



# *Naked Faith* *Part 1*

A Journey into the Arms of the Living God

DEAN CHICQUETTE



# NAKED FAITH - PART I

A JOURNEY INTO THE ARMS OF THE LIVING GOD

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## **Naked Faith - Part 1**

A Journey into the Arms of the Living 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

*Congratulations to all who love a good story, well at least a story that was meant to be entertaining. Enjoy the sometimes exaggerated content. Not exaggerated by intent but because some of what I am relating occurred up to 60 years ago.*



## 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)

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Well, my sons have heard these stories so many times that they are more than willing for me to find a few new ears upon which to tell my tales. *Tag, you are it!*

Behind every one of these stories is not only my unspoken appreciation to God for scooping me up into His hands, but my thankfulness that in His enthusiasm and excitement He is not clapping while I am in them.

Nothing I say is suggesting that I’m bettered by having had these experiences, except one, my heart finding rest in God, Who loves me no less than He loves you.



## FOOD FROM HEAVEN

*B*efore I knew it, I was flopping like a fish down the darkened steps just outside our apartment's front door. At the time we lived in the second story apartment of a home which had been converted into three apartments, two downstairs and our single apartment upstairs. Coming to rest on the landing some six steps later and nursing a slightly twisted ankle, I glanced back to see what I had tripped over. Astonished, I saw the largest bag of carrots I had ever seen covering the first step heading down to the landing. I picked up all 25 pounds of them and took them to Linda who was in the kitchen, putzing around. She loves to do kitchen stuff. What would take me three-seconds, with her can take half an hour. So, I say she putzes.

Seeing the carrots she too was surprised at the unexpected gift. Never before had such unsolicited fortune arrived at our doorstep unannounced. This time, after carefully descending

the stairs and exiting the house, I found myself standing in the new fallen snow, looking up to heaven. I declared with vigor, "Father! We need \$1,700 more in work-study funds." My earthly father had not died yet, so guess with whom I was talking.

At that time we were full time students at Utah State University in Logan, Utah. Walking out into the snowy morning, the mature snow beneath the new fallen snow crunched under my feet. As I rehearsed the upcoming request for funds from the college administrator's office, I remembered the carrots with gratitude. Yet, like borrowing a jack and expecting the worst, I was ready to shout at whoever, "I don't need your money anyway!"

With one last gulp, I proceeded to the administration building to beg for the money I knew I wasn't going to get. Right at the main office entrance was a desk with a student sitting behind it. I cleared my throat to begin my plea for more funds when the Dean of the College, having just exited his office, walked past me. Without introduction or hesitation, he said to the secretary, "I know he is a good man, give him whatever he wants." Within minutes we had the \$1,700 increase in work-study funds. If it only takes a tiny bit of faith to pull off big things, I expect that the tiny little seed of faith in me would have needed an electron microscope to be seen.

On the way home, dizzy with joy, without the stress and fear concerning finances, I began to recount the import of the day's events. Upon arriving home, I was eager to share with Linda what had happened, but she initiated a conversation concerning her own financial blessing.



Having five dollars to our name (that's another story) she ventured to the store to purchase a staple or two with which to feed us and our two boys, ages two and four. While at the store, a girl she had known since birth (not Linda's, but the girl's) bumped into her. In a flash, she offered, out of her own meager finances, to help fund Linda's shopping. Two full grocery bags later, which included potatoes and onions, Linda returned home rejoicing in God's goodness and her friend's love.

You can imagine the praise from her lips as I related my adventure with the Dean of the College. To our knowledge neither of us had ever been personally introduced to him nor spoken with him. His trust and generosity were truly gifts from God. Our friend's generosity at the store was another example of our Heavenly Father loving us through people.

Oh, I forgot, when I entered the foyer and began ascending the steps to our apartment, I placed my hand on top of the banister as was my custom in the darkened entrance. What a shock! It was cold and damp. My first thought was that I must have carried in some snow and deposited it on the banister. Upon inspection, I noticed a package wrapped in white butcher paper with the phrase "to Dean, Linda and the kids" written in bold black letters. Upon further inspection, I realized it was a five pound beef roast.

Now we had the carrots, roast, potatoes and onions to make my favorite dish.

## HOW IT STARTED

What had just happened was directly related to an event we had experienced on the trip from which we had just returned the night before. For about two weeks we had been on the road traveling to San Diego, California from Logan, Utah and back again.

First, to accomplish this journey, we borrowed Linda's brother's car. It had a problem. There was a tack-sized hole in the bottom of the gas tank. After filling the tank with gasoline, I would crawl underneath the back of the car, reach up to the hole with some Ivory soap and rub it back and forth to plug it.

Of course, this plug did not last long considering the constant contact with the gasoline. To make things even worse, it was snowing quarter size flakes and the roads were slushy. The icy cold water was splashing up on the Ivory soap which gave way in about half an hour. We were on the road to our first destination for some four and a half hours. My math

says I was under that car in that cold slush about nine times. My clothes were soaked around my back, butt and shoulders. The car heater was not able to dry me off as fast as I got wet. I still shiver thinking of this adventure.

When we arrived at the home of Linda's parents, we bedded down for the night. Before the rooster awoke the next morning, we were leaving our sons with their grandmother. We joined Linda's father and some 37 other people on the community's bus. I had the proper chauffeur's license and if needed was available as a relief driver. For some reason no one ever needed me to drive. I had on a previous trip, but that too is another story.

The last few rows of seats on the bus had been covered with plywood and then some blankets. We all took turns sleeping in the back as we traveled the next two days to San Diego. We stopped in Glendale, California close to the Forest Lawn Memorial Park where Errol Flynn was buried. The park was a disaster. In those days people were not required to pick up after their dogs and their dogs didn't either. I found it both disgusting and funny that the grave of this silver screen hero was in the middle of a mine field of dog poo. Once dead, no respect.

That night the 40 of us filled every corner of a small home and yard. Three ladies took up the job of cooking some spaghetti. As I entered the house from the front porch I heard one of the women say, "I don't think there is enough for everyone." That frightened me. Another said, "Well, we will feed them what we have and see what we need to do after it is gone." As I heard this, I remembered Jesus feeding the 4,000

men (women and children not counted) and again the 5,000. I just agreed quietly within myself that He could do it again. I love spaghetti, but even after remembering Jesus feeding the multitudes, I got nervous believing that I would not get my portion. Besides, I had a right to fear because I had a low blood sugar problem and needed my vittles! Don't we just love excuses!

Soon we had a prayer with someone asking our Lord to multiply the food. I was one of the first to travel into the small kitchen to scoop up some spaghetti and pick up a piece of bread. I cannot remember what I drank but I do remember the large aluminum pot being about a third full of spaghetti as I began to scoop out my portion. Later, after everyone had been served, someone said there was enough for seconds. I ventured back for another helping to find the pot about a quarter full. Many followed and there was a good portion left even after all had eaten. Yes, this is for real!

This spaghetti multiplication happened two more times over the next few years.

## JOURNEY TO RICHES

The next day, we traveled to the Cortez Hotel in San Diego and settled in for the night. The hotel was filled to the brim with attendees of the upcoming Morris Cerullo meetings. Mr. Cerullo was lodging in the Hotel as well. That very day was his 40th birthday. A brother in Christ decided that several of us should go to His room and sing Happy Birthday to him. I thought that bold and that we'd have the door slammed in our faces. I wanted to see that, so I joined the crowd of about 14 of people. We did meet him and sang 'Happy Birthday'. He was most gracious. After chatting a while, we sang a Christian chorus and took our leave.

That evening was the first of two evening meetings, an afternoon meeting, and a morning breakfast with Morris. I have little recollection of the first evening except for one event. Morris, while in front of some 5,000 people, would be speaking about this or that and right in the middle pause and

say something like, “Holy Spirit is asking me to...” It was a bit theatrical for me, and I being a bit of a skeptic, okay, a full blown Thomas, began to speak to Jesus saying, “Lord if that is really You, have Morris stop and point out our group.” At that time we were about eight rows back off to Morris’s right.

Within a minute he again paused in the middle of his sermon and said, “The Holy Spirit is asking me to...” The silence of that pause was like a surgeon’s after dropping his scalpel in his patient’s open wound.

Morris finished by saying, “I want to point out this group from Utah sitting over here.” He pointed to his right. He continued, “Today is my 40th birthday and our Lord had them come up to my room and sing for me. I believe Holy Spirit wants them to sing for us all. Come on up here.” Most of the group including myself ventured to the stage and sang a chorus or two. My doubting Thomas had just touched the side of Jesus.

That afternoon we attended a small gathering of about a hundred people where Morris asked us all to seed his ministry. Having become convinced he was, on occasion, listening to God, I was willing to do so. As he concluded his plea, he said God would meet our every need for our generosity.

At that time, our bank account had around \$27.34 in it. I turned to Linda, informed her that I intended to give him everything we had in our pockets and bank account. She agreed. We emptied our hands and opened our hearts for Jesus to care for those who share in what He is doing.

We had seven silver dollars which I had gathered and saved since a child, but they were back in Logan. I pledged to

give them away too. How Father shared those and later replenished our family's physical needs is another story. As the meeting ended, I discovered I was thinking of food. I turned my heart to Father and said something like, "Okay Lord, what are You going to do next?"

As we walked down a narrow hallway we passed a young lady we knew. With a good amount of anger she declared God had told her to give us five dollars. She thrust the bill into my hand and with a sour look turned away. Within moments, as we continued down the hall, we saw a sign advertising a steak and eggs meal with a drink for \$2.50. I said to Linda, "Let's get one of those meals and share it." Instantly, Holy Spirit checked my faithless heart. I repented and recanted my statement, declaring to Linda that we would both have a full meal.

Next to a pot roast supper with onions, carrots, and potatoes, steak and eggs is my favorite anytime meal. It was hard to beat two eggs, hash browns, T-bone steak cooked to perfection, coffee, two buttermilk pancakes, Linda by my side and Jesus rejoicing in our hearts over our child like faith. However, I was also feeling a huge topping of fear.

Way too often my seedling of faith was seemingly doused by fear, but in the end Father never listens to my fears, but remains faithful to His promises. He can always fill empty. Fear is sort of like real empty stuff.

## A FEW MIRACLES

At that night's meeting, wanting a break from the group, I separated myself and ventured to the left side of the auditorium. I sat down next to a man and instantly struck up a conversation. Before long, I knew where he was from, that he was a born-of-the-Spirit-of-God-through-faith-in-Jesus-Christ Christian, and why he was attending that evening's meeting.

I had noticed a new pair of black wing tipped shoes on his lap with a new pair of dress socks stuffed in one shoe. After glancing at his feet, since he was wearing shoes, I asked him about the shoes on his lap. He said, "I am going to be healed of my club feet tonight and walk out of here in these new socks and shoes."

At the same time he raised his right foot onto his knee exposing the designer soles that allowed him to walk. Both feet were equally disfigured. Not wanting to watch him suffer



disappointment at the end of the meeting over not having new feet, I found a way to excuse myself and ventured to the other side of the auditorium.

As I found Linda, I passed a woman in a wheel chair. She seemed old, like 50 or something. Now that I am 70 years old, I say that with repentance.

I took a seat to the right of Linda who was sitting in the isle seat right in front of the woman. After the music and passing of the hat (we had nothing to give), Morris began to declare the goodness of God and Holy Spirit's intention to heal people that night. Brother Thomas was once again alive and well in my mind. As I watched the meeting, I saw Morris get gut angry at one of the ushers for allowing a person on stage who claimed a healing Morris did not want to credential. Now Brother Thomas had to make room for Brother Righteous Judgement as well.

Several people made their way to the stage to declare their healing. I looked for the man with the shoes to find his way to the stage to proclaim God's goodness to us all. He never showed up. So, I was very glad I had left him to suffer his disappointment alone.

Just then, right behind me, I heard what sounded like 1,000 dry sticks breaking one right after another. As I turned to see what had happened, I saw the woman who had been sitting in the wheelchair running towards the front. Her daughter was crying, saying, "She has not been out of that chair in 20 years."

Both Brother Thomas and Brother Judgement took a hike. My jaw was bouncing off the floor.

All too soon the meeting was ended and we made our way to the exits. There were so many people in the auditorium it was difficult for us to extricate ourselves. By the time I arrived in the foyer leading to the street, I was separated from Linda. As I passed one of the huge garbage cans, I saw the man whom I had met earlier, throwing shoes into the garbage can. After rewarding myself for not remaining by him, I glanced at his feet and noticed he was wearing the wingtip shoes and had thrown away the special shoes he had been wearing earlier.

Sometimes it is easy to cry. This was one of them. Jesus had walked into this man's body lending His perfect feet to him for the rest of his life.

## GOD IS GOOD!

That evening I went to the room we shared with others. We were sleeping on the floor. Linda, one of her sisters, and our sister-in-law were asking God to show them what to do with two extra tickets they had for the next morning's breakfast. I wanted to see how God would answer their prayer and for some reason ventured to the main floor.

The sitting room was to the left of the elevators. There I noticed two African men in the back right corner praying by an open chair just to their left. The men's clothing was so bright and intriguing I forgot my mission and decided to sit close to them and strike up a conversation. They were praying, so I paused to listen. They were asking the Lord for two tickets so that they could attend the next day's breakfast. Usually, I would have chimed in and said I knew where they could get those tickets, but Holy Spirit checked me and I just listened as they beseeched Him.

Just then I heard an elevator bell ring and turned to see Linda, her sister, and our sister-in-law walking towards me with intent, but they did not see me. They were focused on the two men praying next to me. They walked directly up to them and asked if they needed two tickets for the next day's breakfast. They gleefully received the answer to their prayer. Prayer prayed, prayer answered. Hmm! In a moment the gals saw me and I told them this story. We all rejoiced in how Father works.

## NEED

I do not know where my head was. I was broke, had not eaten since the steak and egg brunch and I had no tickets for the next day's breakfast. Hmm!

The next morning Linda and the others ventured off to the meeting and breakfast. I do not know where she got the ticket, but all I got was mad and hungry. Today we call that hangry.

In a few minutes I ran into my best friend and he too was ticketless. He had a buck with some change. We thought we would find somewhere to snag some food. Instead, we found ourselves in the foyer of the auditorium. While sitting there, we listened to Morris and others chat about their ministry. We sat outside smelling the food and hearing all the silverware clanging as they dipped into eggs, sausage, and pancakes.

I think I was really hangry by then. Remembering the two African men, I suggested we pray for tickets. We prayed as the meeting was drawing to a close. My friend said he was going

back to the hotel and left the building. Within seconds a man in (of all things) a white robe, came out and asked if I wanted two tickets to the breakfast and informed me it might be difficult to be served. Some of the tables were already being bussed clean. He went somewhere, I really do not recall where.

I ran to the door and seeing my friend half a block up the road I yelled for him to come back and have some breakfast. He did, we did.

## OUR LORD MULTIPLIES

Late that afternoon almost everyone was back on the bus ready to venture home. My friend was sitting with my sister-in-law right in front of Linda and me. As the last of the people joined us, he excused himself, exited the bus and walked across the street towards a fruit stand. When he disappeared within the store, I concluded he was in need of some facilities. I was ready to get on the road and now my friend was holding us up. In a few minutes I felt a lurch as he stepped into the bus. In his arms he held a large paper grocery sack. He took his seat, retrieved an apple and an orange from the sack, and passing the sack back to us said, "I do not think this will go far."

