

GOD HELPS THOSE  
WHO *CANNOT*  
HELP THEMSELVES

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*True Life Stories  
of God's Amazing Miracles*

C. WAYNE PRATT

FOREWORD BY TOM DANT

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When you pass through the waters,  
I will be with you;  
And when you pass through the rivers,  
They will not sweep over you.  
When you walk through the fire,  
You will not be burned;  
The flames will not set you ablaze.

—*Isaiah 43:2*—



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I would like to dedicate this book to...

Those who choose to walk by faith and not by sight...

Those who trust in the Lord, and lean not on their own understanding...

Those fixing their eyes on what is unseen, not on what is seen...

Those willing to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, even when it means not knowing where they are going...

Those who dare to boldly tell the world, "The Lord is my helper."



People who share their testimonies are helping others to see how we are all involved in the demonstration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. *God Helps Those Who Cannot Help Themselves* is a book that was written years before it flowed through the pen and onto the pages you are about to read. These stories have already impacted many lives. I got goose bumps the first time I heard Pastors Wayne and Tom talking about some of these faith experiences which revealed how visible God had been in the circumstances of their lives. Each time they told their stories, I recognized what a valuable book they were carrying around in their hearts. I could not help but pray that one day, one or both of them, would settle down to write that book so that others could also be inspired by their amazing experiences.

Finally, here it is in your hands.

I can promise you that this book will take your faith to another level! It will help you to recognize how God's hands are steering you through life in little things and also in great things. According to Pastor Wayne, "You just can't make these stories up!" I will now leave you to read it all for yourself.

Pastor Kwesi Oginga  
Associate Pastor  
New Life Ministries



## FOREWORD

By Pastor Tom Dant

I COUNT IT A GREAT PRIVILEGE to be asked by my dear friend, Pastor Wayne Pratt, to write the foreword for this book. As you will see, *God Helps Those Who Cannot Help Themselves* gives testimony to the fact that God is alive and working in the lives of people today. Miracles still happen for those who put their trust in Him. You will be greatly blessed and uplifted by the stories of God's amazing works accomplished through this man's life and ministry.

I first met Pastor Wayne over 41 years ago at a Christian retreat. God seemed to knit our hearts together, but what a peculiar pair we were! Wayne used to be a long-haired hippie protesting the Vietnam War, while I was a short-haired marine just back from the Vietnam War! But, God has a sense of humor, and His ways are perfect. And it wasn't long before the Lord had the two of us enlisted in *His* army serving Him.

As I worked alongside Pastor Wayne, his sincere love for God's word, his trust and belief, his compassion for souls, and his thankfulness for what God had done in His life were all quite evident. This was also very contagious. We spent many hours passing out tracts and ministering in high school Bible studies.

I will never forget the night when Wayne returned home to our house in Arlington (you'll hear much more about that house later in

the book!) with a man he had found living under a bridge. This was no ordinary man—he was a paint sniffer (this was all new for us—we had never heard of such a thing!). This poor man was covered with spray paint and high as a kite! But Wayne had brought him home to give him some food and a bed. The man lived with us for a month, and each morning, Wayne would rise up early and share God’s word with him. He would explain how God wanted to help him and try to show him from the Scriptures what the Lord could do for him. In the end, this man found a new life in Jesus Christ and was reunited with his wife!

Through the years, Wayne’s gift of teaching became clear to all who sat under his ministry. The Lord has truly given him a wonderful ability to expound on the Word of God—what a blessing and gift to the Church! His depth of knowledge, revelation, and grace could only come from many hours spent with the Lord.

Jesus said in Mark 9:23 (NKJV), “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” This book is about a pastor who truly believes in Jesus Christ and His promises for us today. I can testify that for 41 years of ministry, Wayne has not slowed down, and it seems now he is running even faster toward the day when he can be found in His Master’s arms.

As you read the various accounts of miracles in *God Helps Those Who Cannot Help Themselves*, you may hear my name mentioned from time to time. I want everyone reading this book to know that every miracle took place exactly as it is described. I can truly say before God and His angels that this was the Lord’s hand at work. And the Lord is still working today.

Reading about the astounding miracles described in the pages of this book, I found that it brought new hope to my heart. My prayer for those reading *God Helps Those Who Cannot Help Themselves* is that new

hope will fill your heart also. Indeed, “All things are possible to him who believes”—your miracle is near.

Tom Dant  
Senior Pastor  
Pentecostal Renewal Ministries



## INTRODUCTION

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

—*Hebrews 13:5-6 (NKJV)*

ONE OF THE MOST OFTEN QUOTED PHRASES that is nowhere to be found in the Bible is: “God helps those who help themselves.” This saying is usually attributed to Ben Franklin, quoted in *Poor Richard’s Almanack* in 1757. In actuality, it originated from Algernon Sydney in 1698 in an article titled “Discourses Concerning Government.” Whatever the original source of this saying, the Bible teaches just the opposite—God helps the helpless!

