her lesson with which to teach her Sunday school children, so I turned and pointed to my friend and said, "Treat this young man like he has never heard of Christ Jesus. What would you say to him?"

Immediately, like a stunned deer captured by a car's headlights and with a weird look on her face, she first looked straight ahead, then up, gained a smile, relaxed, turned to us and we all entered into an uncomfortable pause. Able to ignore my desire to break the silence, I just listened to the cacophony of people dancing with life right there in front of me. Within a minute and with great poise and confidence, she turned to us and spoke words similar to this.

"Why wouldn't I love Him. Why wouldn't I? He took each empty, dark corner of my life and hugged it into happy. He gifts me each moment of every day. He is my reason to live, have hope for tomorrow, and a purpose to live right now. I can, with a pause in each moment, like in-between each breath, see His loving face, experience anew His embrace of peace. Then looking at His smiling face looking square into mine, I am flooded with such inexpressible joy…

Why wouldn't I trust Him? He took the past heap of decaying efforts and after making them compost,

planted Holy Spirit's presence, revelation, acceptance, love, and sense of peace deep in my now fertile soul. He wakes me to a new day of possibilities and tucks me in like a child at night as I drift off to sleep remembering how He, that day, took me to the fair of life and even bought me cotton candy. Then I take just a moment to tuck the memories away and excitedly wait for tomorrow.

Why wouldn't I honor Him? My life is no longer a mystery. He is both my purpose and core. Where an empty, chaotic void once ruled, His peace and love, along with this unfathomable sense of being right with God and humanity now lives. My life is no longer me trying to become, but the ability to watch Him be Himself to others through me. I have discovered He almost hugs me too much, everywhere, all the time, that I want to hug others with the same love and encouragement.

Why wouldn't I obey Him? My previous will had no other capacity than to pad the desires of my flesh, dance to the tunes of the world, and gain prominence before people, even demanding respect before giving any. His will, His ever so perfect desire to be the answer to every human heart has so burst alive in me I cannot but share His tears of pain and joy, and heal the wounds of hate and fear. His will has no boundaries for me. Here I share another of His hugs. His kind thoughts toward me never end.

Why wouldn't I remain with the only one who walks

before each of my breaths, removes every stone from my path, plants projects too big for me to accomplish, delivers all the resources to do so to my front steps, and gloves me with His skills to transform my world into children at selfless play?

He is everything to me. He lives within me and sneaks out of me to you. If He died, I'd die.

Why? I ask you why wouldn't I love Him who is forever faithful and has no plans to leave me, is honest with me, trusts me with His desires, and always, without fail, hugs me back to His first, all healing embrace?"

With that, she turned away and went back to work. In concert I turned to see on my friends face a smile matching my own. From toes to top of our heads, from deep within and now from ear to ear we were but one big happy smile. Our hearts were warmed…okay hugged. After she had dumped her inside life at our feet and we each discovered and proclaimed 'I like it!'

Finally, I was able to say to my friend, "Well, I guess that would be what Phillip had to say to the Samaritans."

After relating this event to Linda and about a week later, we were at the coffee shop. There she was. I almost ran over to her as she, having seen me, removed her earphones, stood, and hugged me. Linda, now to my right, heard the rest of the story.

Apparently, she had never tried to share her testimony before. My request for her to expose her belief had come as a

surprise. After a silent prayer she then proclaimed with clarity what she had never before put into words.

Then she informed us that the rest of her day fell into insurmountable challenges which she could not avoid. Not knowing exactly what she had said to us she never the less found herself clinging to Jesus's hand like a desperate child. Again all was well. Then she said, "Yay! Why wouldn't I trust Him?"

32
TAKE A MOMENT TO GIVE THANKS

WHAT MORE CAN I say but to raise my trembling lips in praise to You, O Lord. Your name is Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

You are good and your lovingkindness is everlasting. You have ordered my ways before I was conceived in my mother's womb. Your thoughts toward me are always for my good. Your act of salvation separates me from that evil heart and glues me to your Son of Love.

In His arms I find rest and joined under His yoke I find ease. You call me to trust You and I find You are trustworthy. My fear of You is but the flower springing from the seed of knowing that You accomplish all You desire and You desire my union with your Son. My life speaks of You. Even the sins of my youth declare your kindness and mercy.

Your desire to walk out into this world through me is not a peculiar calling, but the flesh and fabric of Jesus's Spirit of

selfless love willing, yet again, to embrace and even die for another that they might wake up and throw off doubt. With a single glance, even a whisper, hearts melt, give up, relinquish their self made religions rooted in self-effort.