I peeked inside to see only a few apples and oranges. I extricated an orange and Linda took an apple or vice versa and I passed the sack on to those in the seat behind us. The sack

soon traversed the bus, and was being passed to the seat on my right.

I noticed my friend watching the sack with an incredulous look on his face. Once it arrived back to him, he peeked inside and declared, “I don’t remember buying this much!”

We had just entered the God Zone!



## GIFTS FROM HEAVEN

Once we were back in Utah and had retrieved our boys, we were faced with the fact that we had a car with an empty gas tank and no money in our pockets. That day we began to present every need before Father. After praying for some gas to get home, a cousin of Linda's appeared at our door and handed us a \$10 bill. He had never done anything like that before and only once since. Along with the soap, the money was enough to get us home.

Now you are caught up. Its was the next morning, after we had returned, that I stumbled over the carrots.

We continued to see Father take care of our financial needs down to the penny.

Remind me to tell you about the phone bill.

After returning home from the San Diego trip and completing our promise to God concerning our seven silver dollars, we were once again broke.

You may remember from a previous story that Linda had five dollars with which to go shopping. It was after our return to Logan, Linda's brother called and informed me that a letter addressed to me had been delivered to his apartment. Neither of us could figure out how that could have happened. We had shared an apartment with Linda's brother once in Salt Lake City, but that had been several years before. I decided to return his car that evening, pick up the letter, and walk the four miles back home. Once in his apartment, he retrieved the letter from a pile of mail on his kitchen table. It was from my Aunt Bee. Every year she sent me some birthday money. She was awesome that way. This envelope had a five dollar bill in it. Wallah!

## SILVER DOLLARS

*R*emember the silver dollars. Well, one evening while at a Bible Study with the head pastor and another young couple, we learned that the couple were in need of some cash. Earlier that evening Father had suggested I take the silver dollars with me to the Bible Study.

After hearing their need, I reached into my pocket and gave them the silver dollars. Before this time they did not enjoy being around us much. After sharing the money with them they decided to have nothing to do with us until...one evening when we were again down to no food in the house, they asked us if we liked sloppy joe. We said yes. They proceeded to invite us to their apartment which was just up the hill from our apartment. Our boys were working on their second helping of sloppy joe before we commenced to feed ourselves.

The couple was not eating, and I was concerned that we

were eating their next meal. After venturing a question, they informed us that they had consumed sloppy joe all week and there seemed to be no end to it. Linda and I, with as much reserve as we could muster, consumed only a couple each. Our boys had downed three each before we left, maybe four.

## TIME TO RUN

*Y*ears before and long before I had any saving faith in God, His interventions had abounded in my life. Like most people born in the 40's we went to church every Sunday. The goal of parishioners coming to God with a saving faith had been replaced with, well, just come to church.

However, I had, from as early as I could remember, an awareness of God. I chatted with Him often and felt loved and protected. We were really tight until I turned 10. It was not traversing from nine to 10 that changed me, but an encounter with my maternal grandfather and grandmother.

I'd like to add a note here. At that time in my life I found it very difficult to express what I was thinking. I had huge adult thoughts, but getting them out was almost impossible. That struggle led to severe stuttering and cryptic replies such as, "So?" Which, of course, meant, "I do not understand, could

you flesh that out for me before I give you a definitive answer?”

In fact, that was the cryptic reply I had just shared with my grandfather, who at the time was very angry with me. I did not understand why he was angry and I unfortunately replied, “So?” again. He stiffened and began to inform me that no son nor grandson of his was going to disrespect him that way.

Glancing just past him, I noticed my 4’11” grandmother. She was enveloped in a state of fear which I had never seen before. In a flash she disappeared toward their kitchen and back bedroom. Somehow, her behavior warned me not to say, ‘so’ again. Grandfather leaned toward me and continued to exercise his ability to yell.

Moments later, Grandmother reappeared. Her tiny body was dwarfed by a thick yard stick raised toward heaven. She addressed me in an uncharacteristically loud and commanding voice, “I prayed and God has instructed me to beat you with this yard stick.”

I was out of there. After fleeing to the front door, I began to descend the front stairs three at a time. Between the time I left the landing and my foot hit the first step, I had looked to my heart and could not find the God who wanted to beat me. Because of this revelation, I vowed out loud, “If that is the way You behave, I want nothing to do with You.” Before my other foot had landed on the driveway, the God I had known since first consciousness was gone. I felt totally alone.

My lifelong loneliness was transformed into unbridled terror, dressed in a chilling sense of being abandoned. The void that had first driven me to God at less than two years of

age became, for the next 17 years, a growing nemesis eager to steal every breath by choking me with the fear of an eternal, empty, meaningless existence. Unfortunately, I lived with people who were eager to skim the surface of life and ignore the doom at the end of their existence.

Unfortunately, my search for authenticity had just begun. In that very moment I had learned how to run from God's love and hate His ways.

## MY LEAP OF FAITH

I expect I ought to pause here and spin a happy tale before you all turn in disgust muttering, “enough already,” so I will.

Through all those years of despair, God became more real at a yet deeper and undefinable level. My ability to seek was copious, which over time led me into the presence of the inexhaustible God of love. I became a very adventuresome child, who lived in a challenging, dysfunctional environment. I loved to explore life. People were always more interesting to me than things, while animals brought me comfort. Along with unbridled bravado came opportunities for Father to literally save my physical existence.

We had an awesome twenty foot pear tree in the back yard that not only comforted me with its fruit in season, but it gave me a place to act out the antics of my favorite Saturday afternoon serial, Tarzan. He made it look so easy.



Of course, I could do that, leap from limb to limb. So, from about 15 feet up, like some flying squirrel, I set my eyes on the last large branch below and a bit ahead of me. Without much thought, I leaped toward the branch, only to discover that my grip of the branch was ripped out of my hands.

Next stop, earth!

Face first I smacked that hard ground only to discover it hurt worse than going to bed without dinner. Some of my neck and back bones were 'adjusted'. My nose was scraped and a small stone was embedded in my forehead which when removed caused some blood to exit. All in all, there were no major problems.

Even today when watching movie stars leaping from building to building and catching a ledge with one set of fingers some three stories below, my meter registers, "Not happening".

## MONEY OVER WHAT MATTERS

*T*hrough the years I have become aware that people often live their lives as if alone, even independent. That is, they live unaware of God's presence and swim in an ocean of supposed self determined choices.

Let me ask, "What did I lose on that fateful day with my grandparents and the yardstick?" What was actually happening that day could not be dressed with words until I was in my late 40's or early 50's.

Apparently, when my mother was around 15 years old, her youngest brother, who was about 19 or 20, was suffering from pneumonia. It was 1939 and people were still experiencing some effects of the Great Depression. At a time when few jobs provided sufficient incomes, he was doing well. He owned a car and had three or four newspaper delivery routes every day. One day, he was so sick that his father and my mother bundled him up in coats

and blankets to deliver his papers. In those days, a car was often nothing more than an open carriage. His was open and unheated.

They successfully delivered the papers. That night my uncle slept in the same bed as Grandpa. In the early morning hours Grandpa went to the kitchen to fix some coffee and buttered toast. He kept calling out to my uncle to get going. Apparently Grandpa returned to discover that my uncle had not stirred.

Thinking him lazy, he began to berate him and shove him. Soon Grandpa was literally on top of him beating him with his fist. My mother of 15 rose from her deep sleep to find this event escalating. She, though a very tiny girl in stature, was able to pull Grandpa off.

At the autopsy, and with my grandfather having to watch it by court order, it was determined that my uncle had died before the beating and Grandpa was free of any charges.

Apparently, when I said, "So!" to Grandpa, Grandma noticed Grandpa's body language and divined that my death was imminent. The first miracle was that God gave her the bravado to intervene. She was not a demonstrative woman. The second miracle was 'her' wisdom to bring the largest stick she could find to the fray and declare that I was going to get the beating of my life. As a result, God definitely dissuaded my grandfather from the need to personally instruct me in proper behavior.

The God I had divorced somewhere between step one and the driveway was in fact looking out for me. Like flying 15 feet to the ground from the pear tree without injury, He saved

Grandpa from having to view another autopsy. I, on the other hand, had turned my back on Mr. Love Himself.

At ten I determined that a God-me relationship would have to be without bumps in the road. I wanted a Santa Claus who would lose his list and bring me gifts every day that perked up my heart and sprinkled giggle along my path. Coming to a God of wisdom, Who is deeply imbedded into the very fabric of living, meant that my greedy, arrogant heart had to be humbled. But even this task proved to be beyond my capability, and in the end the victory again fell to the Creator.

## NEAR DEATH

Numerous times before I had saving faith in Christ Jesus, Father had spared me from death. One evening, while visiting my then widowed grandmother, who still owned that stick, I borrowed her car. Within minutes, I had it loaded with five friends.

We decided to travel to the next larger town and ‘tool’ the streets. People speak of road rage as if it were a new phenomenon. It was a very warm, humid 1965 summer night and not having air conditioning, we drove with the windows down. Just as I arrived at a lighted intersection, the light turned red. I stopped and another car pulled up beside us. For some reason I turned to see what make and model it was and found myself facing a 38 caliber Saturday night special. How appropriate, it was a Saturday night.

There were two people in the car. The passenger aimed the gun at me which in his outstretched arm was less than two feet

from my head. In an instant, I leaned back as deeply into my seat as I could and with my right arm and hand pressed my two friends in the front seat back as far as possible. The gun went off and the bullet whizzed right through one open window and out the other.

The flight instinct took over and I was instantly turning right onto the one-way street before me, accelerating like a crazed banshee. As we sped down the street, I honked the horn wildly. Only the young man to my direct right knew what had happened. Everyone else was freely expressing their concern about my driving techniques.

I was saddened that I could not find a police officer. Within seconds I realized the shooter had not pursued. Quickly I ducked through the back streets to the main road and headed home. I do not know why, but this group of friends and I seemed to invite disaster.

## ROLL OVER

The following summer, I was with the same group again. This time three boys were in the front seat of a Woody's Jeep truck. The owner's son was driving. Four others and I were in the open bed. As we traveled at the appropriate speed for a gravel road, I found, in the back of the truck, a galvanized pipe, about five or six feet long and one and a half inches in diameter.

I extended it out the back of the truck while leaning against the tail gate and drug the pipe in the gravel road. Well, it simply bounced and danced around. Soon the whole Jeep was dancing around the road. The front passenger tire of the Jeep slipped into the tall summer grass and then it happened, 'slow motion disaster'. The back of the truck took to the sky. The pipe was wrenched from my grip. I remember seeing a grassy field and barbed wire ahead of me. Something

prompted me to roll up into the fetal position, covering my head with my hands.

If I had kept my eyes open, I would have been able to give you a detailed description of what happened. Okay...I didn't look until the right side of my body had slammed against the ground. I heard metal bending. Looking up I saw the back right side of the truck falling toward my head. Once again as I took the fetal position and held my hands over my head, the side of the truck bed came down exactly towards my head missing my shoulders. After the fear settled—the dust settled first, I realized my head was resting perfectly in a dip in the grass with the truck bed resting about an inch above it. I had to slip out backwards.

In a split second I ran to the cab which was now on its side. I jumped up. I was able to open the driver's door. The driver virtually leaped out on his own. I helped the second passenger to extract himself. The third untangled himself and stood up. With a little more effort he too was out of the cab. I noticed his elbow was full of glass and bleeding. As I took him to the side to administer first aid, the others, who were all okay, righted the truck.

About then an oncoming car stopped, filled with a man and his family. He said, "I wondered what happened to you. On one hill we saw you and then you disappeared." With little more ado he drove off.

The driver jumped back into the truck to start it while another finished breaking out the passenger window and opened the passenger door. The driver exclaimed, "Where is the gear shift boot?"



For those who do not know, it is a rubber sleeve that covers the eighteen inch metal floor gear shift rod which is attached to the transmission, keeping the dirt, dust, and rain out of the cab. It keeps out the dust, dirt, rain and snow from off the road. We were just about to enter another God Zone.

Upon inspection, the gear shift ball was still in place on top of the gear shift. All the contents of the glove compartment were missing from the cab. This was amazing because both windows in the cab were closed at the time of the accident. The pipe was missing as well. It was just about then when I realized my sight was blurred. My glasses were gone. One of our bunch called us over to a pile of stuff. All the contents from the glove compartment, gear shift boot, my glasses, maps, etc., were in a neatly composed pile some twenty feet behind where the truck had landed. We never found the pipe.

Besides the neat pile of things and my head nestled perfectly where the truck could not crush it, there were two other things that told me this was a God Zone moment. The rubber boot was not torn. We tried, for the fun of it, to slip it over the gear shift knob. Soon we gave up, unscrewed the gear shift knob, returned the cover to its 'proper position,' and the gear shift knob to its right place.

About an hour later and upon arriving home, my grandmother with anxiety ran up to me and said she had been prompted to pray for me about an hour and fifteen minutes earlier. She said she had felt my life was in danger. Being rather self absorbed and at that point somewhat ashamed, I simply shrugged it off. Oh how blessed she would have been

to know she was hearing right and God answered her prayers right on time.

Moments like these have followed me my whole life. I am utterly convinced no one checks out of this life without a specific call from our Lord. After all the exceptional escapes from death in my life I cannot help but believe I'll croak in a way that will cause even the deepest skeptic to say, "God has a sense of humor."

## IGNORANCE TRIUMPHS

Speaking of people trying to shoot me, it happened again while I was pastoring a Methodist country church about ten miles east of Fayette, Missouri. Before coming to the particulars, I must introduce you to Bill (not his real name).

Bill had a shop in town. One day I was determined to share Christ's love with him. I drove up to his shop and soon we were engaged in a God centered conversation. Well, that is what I thought I was doing, but I was new to the South and had not learned the language of the Missourians. You see, if someone said, "Oh! We have never done it that way before," the interpretation should be, "We don't do it that way and you won't either."

Upon reflection, Bill had uttered several such phrases and soon he simply turned, exited the shop and disappeared to my right. I had noticed his helper was working in the corner. Not

realizing Missouri had won the Civil War, I approached his (black) helper and began to share Christ with him. He seemed very receptive to the good news of God's love shed abroad in our hearts by faith in Christ Jesus.

Within minutes I heard Bill call to me from where he had disappeared. I ventured towards the entrance of the shop and Bill came around the corner with one of those huge screwdrivers, about 18 inches long, in his right hand. With a roundhouse move he plunged it toward my gut. Without thought, my arms simply bared my stomach and rose upward. He stopped the screwdriver about a quarter of an inch from my belly button. A week or so later he gave me a Wurlitzer electronic keyboard.

A few months later, my car broke down in town and I had to walk seven miles to my country home. The area where we lived sported few wells. Most people dug huge ponds to collect rain water which supplied all the culinary water for their homes as well as for their animals. Constructing ponds was actually Bill's occupation.

As I continued toward home, I rounded a corner and found myself walking on an undefined 'two' lane asphalt road with about a six inch gravel shoulder. Just to the left of the shoulder was a six foot drop into a pond. I heard the roar of a truck speeding toward me. I recognized it as Bill's. Glad to see him, I waved wildly as he passed. I noticed that he noticed me, but had a scowl on his face.