There are numerous verses in the Bible that speak of God’s help or aid. It is His desire that each one of us would personally experience that help in tangible ways in our day-to-day lives, and to then be able to boldly tell others, “The Lord is my helper.” But think about the implications—if we are to receive help from the Lord, one prerequisite must be met—we must first *need* help.

How will we ever know the Lord as our Healer if we haven’t passed through a trial of sickness? Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a

doctor, but the sick” (Matthew 9:12). Can we truly sing, “Jehovah-Jireh, my Provider,” if we never face necessity? The Scriptures clearly teach that God “fills the hungry with good things but sends the rich away empty” (Luke 1:53). How can I tell others, “The Lord is my Deliverer,” if I’ve never been in trouble? David could confidently sing, “You have delivered me from all my troubles, and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes” (Psalm 54:7).

While here on earth, Jesus repeatedly affirmed His mission—He was sent for the lost (Luke 19:10), the poor and brokenhearted (Luke 4:18), and for the helpless:

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

—*Matthew 9:35-36*

Man is utterly incapable of saving himself from his sinful, lost condition. That is why he needs a Savior. The Apostle Paul confirmed that Christ’s death on the cross was indeed for the *helpless* and *powerless*:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless [“helpless”, NAS], Christ died for the ungodly.

—*Romans 5:6*

No one wishes for sickness, necessity or trouble—but based on this author’s experience, Job seemed to have it right when he stated that “man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). We don’t have to go looking for trouble or invent situations where we need help—those situations seem to come along quite naturally in the course of our lifetime. But when they do come, we can turn to the Lord,

knowing that our “help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:2).

### *The Writing of this Book*

In my more than 40 years of Christian ministry, God has graciously allowed me to travel and work in many different places throughout the world, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. An integral part of my message often seems to include stories and testimonies of the miracles that I have personally witnessed in my journey with Christ—a journey that began back in 1974. I find that in sharing these experiences, I can boldly say, “The Lord is my helper!”

Over the years, a number of people have entreated me to write a book documenting these “faith stories.” In the back of my mind, however, I have often thought: *There are already so many Christian books, especially those recounting people’s miraculous experiences and testimonies. Why write another book?*

Indeed, I have wanted, in some humble way, to record a few of the more remarkable works of God that I have observed with my own eyes over the past four decades. But one lesson that I am slowly learning after 40 years is to *wait on the Lord*. And I am painfully aware that, unless I am connected with Christ and aligned with His will, all of my best efforts will fail to produce the fruit that He desires:

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

—*John 15:4-5*

After waiting for a long time, I can confidently affirm that I finally heard the Lord say, “Now it is time for you to write!” I had gone to sleep around midnight, July 8, 2015. Though exhausted from a long day, I found myself restless, tossing and turning in the bed. Suddenly, it was as if God began reading an audio book to me: He gave me the theme, title, chapter headings, and content for this entire book over the next few hours! It was time to write!

The following morning, I sat down at my computer and began to write—it was actually more like taking dictation! I was embarking on the most incredible journey that lasted for the next seven days (and nights!). The Holy Spirit literally transported me back in time and allowed me to relive each one of these stories as if it were happening all over again. Sometimes I found myself overwhelmed with emotion as I wept, contemplating the goodness and love of God. At other times, I was shouting and praising God for His mighty power and great faithfulness.

At the end of seven days, I thought my assignment was finally completed. I printed out a rough draft of the entire manuscript in order to begin the editing process. Then, that Wednesday, July 15, ten minutes before I was to begin our weekly church Bible study (at 7:30 p.m.), God began to give me more... more chapters, additional stories, and specific characters that I needed to include in the book.

One of those new characters to be added was the “IRS accountant,” whose amazing story is told in chapter 2, “God Will Never Pay Your Rent,” beginning on page 35. I had not seen this brother for four or five years. To my surprise (and delight!), after the Bible study, I discovered that he had texted me during my study to say hello at 7:48 p.m. Confirmation!

When we are moving in the will of God, He often gives us signs and confirmations to assure us that we are on the right track (see the section on confirmations in chapter 15, “Ohio, America’s Moving Adventure,” on page 123). Three days after the Bible study, I received yet another amazing confirmation. My wife and I were attending the funeral of

a dear pastor's mother-in-law. The pastor spoke at the funeral, and in his message, he shared how he had had a serious conversation with his mother-in-law some months before about salvation and her need for God's grace and free gift of forgiveness. The pastor then told how she had brought up the well-known argument against grace, saying, "Yes, but 'God helps those who help themselves.' God won't do *everything* for us!"

He corrected her saying, "NO, NO... God helps those who *cannot* help themselves!"

*That's the title of my book... the pastor just quoted the title of my book! This is crazy!* Confirmation! You can't make this up!

The purpose of this book is to give an account of a few of the amazing miracles that I have experienced in my brief lifetime. Like the Prophet Samuel, I want to set up my "Ebenezer Stone" and declare:

Thus far has the LORD helped us.