I fall silent at your feet and with face to the ground I remember my frail frame and its finitude. Your word to me both frames me and sustains me. Your hope for me becomes my praise to You. What You begin is always and perfectly accomplished. As You rise higher, the shadow of myself diminishes to an imperceptible dot under my feet. At your zenith I find all confusion has vanished. Every promise You make becomes a soft pillow upon which to repose, watch and wait, ready to proclaim your glory and honor, your handiwork.

Where would I go, in what home could I find such peace in the midst of such divine purposeful activity? There is nowhere to go nor hide from You. Your hand is always upon me. You declare me to be your son. I do the works in which You have preordained for me to walk. Your Son's thoughts capture my thoughts and define me. Your will calls out to me to plant my seed of hope within the fertile soil of your will. Your demand for me to rest becomes your ability to do the impossible.

The events of every day are gifts from You. Your abundance becomes the rooms in which I live and the food set before me in the presence of my enemies. There I raise my head, call to those who hate me, invite them to the table of your abundance, and declare your love for them. There I serve them, cut the choicest corners of the meat You have set before

me and set the wine of Love shed for them and deliver your bread on each plate.

Where I end, your uncluttered truth begins. Where my total dependence on You is honored, my neighbor is bettered. When my heart rests in your abilities to accomplish the most menial task before me, I find your treasure house overflowing with immeasurable wealth. Each gift given I receive with the enthusiasm of a child, ready to fully consume and immediately expect more, more, more, and better, better, better.

I praise You best of all for just being You, for always being before my face, ready to speak, listen, instruct, lead, and do. Your abundance becomes the ground upon which I trek and your whisper becomes my law. You and You alone I worship. Not for all these things do I praise You, but for You just being You—being You. You alone are my reward. You are my crown. You are the clothes I wear, the shoes that protect my feet and guide me down the road of your making. Just to see You and proclaim that vision is my life, my purpose, my destiny.

Once, deep within, echoed emptiness. Thoughts battled for preeminence, thinking their thinking would think the right thought—the thought that could quiet all the other thoughts.

I was quick to blame others, yes even You for the mess I deemed You made. Oh, but for a moment in which I could feel safe knowing I was justified in my divine judgement against the Divine Person. If the empty persisted I made plans, devised methods by which I could fix your mess. Social justice became a stage on which to declare your ineptitude, no,

your death. With the help of but one other we could fix this mess. But then…

You came to my door. Gently knocked. Asked if You could come in and take over. I said yes. That was it. That was all. I knew deep within, my home was in your bosom, and your arms were my playpen. You came in, not to visit nor to act as a tutor waiting for the day I graduated from your instruction. No, no, no, a trillion, trillion times no. You came in and kicked that empty out. You took residence and like the eternal child I am, I began to play before You. You poured out your gifts and I showed them to my friends and to my enemies. Soon even they became my friends. What peace rang pure from my lips. Drowning in your acceptance, I began to sing and praise You with words I had never heard nor understood. My heart leapt for joy and sang over my family. Your peace reigns!

What more can I say, but to raise my trembling lips in praise to You, O Lord. Your name is Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

33

PHILIP'S TRANSPORT

"AND WHEN THEY CAME UP OUT OF THE WATER, THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD SNATCHED PHILIP AWAY; AND THE EUNUCH SAW HIM NO MORE, BUT WENT ON HIS WAY REJOICING." (ACTS 8:39 NAS)

LINDA and I call this snatching away of Philip, 'Philip's transport'. This phenomena has happened several times to us. Here are a few.

River Heights

One such event, and the second in my recollection, happened while living in River Heights, Utah, just to the south of Logan, Utah.

It was a warm fall evening. We had tucked both of the boys in the back seat and proceeded to go to a weekday church meeting. We lived on S. 600 E. (Hwy 238) and could follow it into town. To do so I would drive a couple blocks, turn left and from there follow it into downtown Logan.

As I turned left and peered up the hill I noticed two young boys playing ball in the street. ‘Something said don’t go that way.’ I continued. Then I thought, ‘Where’s my Bible?’ I looked around, slowed down and asked the boys if it was in the back seat. A unified ‘No!’ Came from the back seat. With that I made proper ‘U-turn’ and went back home for the Bible. Once I retrieved my Bible, I headed back with full intentions of going up that hill thinking, ‘I’ll be really careful and drive slowly.’

As I passed the first street on which I could have turned, a special nudge encouraged me to do so. Being anything but obedient to such nudges I continued to the second street, turned left, started up the hill while telling myself to drive really slowly and carefully. The boys were still in the street playing ball.

It was hard to admit what happened at just that moment. Looking ahead I could not see the boys nor the ball. Why? We were not on the same street. In an instant we were on a parallel street, one street to the south of the street where we had just previously been.