His truck had metal racks that extended off the sides making me quite uneasy since he approached way too close for comfort. I took a step or two to the side and continued

walking. I was on the left side of the road giving him plenty of room to pass. As he passed, the back passenger tires of his truck rained gravel on my pant legs. As I noticed that scowl, I concluded things were not right. I noticed the gravel once again crunching under my feet. It was when I looked back that I realized his bobtailed tires had taken up all the gravel space and maybe more. For me to have continued walking as I had, I would have been walking on air and over the pond.

Felt like earth!

A week or so later I visited Bill's landlord, Kevin (not his name). He rented a trailer to Bill about half a mile up the road. As we chatted, Kevin suggested I stay away from Bill since he had tried to kill me twice, once with the screwdriver and once trying to run me off the road. Apparently, the screwdriver stopping just before my bellybutton was not his idea but His idea. Bill had told Kevin that something simply stopped his arm and hand from finishing what he had full intention of doing.

Then too, he deliberately tried to run me off what little road I had to walk on. Bill had told Kevin he could not understand how he missed me seeing how his back tires covered what road was left. After sharing this vital information, Kevin strongly suggested I avoid Bill.

Being very wise and always ignoring good advice, I immediately drove over to Bill's home and knocked on the door. He answered the door with a 357 revolver in his hand and wearing only boxer shorts. After inviting me in and suggesting I sit at his kitchen table he set a towel down, took out his pistol cleaning kit, opened it up, looked at me and said,

“You know, people are often killed by loaded guns when they are being cleaned.” He picked up the revolver holding it sideways as if to clean it, pulled back the hammer and pulled the trigger. His face turned pale as he did it again. Now shaking, he stood up, turned around, took a brand new twelve string acoustic Takamine guitar with electric pickups from the wall and gave it to me saying, “Never bother me again.”

In retrospect I realize each time he tried to kill me he gave me a musical instrument except when he tried to run me over. I feel cheated.

I later found out his live-in girlfriend (in today’s vernacular, partner) had shut off the romance after having become real close to Christ. I guess she said it was marriage or nothing. All I know is that he died alone a few years later.

## CONVERSION WHILE FACING A GUN

A similar event had occurred a year earlier in Logan, Utah. I was co-pastoring a church where a young woman was attending without her husband. Somewhere along the line she too had found peace in Jesus, but not with her husband, who was a Vietnam veteran suffering PTSD. He was asking her to behave in ways that cannot be mentioned.

One afternoon she came to our home and we chatted a while. Afterwards, we decided to take a drive into town to run some errands and she came along. Upon returning, her husband was parked across the street with a ‘Bill’ scowl on his face. She panicked. I encouraged Linda to take her and our boys into the house.

Within moments I was standing on the passenger side of the car with my arms resting on the roof. He, on the other side, began verbally expressing his disappointment. We chatted

about half an hour and then he pulled out a 38. What was it with 38s? They are everywhere!

Anyway, he began to threaten me and his wife, and in a few minutes everyone in the house. I was calm. Don't pat me on the back, it was a God Zone moment. Before another half hour had passed, he too had found Jesus sufficient to wipe away all his pain, fear, and guilt. I asked him to leave, go fellowship with his God, and in an hour I would bring his wife home.

After he drove away I entered our home and shared what had happened with his wife and our family. We all rejoiced, prayed for him, and in an hour I had his wife home. She never came back to our church, but rumor had it that her husband had decided to become a minister.

Several years later I learned he had become a Presbyterian Minister somewhere in the western United States. I continue to reflect on what I said as we chatted over that 38, and have not concluded exactly where I went wrong or what I said to direct anyone to become a Presbyterian.

Oh well!



## TRUSTING MAN FOR SALVATION

*B*y now you would think that I have no more ‘revolver in my face’ stories. You are right, the next story involved a .30-06 rifle. This event actually happened about three years before the one just mentioned.

I was attending church in the community where I had placed (was irresistibly graced if you are a Presbyterian) my faith in God. For some reason I became very bored with whatever was happening and walked out of the sanctuary. There was a side back door which no one ever used since we had built the building. Nothing of particular interest was on that side of the building. The first step was not just a step, but a leap of faith. If you were careful, you landed on dirt. Then there was more dirt.

I exited without incident, turned right, and ran into my best friend’s father who was pointing the above mentioned rifle at

my gut. He did not look happy. Another 'Bill' scowl. I'll call him Jim.

Well, Jim wanted his son to become a priest in the church of which we were members. Jim thought that if his son were a priest, his acceptance into heaven would be guaranteed. Now that his son loved Jesus and found Him sufficient, Jim considered his son insufficient. He rightly blamed me for sharing Jesus with his son, but I thought his intention was a bit overkill.

We chatted for a few minutes. I explained he need have no fear that he was not going to heaven. He simply needed to follow the counsel his son would give. I explained that what his son would share with him was far better than anything one of the priests might share. I asked him to give his son a chance.

This man wrestled with an ocean of guilt after surviving WWII and having to live with the memory of all the people he had killed as well as the memory of all his own soldiers whom he had been unable to save. Years later, his son was with him while he was being rushed to the hospital. During this trip he listened to his son and gave up his self effort to please God and trusted Jesus for his eternal destiny. He died within a week or so.

His son, several years later, was dying of metastasized prostate cancer which led to stomach cancer. I was able to traverse some distance to his home and found him in good spirits. A hospital bed had been set up in his front room where he could look out across the street. I sat off to his left on a piano bench just in front of the piano. Somewhere in the

conversation he began to look directly to my right as if someone were there. That was freaky! As the hair on the back of my neck stood to attention, he explained that he had, for about three hours, chatted with his dad the night before.

That did not help things. I was afraid the cancer had reached his brain. Hesitantly I asked, “You do realize your dad is dead, don’t you?” Without hesitation he replied, “Yes, but he’s looking really good.”

Whatever we talked about after that statement has been rightly forgotten. All I knew was that Jim’s son had acted as his father’s priest and helped him find his way to an eternity with life.

## MY CONCLUSION ABOUT GUNS

*M*y conclusion is that guns should not always end a conversation about eternal life, but sometimes perpetrate it. Then there are those times where just being ignorant of what is happening helps too. This same friend (also my brother in law) and another brother-in-law were, to the best of my recollection, with a group in some Central American country sharing the love of God found in Jesus Christ. These two, with my friend's youngest child, a baby in diapers, took a walk out of the village and down the path a good distance.

Suddenly they were surrounded by several scowls and rifles being pointed at them. The men began having an energized conversation among themselves. My friend understood nothing of their conversation, but rightly concluded from their anxiety and body language that this was an exceptional moment.

Just then the child began wailing uncontrollably. My friend bounced him in his arms, but could not comfort him. He lovingly continued to try to do so while smiling at the men with the guns. Soon the leader said something pointing his gun down the same trail my brothers-in-law were traveling. As the militia ventured away, my nephew continued to cry. My brothers-in-law turned and walked back to the meeting place. Moments after the militia had disappeared from the sound of my nephew, he stopped crying.

My other brother-in-law had a chance to share with the whole village what had just occurred. Understanding Spanish, he knew exactly what the armed men had said. Apparently, just when my nephew began to wail, they were about to extract my nephew from his father's arms, kill my brothers-in-law and sell my nephew on the open market. As the child continued to cry they could not find one man in their group willing to care for him. They gave up in despair and went their way.

My Spanish speaking brother-in-law was wise in saying nothing nor acting like he understood what was being said. As for my friend, he simply had no idea of what was going on. It was like me and Bill. I simply had no idea that he wanted to kill me, well, not until that last visit.

Unlike Bill, not one of the militia offered either of my brothers-in-law a musical instrument.

## REFLECTIONS OF A HUMAN TORCH

*R*emember how I had left my God at the age of 10? Well, by now, you have probably realized that He does not abandon you. But even while in His arms, things can seem strange, even wrong. By the time I was 12, I could not enjoy life. Later I realized I was missing some chemicals, but sad is sad whether from lack of chemicals or from suffering a lot of heartaches. I had both.

When I was about 17, feeling extremely sad, I donned a coat my parents had purchased for me. It was made of long, faux fur, mottled blue in color with a hood made of the same stuff. I was drunk, very drunk, sad, depressed, not happy, and tired of it all. I left the house, walking straight out the back door and into a freezing blizzard. I continued across the field and sat down on a fallen log from a hedge apple tree (Osage orange tree). There, somewhat covered under the trees, I lit up a cigarette.

After smoking it and not feeling any better, I lit myself up by running my Ronson lighter across the bottom of my coat. Within a split second I had become a human torch. As flames continued to blaze past my face, the hood began to burn.

Breathing normally and expecting to keel over at any moment never to awaken again to my pain, I began to get bored. Well, nothing spectacular was happening. I had no physical pain. I was just aflame.

Soon I took my bare hands and patted out the fire, returned home, hung up my coat and fell into a drunken sleep. I awakened to my father exclaiming, "What happened to your coat?" Not thinking, I replied, "I tried to kill myself, but failed at that too."

He ran down the stairs to my room in the basement and checked me over. Only my eyebrows were singed. He told me to get rid of the coat and went off to work. Later, I looked at the coat and like my father was astounded at its condition. I think by now you are catching on why I believe you will live until God determines that you are not supposed to.

## ANOTHER TRY AT EXITING THIS LIFE

Well, stupid is what stupid does, and years later I had another run of deep emotional despair. Forgetting my failure with the human flame incident, I gathered up several knock-you-dead drugs and over a three hour period downed them all. It was a surreal evening. FYI, at this time I only knew about Christ, but still had a wavering faith in my ability to control my life and prepare myself for eternity.

I loved debating with Linda's mother on religious views and a friend I'll call Tim was right in there with me. Soon I was woozy and said goodnight. Once home and in the total dark I kissed our oldest son on the forehead and said goodbye. Under my breath, I said goodbye to Linda. With the full faith I'd never have to face another day, I drifted off to sleep.

It seemed that in a split second my mother-in-law was standing over me and bouncing the bed with her arms,



screaming things like, “You lazy, no good son-in-law! Get up! You’re late!”

Right then, I became a true believer in hell. Moments later, I realized I was in my bed at home and for some reason my mother-in-law was declaring a litany of my failures. I thought it generous of her not to mention all the ones I screamed at myself every day.

Come to find out, I was supposed to deliver a truckload of hay at 4 am that morning. It was 5:30 am. I jumped out of bed, put on my clothes, and ventured out into the sub zero morning to find the man I was supposed to go with. He wasn’t happy. He dismissed me and to my recollection we never again worked together on another project.

Sad breeds sad.

## POPCORN IS BETTER

Somewhere, close to my 24th birthday, I dove into Zen Buddhism. For me it was a more polite way to end it all. Just let go of all desires and once dead, dead forever. Yeah! I practiced Zazen and even ventured to San Francisco to study under Dr. Suzuki. There I sat with the best, and once bored of it, I went to the movies and shared popcorn with Joan Baez. I don't remember the movie nor Joan that well, but after eating only macrobiotic food for weeks, the popcorn was really exceptional.

I read Zen, sat Zen, thought Zen, and once back in the community, gathered others around me to sit. I even had priests sitting. In many ways it was the most peaceful time I had yet experienced. In front of me was a huge window looking out over the high Utah desert and beyond to where the moon was painting ever-changing shadows on the hills a few miles to the East. Morning, noon, and night, I sat for a few

minutes. Seasons passed. I watched the migration of birds gobbling seeds from the trees. I watched the trees grow and begin to cover the mountains from my sight. I learned that everything is changing and will continue to change. That gave me hope. Maybe this sad would go away and never return or grow into something worth living for. Well, it did.

## INTERLUDE

Over time many of the internal triggers that would cast me into despair softened. Even Linda periodically sat meditating with me. Now we sit on a love seat at night in order to be close. Then we sat on Zazen pillows on our sleeping mat on the floor.

I thank God for all the many ways He has to bring us to Christ. Every road, other than The Way, becomes a dead end with Him standing to the side saying, “What were you thinking?” I was headed for the biggest dead end I would ever experience. Of course, every end is but a beginning, but it is still an end.

I was learning that this life is ever changing and that my every effort was a desire to flash freeze life and stuff it into a corner where I could visit it. Sitting in meditation helped me realize that every day was different. Well, every moment was different.

Years later, when attending my master's program, which met for one week out of every six, I learned firsthand that everyone suffers, even if they try not to suffer. Almost every time we met, at least one student had lost a child, spouse, or other family member to death.

As we worked to gather enough information to build the life skills necessary to graduate and propel ourselves into the next chapter of life, many were expiring and leaving no specific legacy. At a deep level this brushed my soul the wrong way. I wanted to leave my mark. I wanted to write a book that would change lives for the best.

I had outlined and started writing dozens of books before and would continue to do so for another 15 years. Each one only reminded me of my mortality and behind the vision of finishing my book was finishing my life, which since the flaming coat experience was becoming worth living. Even now, as I pen this, my third book, I realize it is what He desires to do and not what I have to do that justifies my walk on this earth.

Today, my only desire is that in some way His hand print is seen a little clearer by those who have known me personally or through these writings.

## FINGER IN MY CHEST

Let me go back to the time while I was still in the desert community of Utah, continuing to practice Zazen. During that time, some wild Christians began coming out to our community. One dark night I ran into two of them by a house with the porch light on. We talked about Jesus and I said I knew Him and began sharing my Zen faith.

After a few minutes one of them took his finger, poked me in the chest just left of the sternum, and asked in a demanding way, "Is that Jesus in there?" I boldly declared, "YES!" But I knew I was lying.

After swallowing that lie the best I could, he repeated the poke and said, "Are you sure that is Jesus in there?" Again I lied and declared even more loudly, "YES!"

He said, "Praise God!" They went their way. I went home knowing Jesus was not in my heart and at best in my head.

## AGREEMENT

*M*onths later that changed, but first I want to talk about living in a close knitted community that claimed it was Christian. We never agreed on any one doctrine. One group would believe this and another that. There were some who never spoke of God, while others were always seeking God in this or that way. It was no different for Linda, her mother and me.

More than once we would get together to read the Bible and discuss what it meant. One such evening, I remember we were sitting close to the front door on the living room carpet. The book of the New Testament we were reading escapes me right now, but the event itself was so unusual I'll never forget it. I read a portion of the book and like usual we all began to comment about what we had just read.

Unbelievable! We all agreed. This continued for a good half an hour. It was so shocking we all made comment

concerning the fact that we were not arguing. Being of one mind was so unusual, we all talked of it for days afterwards.

Linda and I still mention that experience, because in all the Bible studies we have attended since, we have never experienced such totally complete agreement with everyone involved when discussing the scriptures. When it was happening I knew it was one of those trips into the God Zone.

The only times when we have had similar experiences happened when Linda and I were translating the New Testament from Greek into English to practice our Greek. Often we would have an identical aha at the very same time.

I am not suggesting that people are not Christians because they do not agree over the meaning of Scripture, I just wanted to share how it takes a God Zone moment to get to the heart of God via print on a piece of paper. I pray for many more of those events with a variety of people.

In fact, as I am reviewing this chapter I must add that this last Tuesday evening a group of eight of us came really close to replicating that experience. We stayed an hour longer than usual and left laughing and giggling. It was refreshing.



## LEARN TO SUBMIT

Once, back in 1968, I took a walk out in the desert. About five miles from the community, I decided to walk up a gully of gravel. The terrain soon became steep enough to take my breath away. I sat down on a boulder nearby and listened to the wind as it blew down the valley from the north. As I sat there, I slipped into an inner chat with God concerning my continual need to fight for what I considered right, trying to press the truth into every life situation. My eyes fell close to my feet where there were two blades of grass. One was dry and brittle, while the other green and supple.

He seemed to encourage me, if not insist, that I learn to be like the green and supple blade of grass that bent with the gusts of wind, first this way then that. As He explained how life would always press me this way and then that, my eyes fell upon the dry blade of grass. As I was watching, a strong gust of wind drastically changed direction. The dry blade of

grass broke in two and the almost-mature seeds were lost. It had come ever so far, but lacking the ability to bend with life's buffeting, it had lost its very purpose.

As the years have passed I have often remembered, that when life suddenly changes direction, to remain supple and drop the need to be right. Thus I am able to give way to change and embrace new thoughts and experiences. I still remain joined to the Lord at my core, but I have learned that He is sufficient for every new situation. In fact, I am at this time being challenged to know Him in such a different way that I feel buffeted.

What I'm talking about is the deep-seated need to control life. We are all born with it. Early in life we come to the conclusion that if I don't do life, life will do me and in a bad way. This train of thinking is often the 'truth' at the heart of the Christian life, yet drastically opposing the Truth of God in Christ.

Life has done us in, but, no matter how hard we try, nor how victorious we may think we are becoming, in the end we are done in.

It is in Christ that we get to die and also in and by Him that we live. In other words, we graduate from trying and just be.

## THE BRIDGE

That same Tuesday night when we all giggled, I had a picture pop into my head. I have those. I think best with pictures.

I saw a narrow grassy ridge arching toward me. There, to my right was an old locomotive (steam engine) and several passenger cars rounding their way toward a trestle bridge which traversed a valley whose bottom I could not see. The tracks perfectly fit on the ridge with no room to spare.

As the engine began to cross the bridge, the pylons began to be shaken and then one by one they fell down into what seemed to be a bottomless pit.

As an onlooker, I was concerned for those in the passenger cars. As the train rumbled over the bridge all the pylons continued to fall away until there was only one, which I had not noticed before. It was a single support rising up out of the pit and connecting to a single support that traversed the gap.

Yes, it looked like a cross, well more like a T. As I watched, the train safely continued on its way to my left.

That night, when I shared the picture I had seen, I was asked if I knew what it meant. I shared with them what I thought it represented and a woman shared that she also saw the same meaning. Just the other day I shared the picture with a friend of mine who expanded its meaning and also personalized it. I will take a moment to share with you what I have so far.

First, let us talk about the ridge. It was a narrow way. No one was able to traverse the bridge who was not on the train. It was the right train because it was coming from the right, and once it had passed, it exited to my left leaving all who were not on it behind.

*Hey! Wait for me!*

The whole bridge was being shaken. I knew nothing was going to last nor be left to support the train but that which was necessary and functional to save the train. By now I understood the train to be full of all those who throughout history had put their trust in the train (which of course is Jesus) to get them to their destination.

All the pylons that were being shaken down from under the bridge, which had looked so necessary, were the various doctrines of men taught by and to all of us. They fell away. They had no support. I was surprised they were not necessary.

As the engine of the train crossed the bridge all the pylons had fallen away but the single pylon that made a cross with the

bridge itself. That single pylon was more than sufficient to support the passenger cars.

As the train continued to the left, the bridge remained, suggesting that the train may return for another load. The point of the picture was that there are many things that have been instructed by Holy Spirit which have helped me and many others to trust in the bridge, but when the time comes to cross that bridge to our future destination, only one thing matters.

The apostle Paul must have seen that train and bridge as well, for he related to us almost two millennia ago,

*“For I determined to know nothing among you  
except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”*  
(1Corinthians 2:2 NAS)

## WELCOMING PARTY

Now that I am sharing recent pictures let me relate a couple more. The first I'll call the Welcoming Party.

It begins with me stepping out of this life onto the shores of heaven. Everything was bright and as my eyes adjusted to the light, I saw to my right and left rows of people waiting to greet me. There were so many people lined up shoulder to shoulder that as I lifted my eyes to see where they ended, all I could see was a point where the parallel lines of their forms seemed to meet.

As I stepped into heaven I turned to the person on my right only to be shocked to my core. I expected a relative or friend, but what I discovered was a person I had harmed while alive. I expected a beating, but was hoping for only a tongue lashing. I concluded that if everyone was there to beat me I'd perish before escaping this endless line of greeters.

As I faced the first person, like a sad puppy dog, I was expecting the worst. Then they spoke, with all sincerity, these words to me,

*“I forgive you.”*

I experienced the same heartfelt message from each and every person as I faced them one by one down the line. As my soul was humbled, even crushed to dust, it got worse. I was soon facing the children of those I had harmed, and their children and their children’s children.

To see the depth of sorrow, pain, and confusion I had perpetrated, was beyond bearing. Many words which I had spoken off-handedly had led to despair, hopelessness, and even suicide. As I had pushed my way towards my desired position, I left those called by God feeling discouraged and unfulfilled. The outcomes of my self-for-self behavior was plain before my eyes.

As each one said, “I forgive you.” I was both freed and emptied of any self worthiness. Sooner than I had expected, I came to the end of the line, but there was still one person I had to meet. The line had led me to the foot of the throne of God, Who in both greatness and purity looked deep within me and with His eyes fixed said to my surprise, “I too forgive you.”

It was then I came to know the heart of God. Everyone living in His eternity reflects His lovingkindness and forgiveness.

As the picture ended, I found there was one more person I had to forgive and that was myself.

## UNEXPECTED OFFER

The next picture begins in something like the heart of the Saharan Desert. There, untouched by the world, lived a small family of three. One day, the only daughter of the family, a young girl at that, began to walk out into the desert. Upon her back she carried an outer garment of fur tied up by a leather strap and slung from her neck and through one arm pit. On the other side she carried a skin of water in much the same fashion.

She traveled for days and as the sand turned to a mixture of sand and earth the strangest thing occurred. A man was approaching her. Because she was so overcome by discovering there was another person in the world, her curiosity overpowered the fear she may have had.

The stranger approached her with intent and without a preliminary greeting said to her face, "Hi! I have a strange story to tell you. I died once and laid dead for some days.



Then my father rose me from the dead. He then told me to tell everyone I met that if they would believe that he did this for me they can also believe that he will do it for them. All you have to do is believe that what I am telling you is true.”

No sooner had the stranger finished speaking, than he quickly turned off to the side and walked out of sight. The young woman stood right where she was, shocked at the event. She knew she was at a choice point. She could believe this stranger or not. Within a split second she said within herself, “Why not? I have nothing to lose.” And so she believed the man and continued on her adventure.

## HISTORY REPEATS

*A*t the age of four I loved to walk down to the park about two blocks from my Grandmother's house. We were living in Wisconsin at the time. Dad was going to school in Chicago. There was a swing set with metal chains and worn, weathered boards for the seats. To get ourselves as high as we dared, one would sit on the seat and pump going one direction while the other stood facing the other and pumped the other direction.

During one of these visits I spied a girl I thought was cute and suggested we try to swing higher than anyone else. After discovering her name was Susan (my made-up name for her), she agreed we should attempt the feat I had suggested. About the time we were eight or ten feet off the ground, she lifted her feet and kicked me off. After landing dazed on the ground, I sat up just in time to be clipped on the head just above my left eye by the edge of the swing.

Ever since then I have been wary of swings.

One summer, while in my teens, I was back in Wisconsin. I decided to head down to that same park to play games with my neighbors. A young woman came into the club house and caught my attention. She stole my heart.

For the next two years I chased her hoping she would someday be my own. Being with her took me higher than I had ever been before, then she kicked me off. It wasn't until I had once again lost all dignity that I realized this was the same girl who had shoved me off the swing some 12 years earlier.

Ever since then I have been wary of swings and Susans.

## WHAT'S YOUR FUTURE

While Susan and I were dating, we went to the home of a friend of hers along with a few other youth between the ages of 16 and 19. As I recall, her friend who was about 35 years old, asked us all to declare what we wanted to be in 15 years. Of course, there were those who wanted to be doctors and lawyers, but when it came to me, with some personal surprise, I declared that I wanted to be a minister and an educated bum.

Reflecting on my lifestyle and colorful language, everyone laughed. I wasn't speaking some personal desire, it was really God expressing His desire through me.

I was as shocked as anyone. Well, as you may have guessed, by the age of 33, I was a minister and by the age of 48, an over educated man who loved fly fishing morning and night.

## DOULOS

The number of times God's thumb print has shown up on my life's experiences are too many to rehearse, but each one leads to the same conclusion. God is in control. Yet, at the same time, I am in complete control. I get to do exactly what I want to do when I have the power to do it. All power comes from God.

This dichotomy need not confuse us, but set us on a road of both unbridled freedom and total servitude. Being humans as God created humans to be is not a mystery. We were created to do His will by exercising our will to do His will. I did not say we have the power to do His will, but only the right to choose His will. In so choosing we discover His ability to energize us. We reflect His desires. The conundrum in which we live is this: we exist in total freedom while at the same time we are slaves to His desire.

Let me talk of my Doulos. Doulos means servant or slave

in the Greek. I renamed my Roomba vacuum cleaner Doulos. It does not do windows! It was created with limitations and preferred functionality. It has a one track mind and functions in total freedom when doing what it was created to do.

It is always talking to itself, listening for a command to do something, getting charged up, and many such things. It is totally free to be itself, but by design its self is limited. Even its 'life task' is limited to vacuuming the floors. That is all it does. Even so, in its freedom it does what it was created to do and in its servitude it does what it was created to do.

We were created to shine forth the love of God. Waiting or doing, we are being what we were created to be. We cannot do the things the angels do. We are not created to be angels, but sons and daughters of God who perfectly reflect His image and person of love.

When we discover that our internal volition was made for His delight, we can choose to let Him have His way. In that way, we are not robots. We can screw things up. That is the extent of it.

Sometimes my Doulos tries to eat a rug and after discovering it has bitten off more than it can vacuum, it cries for help. Literally, it calls out for help saying something like, "Doulos needs assistance!" On one such occasion I was upstairs while Doulos called for help. I found it exhausted after trying to eat my entrance rug. With one foot on the rug, I tapped it with the toe of other foot and dislodged the rug from Doulos. To my surprise, Doulos asked, "Shall I continue?" I said yes (pushed a button) and it continued to vacuum until all

the floors were vacuumed and then went home to be emptied and recharged.

We too can pray out of desperation, but it does not mean we are failures. We are created to love our neighbor and sometimes we can get stuck. With a loving nudge we get free and return to doing what we are created to do.

I choose to be God's Doulos and love. Only God loves.

## A GAZELLE

One day I ran across a portion of the Nevada desert like a gazelle. Really! I know that I had help on the launch and on the run itself, because there is no way I could have run like that on my own.

Shortly before this happened, three of us from the Christian community previously mentioned were returning from visiting a bar in a very small town about twenty-five miles away. While there, I played a one-armed bandit and to my surprise walked away with about eight dollars worth of nickels in a small paper bag.

My friend was driving his 1966 GTO. Why do I mention that? Well, he liked to drive fast. My other friend was in the back seat on the passenger side, while I was in the suicide seat. As the car hit 120 mph, the transmission locked up. In an instant the car's back tires locked in position and began leaping all over the two lane state road. The cabin filled with



smoke. Just then the glove compartment flew open and all the nickels I had won flew in my face. Immediately I knew God had seen my sins of sipping wine and gambling. My life was over! Next stop, hell!

I wanted out of that car and now! Remember that advice which says we should not make major decisions while in high stress circumstances? I didn't listen. I got it into my head that as soon as the car slowed to 30 mph I would exit to the safety of the desert.

Moment by moment I leaned over the steering wheel and blew the smoke away. 60 mph, another breath, choke, another breath while thinking I was going to burn to death, blow the smoke away, 50 mph. I repeated that as often as possible. Bingo! 30 mph.

I opened the door of the car and without any thought of physics, I leaped from the car and my right foot touched the desert. I tiptoed across the desert between insanely long intervals of what almost felt like weightlessness. Soon my feet were touching more often and rapidly gaining speed. When I returned to full weight upon my feet, I was running faster than I had ever run before with fear of falling on my face. Finally, I was able to stop.

Looking back at the car, I realized it had not passed me when I came to a stop. My friend in the back seat was laughing his innards out. To this day he says he cannot believe I did that.

## DEMONSTRATION

*H*ave I told you how to demonstrate gravity? Climb up high and jump off. How can you demonstrate the love of God? Climb up into His lap and snuggle in. During moments of boredom poke His arm pits and giggle till you cry for joy. Watch out! He might take you to the floor, bare your tummy, and blow on it. After you escape and catch your breath it might just be time to catch His leg as he tries to get back into His easy chair. Sit on His foot. Now that is a dance you don't want to miss.

Playing with Father is not only a privilege but a duty. Torture Him with your childlike attention. Ask for ice-cream every few seconds. Ask if we have arrived yet, every chance you get. Run away and hide. Then turn to discover He has never left you. Play dead, see how that goes. Tell Him what to do, when, how, and for how long and watch His eyes.

Turn around every now and again and grab Jesus and

tussle, poke, prod, even pinch. See what sort of things He does back. In short, play with God. He is alive in and with you. Don't miss an opportunity to discover what He is made of!

Look at His ears. Do they wiggle when He laughs? Sit quietly in His lap with His hand wrapped around you. Play with His fingers and memorize them one by one. Ask permission to bring friends over and have a sleep over. Don't let one friend escape without knowing how much you love your Father and brother Jesus.

Invite Holy Spirit to walk each one safely home and give them gifts. Run to Father and ask for things to better their lives. As you receive them, ask for a large cart to pile them in so you can more easily deliver them. Find out what your friend's parents need and talk to Holy Spirit about what would be proper for this particular moment. Reach deep down into your sack. You know the best gifts are always at the bottom and the hardest to get.

Run back home empty and ask Father to sing you to sleep. Awaken, expecting to be showered with Life and fed with Truth. Listen for Holy Spirit, Father, and elder Brother. Try to keep your enthusiasm down, nah, let it go. Run out and interrupt whatever they were doing or talking about and demand all their attention.

Demonstrate God's love. When looking at people, look past their eyes and gaze into their spirit. Say, "Hello! I can see you!"

For some reason I was born with the ability to equate green with red. That auspicious blessing has had strange consequences. Like another dear friend and Linda screaming in unison.

It was about Christmas time and we were living in Salt Lake City. During a light snow flurry I was driving my 1953 Chevy down an otherwise deserted State Street.

In 1969 the city loved to decorate the light poles and intersections with large colored lights. As I calmly drove through an intersection I heard these screams. I turned my head and saw what was wrong. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a car pass within inches of my front bumper.

Apparently that was not the right green to pay attention to.

Just a side note, any two persons' screams that are birthed out of terror sound the same.

## HOW TO FORGIVE

*A*nother time, while living in Salt Lake City, I purchased an older 250cc BMW motorcycle. The moment I drove it home, my landlord declared I wasn't going to park it outside my apartment. I decided to park it around the side of the house. Every morning as I went to drive it to work I found that the back tire was flat. After filling it with air at the gas station two blocks down the road, I drove it to work and found it full of air after work.