Linda instantly looked at me mirroring my own surprise. The boys were too busy playing in the back seat to have noticed. I even turned to them seeing if they too were surprised. No. I also noticed piles of McDonald wrappings and empty cups cluttering the floor. Then I asked Linda what had just happened. It was then that we called the experience ‘Philip’s transport’.

We drove the rest of the way to the church building without incident. On the way I mused out loud, "Lord, since You have the ability to pick us up and place us a block away in an instant why didn't You simply remove the dirt on the car and the trash in the car back there?"

Denver

In the late '70s, my sister and her family had recently moved to Aurora, Co. We were still living in Logan, Utah. One weekend, we decided to drive to Denver, a 10 hour trip, and visit them. When we arrived they were not at home. Having made arrangements, we let ourselves in. Then it happened.

As I finished my shower, I reached out toward the towel rack for a towel. The toes of my left foot were up the side of the curve of the tub and when I stepped forward they lost their grip. I reached out to use the towel rack for support. Up to this time in my life I had never discovered how towel racks connected to the wall and how little support they offer. As it came down off the wall I came crashing, naked as an e-mail rant, with my left temple impacting full force into the porcelain lip of the toilet.

I knew I was almost dead. It hurt and with short respites continued to hurt for the next 40 years. Somehow I was able to wiggle my pants up over my wet legs and buttocks. As I was doing so I hopped one legged, first on one foot, then the other, seeking a bed on which to die and from which to let the paramedics extract my body. As I collapsed on the bed I called

out my goodbyes to Linda and the boys. Instead of finding release the pain just got worse.

We had been preparing to go to a house 'church' gathering at a friend's home in Littleton, Colorado. This event did not stall that effort. After arriving, hugging, smiling, sitting, listening, and most of all suffering, the meeting was breaking up. To my right was Rachel Scott, who was less than a year old at the time. I never met her again, but her life story is well known and was even made into a book and movie. Yes, this was the Rachel Joy Scott who was martyred for trusting Jesus as her Lord in the April 20, 1999 Columbine school shootings.

It was her father Darrell who led the group. After most, if not all, the other guests had left I turned to him and asked him to pray for me. He said something like, "God knows what we need." I instantly found my hands on his shirt lapel and told him I was suffering severe pain in my head like I had never before experienced. Then, with a stern 'request,' I insisted he pray. He did. We left their home. Even though we have not seen each other since that night, we have on occasion chatted by phone and I thank him for the prayer.

Well, the release from the pain did not occur immediately. Linda did not want to drive through Denver. Blinded by the pain, I muscled my way through streets I had never seen before and soon discovered that the easy trek down 88 to Interstate 25 to 225 to Aurora had become this arduous journey of stop and go traffic through the downtown of Denver. The excruciating pain so blinded me that all I saw was a cacophony of buildings, lights, and traffic, accentuated by a deep foreboding.

Just as we were passing the 'last' of the high-rise buildings and several storefronts, I cried out to God with a loud voice asking for help. Immediately, the side of the street I was on began a descent while the other side stayed level. I continued to shy from the lights of the businesses as we dropped to a surprisingly dark and abandoned intersection. Linda cried out, "There is your sister's apartment building! Right there in front of us."

You will not believe what my head said. It was something like, "Thank you God. I guess we were closer than I thought. I won't need your assistance."

The next morning, we all jumped into two vehicles to go somewhere. As we came back and passed that same intersection, Linda and I noticed something odd. It was but an off ramp from the freeway. There were no businesses on it. To the best of our calculations, we had been transported some 10 to 15 miles in an instant after the prayer. 'Crow' is not fun to eat, but this time I just had to laugh with God over my 'thanks, but I didn't need You' comment the night before. Since then, two similar events have happened.

Even though your lives may never have such events as related in these stories, you are so valuable to God He gave you eternal life in the Person of His Son Jesus the Christ. His pleasure is to give you His Kingdom constructed of righteousness, peace, and joy.

Just now, I encourage you to turn to Father God and say, "Thank You. I've got it."

34
A DOG GONE PARABLE

God made a dog.

He gave her an instinct. It was that instinct that made her act like a dog. She did dog things, like bark in the dark at nothing in particular. When first created, she was very intelligent and could do what she wanted and at the same time follow God's commands. God had planted in her a dog's instinct that made her behave like a dog.

God put her in a very special place, but not a totally safe place. In fact, there was one pool of water from which she was not to drink. God instructed her that drinking from it would change her from the inside out. He continued to share with her that if she drank from the pool of death she would die to the instinct God had given her. He explained that she would lose the capacity to be a dog and she would thereafter have a rat instinct, and from then on she would try to act like a dog and at the same time fear her desire to be a dog.

God called this potential new nature of trying to do something different than God's will, disobedience.