The next morning, however, it was flat again. After a week of this, I sold it 'as is'. Now, 47 years later I believe my landlord had let the air out of the tire every night. He got his wish. I returned to walking the two miles to work, walking 10 to 15 miles while at work, and the two miles back home. Oh! My fallen arches hurt. Also, I still miss my BMW.

What is this story all about? Forgiveness. How did I forgive him? Well, every time I miss the BMW or think of the

excruciating pain I had in my feet especially when I walked home, I forgive him again. Every time I remember, I forgive him.

All of us have events in our lives, some unspeakable, which cause our bodies to react when we remember them. Your heart fails, anger rises, fear takes hold, and hate grows. Right then, forgive. If necessary, forgive a million times a day. Fear and bitterness do you no good. God has forgiven them, just like He has forgiven you.

Jesus died once for all and for all time to forgive all the sins ever to be committed. When we truly realize the depths to which we have been forgiven, we can forgive those who hurt us. After all, in this case, all I was forgiving was some 'divine suspicion'. Maybe I really had a bum back tire.

I know those who feel they have every reason to hate specific people for the rest of their lives and even eternity. If they can get away with it, they will continue to do so forever. But that is not the eternity we are called to. There is no park in heaven wherein we can have a picnic while watching people roast in hell.

That's it folks!

## DIVINE APPOINTMENTS

Two nights ago, while drifting off to sleep, I asked Father to allow us to do something we have never done before. I went to sleep having total confidence we would. Next morning, as is my custom, I said, “Well Lord, what are we up to today?” It is more of an affirmation of my will being willing to do what He wants than a real question.

Later that morning Linda and I drove to Tempe to have our car serviced. She dropped me off at our favorite local coffee shop, then drove the car half a mile to the dealer. As it was being serviced, Linda walked back and I worked on this book. Soon they called to let me know the car was ready to pick up.

We walked back together, chatting as we went and once there found our representative and went to the cashier. After paying the bill, we picked up the car and drove off to our next destination. Shortly after we had entered the freeway, Linda

discovered her best sunglasses were missing. She remembered having laid them on the counter as we paid the bill.

We exited the freeway at the next opportunity, took a right onto the next main arterial and soon entered a neighborhood named Guadalupe. Within a minute, we discovered we were in little Mexico and the Yavapai Native American Nation. On the right side of the street I noticed a sign reading. "Love is all we need. Guitars for guns."

My heart leaped for joy and wanted to go back to see if they wanted one of our printed copies of *Simply Grace*. A little way down the road, I turned around to do what 'I' wanted. As I was parking on a side street by the house where I had seen the sign, I realized that I was not only in Little Mexico, but in the rough part of Little Mexico.

With a prayer and excitement I walked onto the property of the house displaying the sign. Just then a man exited his vehicle. I called out to him, but my English failed to communicate with his Spanish. He rounded the corner leading to the modest door and another man came toward me. He was short, thin, and tatted over most of his visible skin. I asked him if he had put the sign up. He said it was some woman on a crusade. I said I had written a book that spoke of God's love and wondered if he could read English. He said he could and I offered him a book. He took it with a smile and enthusiasm. I learned his name and we gave each other a deep, meaningful smile and a warm handshake. I've been around enough to know that I had just met a 'gang banger' with a heart.

You probably know the story did not end there. As we drove down the street trying to find a place to turn around, we



saw a beautiful Catholic Mission Church. I drove into the parking lot and noticed a 'sister' sign just like the one that had been on my new found friend's fence.

We parked, found the office and walked in to find several people in line being helped in one way or another. The two people who seemed to be in charge invited us to enter the office. I did, and mentioned the book *Simply Grace* and held out three copies for them to receive. At first they were shocked and hesitant, but once they realized the books were free, they thanked us and took them.

As we drove away, I commented to Linda about the prayer the night before, asking that we would be able to do something different. She was already praising Father for the adventure. It took me a minute to shake off the overwhelming sense of awe before I too could thank Father for answering our prayer. We retrieved her sun glasses, finished our appointments and went home.

## WATCHING LOVE ON THE INSIDE

When I was about four years of age and living in Wisconsin, we attended a Brethren Church. Of course, I didn't know it was a Brethren Church, nor that it was any different from the church down the block. What I did know was that I loved the huge stone structure with its pinnacle. Inside there were arching wooden pews. Uncomfortable, but they had the scent of age and importance. I vaguely remember some people singing and some man droning. Most of the time I just focused on the stained glass hexagonal ceiling lights. I loved to trace the iron work to the chain and follow it up to where it attached to the ceiling.

Church was always over too soon. I never completely investigated the depths of joy those lights brought me. After standing in line to shake the hand of the man who droned, I was excited to walk again on the street towards home, passing the old store fronts displaying their wares. One such store

always intrigued me. It was the butcher shop with all the hot dogs and bratwurst hanging in the window, flies and all.

Its was fun to be a family and to be in a building where I could pass the time in the presence of my Father Who was loving my loving His loving this world through me. Of course, back then I had no such words to explain what was happening. I just knew I could hug my heart which was being hugged.

Life at its best is just us pressing into that which has always been pressing into us. It is far beyond my mind to define, but I have long since learned my heart can embrace things it would take a thousand lifetimes for my head to understand. We all know when we are welcome. We all know when we are rejected. But somewhere along the way, somehow, most of us have thought that the One pressing into us was in fact rejecting us. Now that is just wrong.

How sad, people spend their whole lives hating the only One Who ever really loved them.

## ANGEL GASOLINE

One night, driving back to Cheyenne from Fort Collins, I discovered my car was running on empty. Being half way between the two towns, I decided to press on towards home. I began to pray. My eight-miles-per-gallon car, now reading empty, ran down the road as though the wind were pushing it. In fact, upon looking back, I have concluded that the wind (Spirit) somehow propelled me home to safety.

Through the years, as I have recited this story, I have discovered that almost everyone has had a similar incident. From this I have learned that I am very, very special to God and so is everyone else. Oh! Jesus said that too.

I have concluded we have an opportunity to let God push us from here to His destination. In fact, that is the way my life has unfolded. All my efforts have always measured empty, while somehow this vehicle has been pushed on. Looking back, I see Him.

## SELF DISCOVERY

*H*ave you ever done something you were really ashamed of? Well, this is not one of those stories. After all, if it were, I'd be too ashamed to tell it to you. This is a story of how I discovered I was an entrepreneur. At the time, the late 50's, Saturday matinees were about a quarter, with popcorn and a drink. Yeah, really! Since I loved buying things like water balloons without the water, plastic cars, and whatever, it was not uncommon to run short of money by Friday night.

No problem.

Just down the street and across the railroad tracks was a park right by Illinois State College. Coeds loved taking a couple of blankets to the park with them where they could cuddle in semi privacy. I learned that if I stood over them, sooner or later, the guy would ask me to leave.

I would remind him it was a public park. He would then

insist and I'd turn my pockets inside out. If they coughed up at least a quarter, I was off. If they were rude, I hung in there until I had enough for a movie, popcorn, drink, and some balloons.

Later in life, after becoming a self employed database consultant, I was told that a consultant had to learn one thing to be successful. That one thing was 'Hold out your hand and do not budge until the payment is in it.'

I paused and said to myself, "Done that!"

## MIND CONTROL

*W*arning! What I am sharing now is what I have done. It is not what I do now, nor would I suggest that anyone should do it. I have a point to make and might as well continue to use my life experience to share it.

By the time I was 17, I wanted to have control of my life. I was sure my parents had messed it up, and I felt that my teachers and ministers had done no better. I stumbled across a book titled ‘Mind Power’. The teaching showed me how to get exactly what I wanted by taking time to visualize it, and then believe I had it. Here is how I first tried it. By the way, it has nothing to do with my God.

One Monday evening my mother informed me that she was planning a trip to Wisconsin that Friday night to visit her mother. Her mother was now living in a nursing home only one room away from her aged brother. My mother’s plan was

not to come home until late the following Monday night. I wanted to visit Susan. This was before she kicked me in the head for the second and last time in my life.

I asked if I could go with her. She promptly said, “No!”. Instead of trying to control the situation overtly or even covertly, I put the Mind Power teaching to practice.

I saw myself riding with Mom up to Wisconsin. I saw myself talking to Susan and visiting Grandma and Uncle Jim (fictitious name). I put all fear and doubt out of my head and focused on the problems which leaving for Wisconsin would create. I’d have to gather up some warmer clothes, pack, inform my buddies that I would not make the regular Friday night game above Henry’s garage, dig up some money to spend on Susan, talk to my teachers and let my buddy, the principal, know that I would not be attending school on Monday.

Day after day I did what was needed to prepare for the trip. I did not mention it to Mom. That Thursday evening she asked me if I’d be willing to help drive her up and back from Wisconsin. I said, ‘Yes!’

Not only did I go, but almost everything I had visualized happened the way I had visualized it. I do not know why, but I put the book and the visualization practice aside until some years later in Salt Lake City.

Linda and I were married and our first child was on the way. I was becoming extremely tired of putting people in the morgue, an activity which usually happened in the afternoon. At that point, I again began to visualize what I wanted.

I began each morning at work by sitting quietly for five



minutes and visualizing my day. I'd see myself doing the blood run, transporting people to x-ray, and moving beds in the morning. I'd see myself doing the truck run in the afternoons. This involved going to the University offices, driving downtown as needed, servicing the truck, gassing it, visiting Linda for a hug, returning to the Hospital to do the early evening computer billing card pickup, and then delivering the same to the data processing room.

That became my schedule every day. I walked less, hurt less, did not have to put people in the morgue and visited longer with my friends throughout the hospital. After a few weeks I had an 80% chance that my day was going to turn out just the way I wanted.

Surprisingly, after six weeks I realized I was bored. The excitement of not knowing what would happen next was gone. My life seemed to be under my control, but blah. I stopped the visualizing and joyfully imbibed what life sent my way. Soon I had forgotten that I ever practiced visualizing my days. Just a few years ago I decided to try it again, with the same results, including the boredom.

What does this have to do with a healthy Christian relationship with God? Everything. God is the verb of life. He animates us from within and challenges us from without. We are not called to control life, but we are invited to let Life live us spontaneously. We don't need to plan our future. We have what we need, Life Himself, in the most dynamic way. Once we find our rest in God, by faith we can spontaneously face life and birth His intentions.

For more of an explanation on that, I invite you to read

*Simply Grace*. You can find it by searching the title on the internet, followed by my name, Dean Chicquette or visit [iTransformYou.com](http://iTransformYou.com).

## FAITH, ACTION, AND REACTION

Once while attending a camp meeting half way up the canyon towards Brian Head, Utah, I heard a crunch just to the right of me. The preacher had been encouraging people with corrective eye lenses that they could be healed if they just believed.

My friend, Sam (another fictitious name), had just smashed his glasses with his foot. I was shocked and asked him why he did that. He said his eyes were healed. Wow! I wore glasses too, but I did not get a healing. Neither did I smash my glasses.

A few months later we went fishing and on the way home he nearly ran over a man walking on the side of the two lane road. My mouth leaped into action, “Why did you almost run over that man?”

“What man?” he replied. I wasn’t sure whether or not he was kidding. Upon deeper verbal inspection, I discovered that

he could not see. He hadn't seen well since the camp meeting. A month later I asked how his vision was. He said he had been healed.

A few months passed. His wife, children and I were in his car headed for Kemmerer, Wyoming. He was interviewing for a meat cutting job. I was in the front seat. Sam's wife and children were in the back seat.

Sam kept increasing his speed as we drove up the winding mountain road. I was becoming used to seeing nothing but cliffs while looking out my window. Finally, I asked why he kept speeding up. He said some fool was driving on his tail and every time he sped up, he caught up with him.

As I turned to see who was following, Sam remarked saying, "I wonder why that car has flashing lights on it." After talking to the police officer, he returned asking me to drive. His license, like his driving, rightly declared that he needed corrective eye lenses.

Since that day I have had a problem with declaring something as if the act of declaring it, forces God into doing my bidding, especially when it involves something God has promised, like healing. Understand, I know people get healed by God all the time. I just doubt that you have to smash your glasses and drive blind to prove that God can heal.

## BY HIS WORD AND HIS WILL

In 1974 Holy Spirit poured out on our small community of about 110 people. Most of these were children under the age of 18. The previous year, one of the community members who had been born of the Spirit of God by placing his faith in what Jesus had done, began praying for a revival.

On about August 5, 1974, I had just finished reading the Book of Acts for the first time. I was as frustrated as a dog with a pork chop tied to its cropped tail. All my life I had been asked to believe in this Jesus because He did miracles, and I had never seen one. Well, at least not like the ones spoken of in the New Testament.

I was so disgusted, I picked up that Bible and flung it from my front room through two doorways to the opposite end of the house. As it fluttered with pages flopping on its journey to the wall, I realized I would be lucky to be able to toss a ball

through two abnormally short doorways from the front room to the back wall of our bedroom. Smash! The book not only made it to the back wall, but struck about half way up with such force the binding broke.

As I fetched it and discovered the broken back, I felt a deep sense of sadness. The Bible had been given to me by my now deceased Grandmother (the one with the stick). I had just seen a miracle, but instead of rejoicing, I wallowed in self pity.

On August 7, 1974, I was reading about a Zen Roshi named Benkei. He was quoted as saying something like, “I marvel that people have come to me seeking for the ocean, where I have been sitting my whole life. Then they rejoice when I simply scoop up a cup of it and hand it to them.” In an instant I was awakened. But to what? I did not know that day nor the next. I simply reveled in the ability to ‘see’ the God of creation in and behind everything, both in purpose as well as event. My enthusiasm lasted until the end of the 9th day of August. By then I realized I was in a relationship with God, but in an impersonal way. There was God, but that was that.

## NEW LIFE

*B*y the evening of the 10th day of August I was hungering, no aching, for a personal relationship with God. Reading about miracles which happened centuries ago is fun, but not personal. Also, looking at God being present but not personal, was also frustrating if not disappointing. All I could think of was the eternal agony of living before this God of Majesty, but with no way to have a relationship. It was like finding a new planet on which to live with all the things I desired, but no one with whom to share it. This was much like my experience of controlling each day, but on steroids.

That night, after dinner, I went straight home to pout. I thought it would have been better never to have been ‘enlightened’. As I plopped myself down in my chair, I looked to my right where my now broken Bible lay on the end table. I opened my mouth and without rehearsal said, “Jesus...if You

are there...you can have me, but here is the deal, I give up trying to be good enough for You.”

Before I could finish the phrase “I give up trying to be good enough for You.” He walked through my front door (not visibly but Personally), walked over to where I was sitting, ever so gently, but firmly entered my heart, my person. In an instant, the God out there was both in here and out there at the same time. The Eternal Creator of everything was resident within. We had become one.

Within a few seconds, now flooded with joy and peace, I put my feet together on my footstool and watched my left foot grow out nearly half an inch as my bowed legs also grew much straighter. Oh! The whole time, since He had entered my heart, I was praising Him in some language other than English. I went from being 5’ 8 3/4” tall to 5’ 9”. I did not know that at the moment, but later it became evident.

Being myself, I wanted to share this new found joy. I called Linda in and told her what I just told you. She was polite and listened, and unknown to me, she began to watch me closely. None of my previous epiphanies had stuck. She was measuring the truth of the claims I had been making.

Over the next week I came to know Jesus as my Brother, Friend, LORD, and God. By His very Holy Spirit alive in me, He was eager not only to commune with me, but to live me (I did not understand that at first). I eagerly began to share my growing experiences with this Personal God.

Living in the midst of a community which claimed to be Christian, I assumed that I was a late comer to this way of living. But, when I shared what I thought others would



immediately rejoice over, I found glazed eyes and experienced very short conversations. Like an ugly duckling, I swam from corner to corner of my small pond hoping someone would rejoice with me. During this time, I literally believed everyone was saved and I was the last one to know this truth, this experience. I could only conclude that my explanations of what was happening were not according to their lingo.

One afternoon, not long afterwards, Linda, my sister-in-law, my friend Tom, and I kneeled around a braided rug in our multi-purpose room. I prayed, Linda prayed, then our sister-in-law prayed, and finally Tom. Afterwards, there was this huge deafening silence. To fill the space, I began to sing, only out came another of those ‘other-than-English’ moments. It must have lasted around two minutes. Then that uncomfortable silence returned.

Suffering total embarrassment, I turned to Tom and suggested we drive to the fields and turn the water. While driving about five miles north of the community to the fields, the truck was flooded with more of that silence and my embarrassment grew. About half way there, I turned to Tom and said, “I suppose you don’t believe in Holy Spirit.” Instantly he replied with a glint in his voice, “Yes, I do...” After a short, but long pause, he concluded, “You can’t sing that good!”

Just a few months ago I mentioned the prayer and song to my sister-in-law. Just that fast she said, “I knew that was God. You can’t sing that good!” So there you have it. God can sing good through anyone!

## TOO MUCH TOO FAST

*B*ack to Tom and me in the fields. After turning the water, we headed back to the truck. We took off our muddied boots and placed them in the back with the shovels and other irrigation equipment. Tom jumped into the driver's seat, but just sat there. I, trying to avoid an exposed spring in the seat, scooted over closer to the middle of the truck. Tom just sat there, staring ahead.

I found my left arm leaving my lap and in a windmill fashion traveling over to Tom's shoulder and neck. As it did, in my mental eye, I saw him getting saved, being baptized, the priestly system of the community not enjoying all the ways God was doing mighty things among them, us being kicked out of the community, and my friend eventually disappearing from my life.

I resisted it all in my heart and mind, but like a cruise missile being driven on a mission beyond human control, my

arm landed on his shoulders. Tom turned to me and said, "I want to accept Jesus as my Lord." Without a word, he exited the driver's side of the truck as I exited the passenger's side. Barefooted, we made our way over stones and past stickers to the back of the truck. There, for some unknown reason, we held hands with our wrists crossed. I thought that was odd.

He bowed his head and began to call upon our Lord asking Him to take his life, use it to His glory, and forgive him of his sins. He specifically cried out for having killed his four year old brother. It was an accident which had haunted him ever since it had happened. This younger brother adored Tom. One day after Tom exited his home, he jumped into his truck and backed out not realizing his young brother had followed after him. As he backed out of the driveway, his young brother was run over by the wheels. He was dead, and something in Tom had died too.

After Tom finished praying, he looked up at me. I had been peeking the whole time. The sad soul who had called on the Lord was gone. He was smiling out from eternity. His soul was washed clean and he instantly said, "I want to be baptized." Remembering the vision I had just seen, I suggested we go back to the community and have a priest do that. He insisted we do it then and there.

Within a few moments we stood in the irrigation ditch. He cried out to the Lord, filled with thanksgiving that He had transformed his life. Tom knew he was sharing both in His death and resurrection. It was a short proclamation, but so right on. I asked myself, "Where did that come from?"

I had seen a couple of baptisms and tried to mimic them by

saying something like, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” He went down and then I raised him up. As he was raised up, so were his arms and voice, only he too was proclaiming God’s goodness in something other than English.

Being ‘very quick’, I realized I was swimming in prophecies, visions, and events of souls turning to God like those I had read about in the Book of Acts. My Personal God had once again poured out His Holy Spirit on parched earth only to hear it proclaim His goodness and mercy.

Sometime during the next week, Tom and I were in the old shop fixing a tire when Ken (fictitious name) came in. Almost instantly we invited him to join us in a prayer circle. Tom prayed, I prayed and then Ken prayed. Without prompting, Ken cried out to the Lord to save his soul, wash him clean, and fill him with Holy Spirit. By now you know the answer to such prayers.

## MY BAPTISM

A day later Tom baptized Ken in the same ditch. Two weeks after I had baptized Tom, we were once again turning water on that same field. The pump we used produced the sweetest, purest water which was also cold and flowed like a fast moving river. We used several four inch siphons for each panel and watered three to four panels at a time. It was late on a hot, sunny August afternoon. Like some epiphany, I realized I had not been baptized. I asked Tom to baptize me. He agreed and after taking off our waders, we entered the ditch.

Without much ado I said something like, "I understand I have died in You and have been raised up in You, Jesus. I thank you. Hallelujah !" Before I could get a big breath of air, Tom put me under the water. But something was wrong. I realized I was bouncing off the bottom of the ditch watching Tom grow smaller and smaller as we separated. Becoming short of breath and rehearsing thoughts in my head that I was

not supposed to raise myself up, I became angry. I talked to God about it and was convinced that I was not the one to raise myself up. What was I to do?

As the breath within me became less than useful, some man in a blue and white plaid, flannel, long sleeved shirt reached down and lifted me up out of the water and stood me on my feet. As I wiped the water from my eyes, I could hear Tom, who was now some distance from me, praising the Lord. I thanked my new friend for raising me up, but when I turned to face him, there was no 'him' to be found. I could see 35 miles to the North, 50 miles to the South, three miles to the East and 25 miles to the West. You might think that I fell on my face right then and praised God for intervening.

Instead, I felt I was exercising my right to be 'angry and sin not'. I trudged up the canal like a bull ready to gore a bull fighter. With appropriate anger, shoulder tight and back bent I came up to Tom, who had never stopped praising God. I interrupted him, saying, "Why didn't you pull me out of the water?"

He replied, "I was too busy praising the Lord."

Almost every time he baptized someone, he needed a gentle reminder to pause his praising of Jesus and raise them out of the water. I even suggested once that he learn to do both at the same time. Well, I do not know if I actually said that out loud.

## LINDA FINDS LIFE

Within another week God added another to our clan of believers. Tom, Ken and I had just returned from turning the water. It was about two o'clock in the morning. After entering the house, Linda walked up to me, looked just past me and to my right, and said to the unseen person, "I want what he has." Before she had finished that prayer I had watched her go from a struggling soul to one dressed in peace, hope and love. She like Tom, instantly asked to be baptized.

Just a side note, Linda's father was the High Priest of the community and I knew that if I baptized her, there would be 'hell to pay'. I thought I'd let God choose whether Tom, Ken, or I 'caught hell'. Like the Apostles, when making major decisions, I decided to let God choose who would baptize her by drawing straws. I found our broom, grabbed a long bristle, broke it into three varying lengths of straw and let my brothers

in Jesus draw for the privilege of ‘catching hell’. Tom won the draw, and about a year and a half later I caught hell for it.

Within minutes we were walking to the nearby reservoir which was as much silt and mud as water. There Linda and Tom searched out the deepest point and down she went without any preliminaries. Just as quickly, and for me a miracle, Tom pulled her up. He was praising God and she was speaking Hawaiian.

Well, I didn’t know Hawaiian, but having watched several Hawaii Five-0 episodes, it sounded like Hawaiian to me. I turned to Ken and asked if he thought that too. He said he thought it might be.

We arrived home, I checked to see that the boys were okay as Linda bathed. By four in the morning, she was with us in the front room. I asked Tom if he thought Linda was speaking Hawaiian when she came out of the water. He looked at me like I was crazier than usual. He quickly replied, “She was praising God in English.”

Ken and I reported our experience. Linda reported she knew she was praising God from her heart, but that the words were not English. I asked Tom if he could recall anything she had said. He just repeated that she was praising Jesus.



## THE CALL

Several years previous, back in the fall of 1969, Linda and I were attending a revival meeting in a 7th Day Adventist Church. We attended every night for about a week. After an audition, they even let Linda play ‘Dwelling in Beulah Land’ on her violin. I am so glad that song was on her violin for her to play. I love that song. After the revival, we may have visited once or twice, but no more.

A few months later, two of the women from that congregation drove up in front of the house where we were renting an apartment, just as I was mowing the lawn (with a push mower). Happy to pause, I looked up and wondered why they had come. I did not have long to find out. In a moment they were out of their car, next to me, saying that the Lord had sent them to pray for me. This was really strange. People had not heard from the Lord concerning me before, other than my Grandmother with the stick. This was a bit unnerving.

My body stood still, but internally my spirit drew back a step. I consented to their prayer and as they put their hands on my shoulders, one on each side, I knew this was a special moment. How they prayed was most odd. Since that time I now understand that they were declaring God's word over me.

One said, "The Lord has called you for a special task in the not too distant future. He is going to use you to lead many to Him." The other woman said, "Amen". Just as quickly, they jumped into the car and drove off.

I have never seen either of them again.

## MAKING MYSELF AVAILABLE

Within a month Linda and I visited the founder of the church in the desert. While I looked at him lying on the couch in front of me, I could see that he was physically wasting away. As we chatted, he informed me with tears that he thought of himself as a failure. I was shocked and taken aback. I never thought I would accomplish as many things as he had to further the kingdom of God. To my knowledge, I haven't.

Replying, I asked how he had failed. He said that he had only wanted to bring the people to know and love Jesus as their Lord. If you knew how the people acted around God and each other, you might agree that he had not arrived at the desire of his heart.

No sooner had he finished his statement, than out of my mouth and straight from my heart came the words, "When you

get upstairs, let Jesus know He can use me in any way He desires to help that come to pass.”

Little did I know that in order for Jesus to set the stage for that prayer to be answered, Linda and I would have to go through a series of very emotionally painful experiences. But even then, I knew that the prayer of the two women was somehow tied to my pledge to Jesus to use me as He saw fit.

## WE WOULD SEE JESUS

Shortly after that experience I stumbled across a book titled “We Would See Jesus” written by Roy and Revel Hession. I loved it so much I ordered 100 books. They were expensive, \$0.75 each. Apparently it took several weeks for them to arrive, for by then I had temporarily separated from Linda and our firstborn and returned alone to the Midwest. A letter arrived from her father one day asking me what he should do with the books. I wrote back saying, “Give them to everyone in the church who wants one.” He did.

For Linda and me the book is still so impactful that our website revolves around the same theme.

A free internet copy is available at our website. Here is the IP address. <http://www.itransformyou.com/we-would-see-jesus.html>.

I still highly recommend it. It is life changing, if you are willing to see Jesus.

## YOU ARE KIDDING!

Can you imagine getting bitten by two rattlesnakes at the same time? That is what happened to the founder of the church whom I mentioned in a previous chapter. A few months earlier, he was out on the desert digging around in some old machinery when one rattle snake attached to his left wrist and the other on the inside of his left arm just below the elbow. By instinct he grabbed the one stuck to his inner arm to pull it off. As he pulled the snake, its fangs plowed a set of tracks down his arm ending an inch or so from where the other snake had bitten him.

Without much ado he returned to camp and into our home. There he cleansed the wounds and soon left. I was concerned that he was not being concerned. Even so, what could we do? We lived 110 miles from the closest ‘good’ medical facility. If he was going to die from the bites, he was going to die.

He did not die, but within a month or so he suffered a

severe stroke on his right side. Like the diligent and creative man he was, he instantly made a device that exercised both his leg and arm in concert with his other leg and arm. The contraption sort of mimicked a person walking. The right arm would go out as the left leg went out and vice versa. His recovery was quick and profound.

## DISAPPEARING ACT

When he did die, his death was a disappearing act. I never saw him again after that meeting. He knew that some people almost revered him. He so desired to have them focus on the Bible, Jesus, and loving one another that he decided to disappear without a funeral. So, per his request, a select few took his body to a different state and placed it in an unmarked grave. Only a couple of people knew its location. These men are dying off.

One told me that a freeway now runs over his body, while another claims it is not true. I'm curious about where his body is buried, but he has been dead some 48 years and I find no reason to dig it up.

Within a few years, between 1974 and 1976, most of the people for whom he had been concerned came to see Jesus as their Lord, Savior and God and trust Him for their eternal life.



## TRIP TO ILLINOIS

*I*n 1971 Linda joined me in the midwest for the next 15 months where she gave birth to our second awesome son. Yes, just in case you're reading this, you, our first son, are awesome too.

To help us care for our two sons, a bed-ridden woman, and her irritated husband, two of Linda's sisters had ventured to our home for the summer. One found work to help pay for her upcoming first year of college. She walked about a mile and a half to work and then back each day. Linda and her youngest sister cared for the elderly couple. By the way, that elderly couple were then the age we are today and we are NOT elderly.

During that time I returned to college, to a school which has since become a university. While there, I discovered that all the cute girls I thought I wanted to marry were no longer

cute. Through the years I have come to appreciate that God has gifted me with my perfect mate. She has been loving to a fault, and true to her heart that has always put her family before her personal needs. I can boldly declare that next to Jesus, I love her the most.

## THE SON SHOWS UP

I remember once, after endless weeks of being house bound and burdened with the care of the elderly bed-ridden woman and her husband, we obtained permission from their daughter to leave them unattended for a couple of hours. All six of us ventured out to get a free dinner, well that is another story.

Upon our return we were confronted with the couple's son, whom we had never previously met. He only lived an hour and a half away, but almost never visited his parents. He berated my wife because he and his family had found his mother in her bed (where she constantly remained at her own request). She was soiled with her feces and he had to clean her up. I might mention that for all Linda's obligations which included complete full time care of the couple, cooking and serving their meals, house cleaning, laundry, and food

purchase, we enjoyed room and board only. She was on 24/7 call and did not even have a beeper.

I, like usual, maintained a short tempered man's cool, and confronted right back. I mentioned that his mother would, more often than not, wait until she had soiled the bed before calling for help and I was thrilled that he had the opportunity to appreciate what we (Linda) were doing. He fired us on the spot.

We said we would be out the next morning and he could care for his mother the rest of the night and from then on. We called his sister, his parents' legal guardian, to inform her of the event. She asked us to give the phone to her brother. She fired him and reinstated us. However, that event soured us from continuing to serve this family, who apart from this event had treated us very kindly. We set our sights on returning to Utah at the end of the summer.

As I look back on this couple I am ashamed for not respecting and loving them. I was so self absorbed at that time. I hope they are in that gauntlet to God's throne as I enter heaven. I pray for a moment to let them know how much I regret ignoring their real needs, a hug and a listening ear.

## CHRIST TYPE PEOPLE

*B*efore we talk about jumping into the Econoline Van and heading west with my father driving, I want to mention Cleetis and Opha. The husband of the couple, for whom we had been providing care, was a brother to Opha. She and her husband Cleetis lived, during the summers, in an upstairs apartment next door. In the winter they lived in Florida. Cleetis could not speak due to a stroke and Opha made up for his lack. They were strange people, always talking about Jesus, His love, and His invitation to us to receive that love and enjoy him forever.