He warned her because He loved her and didn't want her to accidentally drink of this water and die from being able to be a dog. He was warning her, not testing her. Because He loved her, He simply said, "If you drink of that water you will die, that is, you will lose your ability to be a dog. It will happen instantly. Please don't drink from this water."

One day, after barking, running, scratching, and running some more, she found herself by the pool of death. She was really, really thirsty, but the nearest safe water was a mile or more away. Then she saw a rat drinking from the pool and the rat looked alive. She thought, "The rat must still have her instinct. Maybe this isn't the pool of death. Besides, God wouldn't let me be this thirsty in front of this water, which looks ever so delicious, without wanting me to drink it."

So she drank.

After drinking her fill she heard a noise and began to bark but to her surprise she just squeaked like a rat. She began to do everything a rat does, like crouch, run a short distance and then nervously look around in fear for her safety, even fearing the dog she used to be.

About then her mate showed up, he too was very thirsty. She reported she had drunk from the water and everything was fine. Although she squeaked it out, instead of barking, he drank and instantly his instinct was to act like a rat.

In fact, their instinct had changed to such perfect rat-ness that all their pups and their pup's pups thought they were rats, walked like rats, lived like rats, and just knew down deep they

were rats. Yet, they also knew something was very wrong with this picture.

Well, centuries passed and one pup was born who acted like a dog from the inside out. The other dogs, now with ratty thinking, didn't like this odd fellow. Yet, at the same time, this dog seemed to be doing what they knew they could do, sort of, if only they could. This dog gave all the credit to acting like a dog to his instinct. He simply was a dog as a dog should be a dog, just like they acted like a rat because they were a rat, only with a dog body.

He told parables like, "The Dog of dogs came to play with the other dogs, but when he barked they were frightened. Some ran for cover. Well, after all, they were rats in dog bodies. Others sat on their haunches and snarled. Soon the fear of having a real dog in their midst got the better of them, and a huge crowd of ratty dogs attacked him and killed him. But three days later he came to life and went back to the Dog of dogs. Shortly afterward, he sent back his dog instinct so everyone could receive it and act like the dogs they were created to be."

Once he got really bold and said, in fact, it was just before they killed him, "Look, I have a dog instinct and you have a rat instinct. There are two distinct instincts. You cannot fix yourselves. I have come to give you my dog instinct. But the only way to get it is to drink deep of me like our first parents consumed the water of the pool of death. Drink me like your life depends on it and I will become your new instinct. Yes, I will be your doggy-ness by replacing your ratty-ness with myself."

Well, you can imagine how that would affect a pack of ratty dogs who had tried to act like dogs for centuries but without any real success.

He had also said, “After I have died and risen from the dead I will disappear and send back this new instinct. It will be available to everyone. All you have to do is trust it is available to you and accept being a dog. Go ahead and bark at nothing in particular and see how it feels.”

Of course, all the ratty dogs thought, “What happens if I do and nothing happens? What hope is there then?”

Well, sure enough, they killed him. Then the once dead dog, now risen, gathered his friends around him, and he disappeared right in front of them.

One day a pack of the ratty-dogs who had followed him and trusted his words began to bark at nothing particular. They declared, “For the first time my soul feels its worth!”

Now the ratty dogs had a big problem. As often as possible they attacked and killed any dog acting like a dog, especially those who talked like the dog they had killed long ago who had disappeared then reappeared.

But the real dogs didn’t mind for they too knew that in their dying, many ratty dogs would give up on trusting their fears and trust the Dog of dogs and begin to bark at nothing in particular.

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END NOTE

EVERY WEEK I gather more stories of how naked faith is sufficient. I listen, watch, participate, and often struggle. I gather with others and learn, praise, pray, and receive Father's blessings. There are so many stories yet to tell and yet this is the final chapter of this book.

I herein offer thanks to you for being you. My faith in God has been punctuated by my dance with you. Even though I may not have met you personally, my spirit is with you, appreciating your stories. And if you only have one story, it is enough. Your life is His story to me. And, if I ever get to hear it I will again stand amazed at our ability to just collapse into the hand of the living God and then rest in the same.

I want to openly declare that this journey of which I have been privileged to travel is authored by Father God and lived out, not only in His presence, but totally authored and expressed by His Spirit from the inside-out. I thank Him for

being both interested in **me** and eager to live out through **me** before you.

When I say '**me**', I do not mean my flesh, thoughts, or emotions, but *me*. There is a new I which I live and this new I, I live isn't that old I which was attached to flesh being, thoughts, etc. But now it is Christ Himself living Himself through me as me. I am not trying to convince you of this. It is true for me and that is that.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."

— GALATIANS 2:20 NASB 77

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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