Well, as I mentioned, Opha spoke while Cleetis glowed. They were genuine loving people who lived what they offered. I was awakened to my lack of having what they had, but for whatever reason I did not want to venture too close for fear of catching something I could not get rid of. Like so many, I now hope to give them at least one big hug when I get HOME.

I had fallen into all sorts of debauchery including Boone's Farm wine and inhaling. I really liked the wine. In fact, I failed at ever getting 'stoned' by inhaling. I think the deep fear of going to a federal prison cut any high I might have had. Other than that I started to discover that the flesh has no end of ways to suggest that I could be happier if I submitted to its desires. Bah Humbug! Right now I'm at my favorite coffee shop and three policemen are but a few feet away. I wonder if I should delete this paragraph?

Is coffee legal?

One hour with Cleetis and Opha brought me more peace than any wine or whatever. But the fear of becoming engulfed by Mr. Love kept me out of His reach for another two years.

## A CALL TO PRAYER

There was another man who reminded me of Opha. A year or so later, after I had returned to the desert community, a man asked me if I wanted to join him in the community's prayer trailer and pray all night. I was into being holier than others and this sounded like a way to do it. I had forgotten to review a few problems with the plan. First, this man was nuts and I was going to be trapped with him for the night. Well, he was odd. Next, the trailer had two candles and no heater. Last, but not least, I liked my sleep more than praying all night.

Upon arriving at the trailer, I remembered that I loved my sleep more than praying. I also remembered it was about 10 below zero that night. This only reminded me of why I liked sleeping at night in a warm house, under a blanket, and next to my wife.

Well, I hung in there through his first 15 to 20 minute

prayer. I said my 10 second prayer. He prayed his second 10 minute installment. I had slipped down to a five-second prayer. He then did something which for me was very uncomfortable. He put his hand on my head and began to ask God to save me and fill me with His Spirit.

When he said he wanted me filled with His Spirit, I thought he meant he wanted me filled with his own spirit. If I let that happen, I'd not only pray all night in a freezing trailer 15 minutes at a time, but do all sorts of other nutty things like he did. Like my escape from Grandma and the yardstick, I bolted out the door leaving it to blow in the breeze.

As I snuggled next to my wife, I realized life had dimensions for me to explore which I had never yet imagined. After a good night's sleep, I forgot it all.

Well, almost.



## MAKE US CLOSE

Speaking of cuddling up to Linda, over the next while we grew apart. Okay, we were at war over this and that, and for sure over doctrine. One night as I slipped into our bed on the floor, I cried out with my voice to God asking Him to make us close again. Just about that fast, a deep tangible darkness entered the room. If I said I was frightened I'd be downplaying my experience by a trillion times. It was a 'face to face' with that dark one or so I thought it was.

It did not matter if it were God or the other guy, the presence of this darkness drove us into each other's arms out of fear. As we clung to one another, the darkness lifted but the answer to my prayer was in my arms.

Since then I have added to my life experience with Linda a specific prayer. It goes like this.

"Father...make me love her."

Within a few moments to a few days I find I am loving her afresh. Actually, I love her more deeply today than ever before. As I find His Spirit creating a desire within me to love, my love for Linda grows deeper.

## TOUGH TIMES

The one you enjoy life with the most can also be the bane of your existence. It can be a challenge to learn that God has placed that very special person in your life to help you experience the best and worst. It is better to learn that they are the visual manifestation of every opportunity to practice love and forgiveness. There is no license in God's economy to hate your spouse and children just to turn around and love other people's spouses and children.

Just now, in the city where I live, many Christian marriages are being challenged by the same problem. Some call it the spirit of Jezebel. I simply recognize it as a very bad attitude that needs to live somewhere other than in any relationship, public or private. If I could talk to that spirit face to face, I would let it know that my desire is for its great grandmother to be barren.

In short, women are being attacked with a spirit of fear and

a sense of powerlessness. It does not seem that way, because they are in fact feeling empowered and commissioned to do great things for God.

*Here is a principle: one never needs anything until they first feel like they lack something. There is no lack in Christ. But those feeling lack believe they have to do something not to feel lack. Along come words like empowerment, getting more and more of this or that thing, experience or ability. They feel marginalized and then do this or that to feel empowered.*

Our modern Eves are again being spoken to by the deceiver who says, “What you have is not good enough,” but with a twist, “Your spouse needs to step up and eat what you have eaten for you to be able to trust his judgement.”

Even worse, some who are joyfully drawing close to God are listening to others tell them that their spouses can steal their joy by not being as close to God as they are. This form of fear turns into arrogance and disrespect for everyone else’s dance with the eternal Love of Father.

Sadly, the targets of this spirit of fear end up distrusting Love. Not just every human effort to love one another, but Mr. Love Himself. If they have been trying, they try harder. When that does not bring peace to their souls, they seek others to strengthen their efforts to create peace by getting them to agree with their grievances against their spouses and children, especially their sons.

From the male’s point of view, it is Satan’s attempt to

emotionally castrate every male. This is of course the direct opposite of the desired outcome by the women.

Equal value before God becomes a demand for equality defined by sameness. The war rages in their souls and spills out on everyone else creating a 'them-us' line in the sand.

Husbands find it easier to work long hours than to face another encounter with the accuser. Soon, both decide the other's God is less than perfect and believe that after they divorce their spouse, their relationship with their personal God will blossom. Each ends up worshipping the god of 'getting better'.

## A FRIEND'S STORIES

A friend of mine knew Keith Green. One day while visiting Keith, he met Bob Dylan who had been invited to Texas to meet with Keith. As they chatted, Bob declared that any trek toward God was as good as any other. After listening to this line of reasoning Keith replied to Bob, “You could not be more wrong if you tried. Now, permit me to tell you the truth.”

After he shared with Bob the gift of grace, Jesus the very Son of God, Bob was humbled and received Jesus as the Lord of his life. My friend wanted Keith to commit to a discipling process with Bob, but Keith said, “Let God handle it.”

This same friend, William, was employed as an air traffic controller in Phoenix. A church in San Diego called him to an unpaid co-pastor position. After putting all his belongings in a duffle bag, he drove his car west while his heart and mind wanted to return to Phoenix. About the time he was going to

turn his car around, it broke down. Okay, the piston rod was exposed. For those not knowing what that means, it means the car was really, really broken.

William exited the car with his duffle bag and decided not to return to Phoenix, but continued heading west. Not long afterwards, a three hour dust storm caused him to take his jacket, pull it up over his head like a hoody, and wait out the storm. Soon after the storm had passed and he had shaken off as much dust as possible, a U-Haul truck with three young women stopped. They asked him where he was going. He replied, San Diego. They were headed to Los Angeles. For William that was good enough.

Soon he was riding in the back of the truck, in the dark, with the door closed. Some time later the girls stopped by a restaurant and began to have differing opinions concerning William. When they continued their journey, they did so without William.

Having about \$250 in his pocket, he confidently headed toward the restaurant for some lunch. Before he opened the door he noticed a young woman with two children (the oldest being about four years of age) sitting on the curb crying. After a short inquiry, he discovered that the woman's husband had abandoned them. She had no money and did not know what to do. Without a thought, he emptied his pockets and gave all his money to her. After a short conversation, she gave her heart to the Lord. At the insistence of William, the woman promised to share that same Jesus with her sons when they came to the age of accountability. Just then a man appeared willing to take the woman and her children to the nearest Greyhound Station.

William turned to go into the restaurant only to remember he was broke. With thumb out by the side of the road, a car stopped. The young couple asked where he was going. They too were headed for Los Angeles and William said that would be good enough.

Soon the couple pulled over to go into another restaurant and asked if he wanted to go in with them. He said he wanted to stay in the car and sleep. He did. When they returned, they handed him a sandwich and a drink. They asked if he were broke, to which he confessed he was. They said that Father God always provides our needs and that William should not have been ashamed to mention his need. From there to Los Angeles they rejoiced in God's love for them and their love for Jesus. Once in Los Angeles, they dropped William off, still penniless.

After getting his bearings, he noticed a gas station across the road. It was in fact a gas station where he had worked some years before. He remembered the kindness of the owner and wondered if he could get a short term job, enough to continue his journey to his new co-pastorate position.

A woman was in the office. He asked for the owner by name and was informed he had passed away a few years earlier. She then divulged that she was the owner's wife and the present owner of the gas station. She informed him that she had no positions open at that time. Then she asked William for his name. Upon hearing his name, her face lit up. She asked him to stay where he was, went to her safe, opened it, retrieved an envelope, and returned. As she handed the



envelope to William she said they had had it for years. They did not know his forwarding address.

It was from the IRS. Hesitantly he opened it to find a \$500 refund. He asked if she believed in miracles. She said she didn't. After reciting the same story I have just recited to you, he said, "Well, you have just been part of a life saving miracle to me." Before he left her, she too had asked Jesus to be Lord of her life.

Next stop, San Diego.

As he finished this story I noticed tears in his eyes and a lump in his throat. Then I noticed the same in mine.

## THEY SAY NO

About five years back, Linda and I were busy translating part of the Greek New Testament when we happened to strike up a conversation with a woman we had never seen before. In just a few minutes we knew a lot about this person. She suffered chronic pain. I have a couple of those myself. At that time in my life, I did not pray for people at the drop of a hat. Yet, I knew God wanted to heal her, really! How did I know? I don't know, but I did. She seemed to sense it too.

She was quite a talker so I took her next pause to interrupt and ask if she would like me to pray for her. To my amazement, she interrupted me by saying something like, "I can handle the pain, I don't need to bother God with this problem." I had not asked her if I could pray, I had only begun to address the problem. She continued to talk to us for a minute more, but now uneasily. Then just like that, she turned

and left. The power of God ready to heal her fell to the floor, and like a tired dog, curled up and went to sleep.

Just a year ago, and now having become a ready-to-pray-all-the-time person, I wanted to encourage Linda to do the same. While at our favorite coffee shop a woman came and sat down adjacent to me. Her knee was extra large. Her face was drawn with pain and eyes only focused on half the world.

I asked Linda to go pray for her. Linda said, "I pray for people all the time." I said, "Okay then, this is one of those times." She continued with a second excuse, "What if she doesn't want prayer?" I said, "She will let you know."

Linda got up, went to the woman and was back in less than 15 seconds. She reported that she had asked if she could pray for her knee, and the woman had said, "No, I have ibuprofen." I was shocked. Love showing up in the form of a stranger willing to pray for you and you instantly want more drugs. Priorities!

## SHE NEEDS YOU

*J*ust the year before, while making our yearly trek to Illinois, I felt the nudge to stop at a particular rest area as we were traveling down the road. It was about nine in the morning. As I parked the car, I spied a woman with pain on her face sitting on a low stone wall rubbing her left knee. Spirit told me we had stopped to pray for her.

As I exited the car I noticed she had on a uniform of sorts and I suggested to Spirit that she was probably working and I should not interrupt. In a flash I was reminded for whom I worked and my heart was informed it was commissioned to pray for her. Okay then, I walked up to her and asked if her leg hurt? She said she had been working since six that morning and was taking a break.

Well, we were not communicating. By her next statement I

concluded my English words interpreted by her Spanish ears had said to her, "Get up and get back to work."

Now she directed the pain I had seen in her face toward me. I was her pain. It got cold! I dropped the effort and went into the restroom. There is something very Freudian about blank walls and as I stared at the one in front of me I said to Spirit, "I tried." Instantly, I sensed Him saying something like, "I did not ask you to try to pray for her, but pray for her. Go!"

On the way out of the restroom I prayed Linda would be coming out at the same time. Her Spanish is much better than mine. She was exiting her restroom just as I exited mine. I told her what was up and she went up to the woman and in Spanglish was able to communicate our desire to pray for her. She said yes. I knelt down on one knee in front of her and pointed at the knee I thought was bothering her and with a quizzical look and a tip of my head asked if it were. Her nodding head said yes.

Now my prayers are both short and less than eloquent. I said something like, "Lord Jesus, heal this knee." I stood up and asked her if it felt better. My Spanish was no better and Linda had to Spanglish the question all over again. She shrugged her shoulders. We asked her to walk around. She did. The limp told me it wasn't completely healed. She reported it was less painful.

Well, I had done my part and was ready to leave what was for me an uncomfortable situation. Now Spirit said, "Pray again." We asked her if we could pray again. In an instant we were being questioned as to our brand of faith. I replied saying with my finger pointed to heaven, "God."

She gave us the right to pray again, I touched her right knee. I had noticed her other knee was hurting too. Linda prayed for that knee. After the prayer I turned and walked away. Linda followed after a goodbye. Halfway to the car and over the noise of the busy freeway, we heard her shouting. Turning to see what was up, we saw her face covered from ear to ear with the grandest smile and moving around like a flamenco dancer. She gave us the thumbs up and we drove off.

I might as well conclude this story by telling you about the young girl we found in the middle of a side street where traffic would often quickly turn in. She had driven off the curb and fallen off her bicycle onto her left knee. She was writhing in pain and whimpering as she rubbed it. Linda and I blocked the traffic from coming into the road. I knelt down by her and asked if she was injured other than the knee. All she could do was shake her head 'no' and continue to cry as she rubbed the knee.

After inspecting the bike and righting a few things, I knelt down by her and asked if I could pray for her knee. She whimpered, "Yes." I gently put my hand on her knee. There was a soft cushion of something between her knee and my hand. Again, with eloquence, I said, "Dear Jesus, in the name of Jesus heal her."

After turning back to the bike and taking it to the sidewalk, I noticed she was standing next to me. Without any sign of pain or discomfort she adjusted her backpack, said, "Thank you," and rode her bicycle away without a sign of discomfort.

## PLEASE PRAY FOR MY HUSBAND

Life is full of lessons. This one happened while I was working at the Salt Lake City Water Department as a draftsman. The drafting department was in the partially sunlit basement of the Water Department building. Directly across the hall was the lunchroom. One day I broke my usual routine of eating a quick lunch at my desk while working and then taking a power nap in the closet just to the right of my desk.

As I was finishing my lunch, a woman, whom I had seen working upstairs, came in and walked up to me. She was distraught. I asked what was wrong. She told me her husband was dying of cancer and did not have long to live. I asked if she would like prayer. She said, “Yes.”

I said something like, “Lord, I cast that cancer out of her husband and claim absolute healing and a long life with his

wife.” She stopped crying and with a shocked look on her face turned and quickly exited up the stairs.

The next day the Water Commissioner of the Salt Lake City Water Department, whom I knew and liked, approached me with anger and demanded that I never pray for anyone again on any city property. Not giving notice of compliance or defiance, I asked why he would ask such a thing. It was my grown up ‘so’ coming out. He informed me that Betty, I did not know her name and this one I hope is fictitious, was all upset over my prayer. I was confused and asked him why. He reiterated his wish. I said nothing and went back to work.

The next Wednesday I heard that her husband had died and that the funeral was that weekend. I did not attend. Now what I say next explains the whole confusing event. The very next Wednesday, one week from her husband’s death, she was in the cafeteria again only not alone. She was showing off her new boyfriend—no, fiancé.

Just that fast I realized my prayer was exactly what she did not want. Her husband hanging around any longer was not her goal. Apparently, the prayer had enough authority in it to scare her. For me I have learned, to a certain degree, to ask people what they want. Not always, but most often.

Jesus said we could receive what we ask for if we ask with unwavering faith. Most people want prayer, but a surprisingly great number of these do not want to receive what they say they want from the prayer.



## HEALED OF HEP C

I know a man who over a 20 year period had three intense treatments for Hepatitis C. The first two seemed to have healed him and then failed to hold the course. When I met him, he was new to faith in Jesus and showed up to Sunday school, church, and midweek men's Bible study. As the disease worsened, we all increased our prayers.

I must admit I really like this guy, but it has not been reciprocated. Even so, I always enjoy him when I see him. Well, back to the story.

He had a medical emergency that covered their medical deductible. In just a short time it was evident that the door to his life was closing. He then heard of a new treatment, but thought it would bankrupt them. Upon investigation, he discovered he was not only eligible for the treatment, but because his deductible had been met the treatment would cost him nothing or something close to that.

Over the next year we rooted for him and I never, when remembering him, forgot to lift my heart to God for his recovery. Soon we got word of his complete healing, and just as quick his life became so busy we were lucky to see him at all. He never comes to Bible study.

## THAI CHICKEN

So that's what it feels like to suffocate!

These were just about the last thoughts I had after a piece of Thai Chicken had gotten caught sideways in my throat. Linda was in the car with me. We had decided to take the meal to a parking lot that overlooked a grassy area and a busy road. After a few bites it happened.

As a child I had swallowed a huge chunk of ice the milkman had given me and it had shut off my windpipe. There is just something about expiring that is unnatural. Food is good, but breath is the best! Ice melts after a time, but chicken is forever. The childhood panic I had learned to overcome knowing ice would melt lingered deep within and thank goodness it came to calm me in this event.

However, I knew the chicken would not melt and needed to be extracted. With each effort to dislodge it by coughing I came up shorter on breath. Linda offered to help by doing the

Heimlich maneuver, but I refused. She had just had surgery a few days earlier. I did not want her assisting me to cause her any problems.

By the third time when I bent over and coughed, I was dizzy and giddy. That is when I said laughingly to myself,

*“So that’s what it feels like to suffocate!”*

I took one last chance, opened the door of the car, turned myself as upside down as possible and coughed out the last bit of breath I had. The chicken went out with it. In an instant I sucked in all the air I had lost and then some.

With the very next breath, all was right. I sat back in the driver’s seat, took another breath, and downed another piece of chicken.

## GIRL UNDER THE TRUCK

I had always wanted to be a hero. Really! I envisioned myself whisking a child from eminent death. Somehow it would be filmed by the nightly news crew and broadcasted for days. My name would become a household name for being selfless. Parents would ask their spouse and children, “Have you become a Chicquette today?” Everyone would be proud of me and want to be just like me.

We lived on the second floor of a three story apartment building overlooking the city library. We often checked out slide projectors with slides and accompanying cassette tapes with recordings of Bible stories. Since we had no television, we used the library to borrow records, tapes and books. It was a memorable way to be a family, hovering over high tech Bible study devices.

One Saturday afternoon Linda, the boys, and I were leaving the apartment building. As we exited the front door, I

heard a truck to my left. Looking up, I saw my neighbors backing up a large truck which was filled with all their belongings. I was shocked for two reasons. First, I did not know they were moving. Second, a young girl was toddling right towards the truck and was about to be run over by the bobtailed tires. In a split second I was waving at the driver. He and his wife smiled and waved back, but the truck continued to move toward the girl.

They were about a quarter of a block from us, but in an instant I found myself diving under the truck grabbing the girl and rolling out the other side protecting her with my chest and elbows from harm as we rolled. Because the truck never stopped, I had to stand up with her still in my arms and run to the far side of the truck. They continued on their way, and soon disappeared after taking a right turn at the stop sign at the end of the street.

The young girl had neither said anything, nor cried. She was maybe two at the most. As I was bouncing her in my arms and checking her arms and legs for damage, I became self aware that I was holding someone else's child and that could look strange.

I looked for the camera crew and only saw Linda and the boys who did not seem that interested in my heroism. Later I learned they were in a state of shock. Apparently I had been next to them one moment and gone the next.

I asked the girl, "Where is mommy?" She pointed at the library. The side door was open. It was a very warm sunny day and fans were in the doorways trying to cool down the library.

I put the girl down inside the library and asked her where

her mother was. Within moments she was next to a young lady. I told her what had happened. She was so absorbed in looking for a book, she virtually ignored me. After looking down at her daughter, she continued her looking through the stacks. As I left, I noticed the girl wandering towards the open front door.

I realized, without people noticing, you're not a hero. You're just God sent. I like that better.

## WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS?

When I was about 18 months old, I remember my grandmother (the one who owned the stick) running with me in her arms to the front room of her house, rocking me almost violently and crying, as she declared between her sobs “NO! NO! He’s dead!” I apparently had just stopped breathing or somehow suffocated.

Hearing the commotion, my mother ran into the room inquiring about what was going on. After Grandma declared again that I was dead, my mother grabbed me from her arms declaring I wasn’t dead. Well, this went on for a few moments as I watched from across the room.

From my vantage point, hovering just under the ceiling, I was just fine and I had to agree with my mother that I was not dead. In fact, I had never felt better. Everything was absolutely peaceful for me, and just like the person we are in our dreams,



I was able to watch everything, yet feel all the fear and sadness without having it alter my peace. I just watched.

I was more than willing to hover there forever, except for all the drama. Shortly after my mother took me from Grandma, declaring me alive, I was back in my body. Now, however, I was awash with all the emotions bouncing off the walls of the house, as well as coming from the hearts of my mother and grandmother.

Since that time, death doesn't scare me. I just don't want to be there when it happens.

## MAKE MAJOR DECISIONS

*I* think I was about two when I awoke from a nap one day. We lived in a downstairs apartment in Beloit, Wisconsin, the town of my birth. The front door opened into a living room which led into a fairly large kitchen. There was a pantry and bathroom on the far side of the room opposite the sink. My crib was in a room just off the living room which had French doors leading into it. My father's easy chair leaned against the right half of the doors just on the other side of the room which I shared with my older sister.

As I stood up in my crib, I could see my dad in his chair reading the newspaper. I was sick. I was about to throw up. So I said as politely as possible, "Dad, I'm sick and I think I am going to throw up."

To my surprise he just continued to read his paper. I concluded that the news was more important than myself and took the initiative to speak out my truth with a little more

explication and vigor. So I said, “Dad! I’m sick and need your help to get out of this crib and get to the bathroom so I can throw up in the toilet. Would you please put down your newspaper and give me the assistance I need?”

With such cogent communication from a two year old I expected him to throw down his paper, leap from his chair, run into my room, snatch me up into his arms, vault me to the restroom and comfort me as I extricated whatever.

Well, that did not happen. He just continued to read the paper. Now angered, I upped the ante demanding him to behave or I’d tell Mama. That failed to work.

With nature’s rhythmic efforts of regurgitation blocked by sheer will, I managed to climb out of the crib by myself by rolling over the raised gate on my already sensitive stomach. Really! I remember congratulating myself for climbing out of the crib, for up to that point I had allowed it to cage me. My elation was soon crushed.

As my feet hit the floor, so did my knees, and whatever had wanted to extract itself from my body did so. Right then, some horrid fear declared to my vulnerable mind that I was going to die. As I was vomiting, I thought I might as well die, considering Dad didn’t care. At some level, my dad and I remained distant right up to his death some 59 years later. He was a good man and we did a lot of fun things together. However, at a deep level I could not trust that he would be there for me when I really needed him.

Just as I watched the juicier parts slowly sink into the braided rug, I heard my mother running through the living room, past Dad, and standing at the entrance of the open

French doors. In an instant she declared with anger, “You should have known better!”

Knowing mother was all wise, I concluded I should have had known better. That meant to me, even at that age, that she had given me instructions concerning vomiting, when, where, how, etc. So I checked out my memory. Nope! I could find no such instructions.

Knowing my mother was a truth teller, I reflected upon an internal question that asked where else in this life experience could I look for that wisdom. So, like opening doors leading to my chest, I peeked within to find that intrinsic set of rules to which Mother must have been referring.

Yikes! There was the Nothing! The Void! Utter Darkness, Emptiness, and any such thing was staring me in the face. I as simultaneously recoiled and ran for the hills, I concluded that Mother was a liar and untrustworthy. She didn’t know what in the h-e-double-toothpicks she was taking about. Right then I set up a rule, “She cannot be trusted! Don’t ever listen again to what she says. She will make me revisit that void for sure!”

Today, of course, I know she was talking to Dad, but then I thought she was talking to me. Those decisions about my parents have changed, but my personal anathema toward the void has not altered a great deal. Today I hold to a ‘personality theory’ which I have developed because of this experience. Like it or not, here it comes.

In some way and at some time, each of us has been invited to venture into the deep resources behind door number two. Door number one, our thought, remains a comfort and a trusted resource for the majority of us. Behind door number two is Nothing and that specifically. The nothing, when confronted, becomes a thing of no-things. It is a reality, just as any other human experience, but it has no boundaries, artifacts, archetypes, or anything of any kind. It just is, but without any dimension or purpose. In fact, at first glance it has no measurable potential to become any one particular thing.

After we peek at it, we all make nodal choices which if not reinvestigated will direct our lives like some unseen rudder or the pounding of Poe's "Tell Tale Heart". Behind every personal preference is this choice of how to avoid the void.

Some choose anger. Others hate. Some fear of the dark or silence. Everyone is so creative in how they cope with this

lurking empty sense of self that no two people are alike. We create a sense of self that supports a bridge over salty waters which needs constant care, reinforcement, and replacement. It is hard to not fear the fear we have of fear itself.

When it comes to coping, we can see that there are a few larger categories upon which we work to keep ourselves safe from the naked truth lurking within. No matter their name, they only tell us our preferred way to drown out the silence of that immeasurable void and chaos.

Of course, there is a better way to live, but it takes a willingness not only to open those doors, but like some existentialist, take a leap of faith into the emptiness, or like Peter, walk on water. But it is best if you do not attempt this alone, for the One able to over-fill that void with possibility, purpose, design, and appropriate functions is not only fitted for that purpose, but the only One fitted to fill that space.

The very desire to live 'un-empty' is God's desire to fill to overflowing. His method is Christ Jesus His Son literally taking you to the depths of that void without you ever having to experience it, leave your old fear-self there, and then raise you up with Jesus where you enjoy His resurrection both now and in the future.

The future is always here, knocking on our senses. Here, we come to know, from experience, that we do not have what it takes to become all that is needed. It takes a once for all transformation of your stoney heart, from that of a fear-driven self-for-self, to a heart of flesh, a self-for-others. It is in giving grace, we receive grace. It is in giving love, we are loved. It is

in showing mercy, we are shown mercy. Not as a payback, but as it is, in and of itself.

We can look to this new heart joined to its LORD and find Him as all we need. He is just as vast, immeasurable, undefinable, and intangible as the void, but fullness Himself.

Everyone will experience an NDE (Near Death Experience) even if it is just before death. At that point, it is not just near, but final. Excluding whatever happened when I was 18 months old, this time at the age of 39 pneumonia took my breath away.

I had been struggling for a breath, not really expecting it to oxygenate me enough. After a day of this, I missed at least one breath, if not a few more. What follows is my best attempt to describe this event.

First, I did not know that I had stopped breathing, nor can prove that I had even today. All I know is that instead of focusing on my breathing, I was now focused on this darkness which was darker outside the tube in which I appeared to be traveling than it was inside. It was a passive event. Personal volition must have been the first thing to go. I continued to travel down the dark tube.



As this sense of 'I' traveled down the tube, I noticed that slightly to my right everything I thought I was, was being removed from my 'sense of self'. In particular, I remember watching all my political opinions slip away. It was as if every now and again while traveling down this tube, some nodal belief concerning my opinion of myself, other people, or the world simply disappeared. Every grand thought, including math and even language of any kind, was simply no more. As the sense stimuli of the world decayed, a new awareness blossomed.

It was at the very end of the tube that I heard a word spoken and a ripping away of some last attachment to this thing we call earth-life. It was the word MOTHER. Even then I knew it was not my earthly mother, but earthly life itself.

It was a jolt of sorts as this new sense of self was pushed or pulled into a new place of awareness. I was this one thing, there was the other thing, and there was a space between us.

Instantly, I checked myself out, and like that hovering by the ceiling experience, I was able to see that I looked like a grain of wheat with matching halves. Upon deeper inspection, like peeking into the void of my chest as a child, I noticed I was everything possible but not one thing specific.

The other 'thing' was identical to me only infinite. It was from where I had come and to where I was going. It contained every one THING possible, but not one thing specific. If there was an up, it was infinitely so and at the same time the infinitely down. So it was with anything I could name. It was there in its essence and infinity, but not expressed.

I felt the beginnings of a motion which were drawing me

towards this 'thing' and into it. If I had been different, I do not think I would have feared joining it. But like it, I was just infinite possibility and once joined with it, I concluded I would lose myself. So, I unsuccessfully dug in my emotional heels. Finally, and before we merged, I reasoned that I would not lose myself, but simply know myself as infinite first.

Bam! I was gasping a breath. I was alive.

This event haunted me for many years, but today I not only understand it, but realize it was an awesome gift. Later I met an atheist who had an NDE and saw Jesus, family, etc. I asked if she had become a Christian. She said she had not, and having heard my story laughingly commented that I should have had her experience and she mine.

MARIE'S ESCAPE FROM PRISON TO  
PRAISE

*R*emember Quigley's first day of employment? Things did not go as planned. It was my first day as a co-pastor of a church in Logan, Utah. The head pastor suggested we go to a nearby town, some 40 miles away, and visit a parishioner who was having a bad day. With no more than chit chat, we ventured to Marie's home. After a short introduction I followed the head pastor into her home. We went to her entertainment room which was in her basement.

While there, she began to explain how horrid God was. She was beside herself and continued for about 40 minutes declaring her sadness, anger, and how faithless God was. If I had believed her I would have concluded that God was powerless and anything but loving. After her extended tirade I had had it. I had no idea what was bothering her, but I knew what was bothering me, her blasphemy!

Without so much as an introduction, I interrupted her as

she took a breath and demanded, “Marie, get down on your knees, raise your hands to God and thank Him for and I mean FOR what has happened.” I heard the head pastor gasp for breath as she obeyed. Once on her knees, she looked up into heaven with her hands raised and said, “Thank you God for taking my daughter and grandchildren in the car wreck today” She changed, loved God and people till her death.

## JUST JESUS

*I*'ll stop here. I have many more stories to tell. I plan to share them over the next few years as I am able.

If you have not realized by now, let me boldly say that I have my eternal trust in Life Himself, Who has been named Jesus Christ and I can heartily recommend that you trust Him.

It is also my recommendation that you read the Bible, pray (talk to God), and fellowship with believers. I do all these things today. It helps to overcome the pain life offers, if we read life's manual, talk to our manufacturer, and encourage and be encouraged by those who trust Jesus.

There is only one mistake we can make today that can cause us not to enjoy all the good God has for us. Those who decide to call upon the name of Jesus and know that they have Him, know they have life.

I pray that you know you have life.

“<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. <sup>12</sup> He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. <sup>13</sup> 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.” (I John 5:9-13 NAS)

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## ***THE BEGINNING***

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Dean Chicquette holds a BS in Computer Science and an MA/ABS in Systems Counseling. His favorite things to do are translating with Linda, visiting friends, praying for others, playing music, writing, teaching, and attending Bible Studies.

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