—1 Samuel 7:12

Many of these narratives and stories are so incredible that from time to time, you may find me repeating the same refrain: "You can't make this stuff up!" Indeed, God's truth is often stranger than fiction.

My prayer is that these testimonies will encourage you to trust God in any and every situation, knowing that "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). And you will then be able to boldly say...

"The Lord is my helper!"



# 1

## DATE WITH DESTINY

For we will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him.

—*2 Samuel 14:14*

**I**T WAS THE SPRING OF 1973. My dream life was truly beginning to take shape. I had completed my undergraduate studies in biology at the University of Maryland and earned a scholarship to enter graduate school at Virginia Tech. When things are going this well, who needs God?

Although I grew up in a nominal Christian home, suffering the agonies of boredom and reciting meaningless liturgies Sunday after Sunday in an Episcopal church, by the time I was 16, church was a memory from the distant past. I had started playing guitar at the age of 12, and was now in a rock band that performed regularly at high school and college dances, parties, etc. I was plunged into the whole hippie subculture of the late 1960s—alcohol, drugs, sex, and rebellion.

In college, my thinking and worldview were radically transformed by the constant exposure to evolutionary and humanistic philosophies.

By the time I was entering graduate school, I had fully embraced the pop notion that “God is dead.”

Ah, but God knows how to “devise means” to bring a banished one back to Himself. Just three months into the first semester of graduate school, my perfect little world began to rapidly unravel. My first marriage ended in divorce, and the feelings of depression were so overwhelming that I was forced to leave school and move back into my parents’ house in Maryland.

Shortly after that, I began working as a Park Naturalist at the Gulf Branch Nature Center, a part of the Arlington County Parks Division in Virginia, and continued there until the fall of 1974. I was doing so well that I was offered a promotion to be Park Manager for all of Gulf Branch. But I was becoming increasingly restless, troubled, and confused.

On the day my supervisor spoke to me about the promotion, it was such an attractive offer that I’m sure he thought my acceptance was a “done deal.” But he was speechless when I replied, “Thank you for the offer, but I cannot accept. I have many nagging questions that I must find answers to. Otherwise, I honestly don’t want to live anymore. I am giving my two-week notice today, and I will be leaving by the end of September.”

### *A Ride to Remember*

Drugs, alcohol, sex, rock music, yoga, and meditation—all of these had left me feeling empty. Increasingly, I found myself asking, “Is there anything worth living for?” I had a new girlfriend, and one day, we were in Charlottesville, Virginia, trying to hitchhike back home—about a two-and-a-half-hour drive. The sky suddenly became black from an approaching thunderstorm, and just in time, a man stopped to pick us up, and informed us that he was heading in the same direction we were.

After some brief small talk, I asked our driver what he did for a living. “I am the ambassador for the King of Israel,” he replied. I looked

at my girlfriend and we both realized we were going to be stuck in the car for two and a half hours with this nut case; I called such people “Jesus freaks.”

For the entire trip, the man went on and on about Jesus, the cross, salvation, and the need to be born again. I was amazed at his knowledge of the Bible, as he quoted verse after verse from the Scriptures, many from the Gospel of John:

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

—*John 3:16-17*

When Jesus spoke... He said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

—*John 8:12*

Jesus said, “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

—*John 10:9-11 (NKJV)*

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

—*John 14:6*

Then, as we were nearing our destination, and our preacher friend was getting ready to make his final appeal, he quoted the well-known passage from Romans:

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

—*Romans 10:9-10*

When he finally stopped the car to let us off, he posed the all-important question, “So, are you ready to receive Christ into your hearts now? Make Him Lord of your lives, and be born again?”

To his utter disappointment, I snapped, “No, but thanks for the ride. Bye!”

And that was that! *Whew, we dodged another religious kook!* I thought. I often wonder if that man was an angel (more about angels in chapter 4, “Angels Watching over Me” on page 55); he must have been so discouraged after preaching his heart out to us and getting such a cold response. But the story doesn’t end there...

The Bible tells us in Hebrews 4:12 that “the Word of God [the Scriptures] is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.” From that day on, the words that man spoke to us in the car kept replaying in my head over and over like a tape recording.

### ***Go West Young Man***

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.

—*Psalm 139:7-10 (NKJV)*

So, by the end of September, I was finished with my job. I loaded my few belongings into my VW beetle, and headed off to California to join my girlfriend, who had already gone ahead a few weeks earlier. But driving solitary across the country, there were many lonely hours to think, contemplate, and reflect—and many hours to keep hearing the recording of that “Jesus freak” preaching inside my head!

I questioned everything: *Is there a God? Is this story true about Jesus being born in a manger, dying on a cross and being resurrected after three days, or is it just a fairy tale?* This went on for several days until I finally reached the state of Wyoming. As I continued driving along hour after hour, these questions were still rattling around in my brain: *Is there really a God? Is the Bible true?* That day I finally made up my mind: *No, God doesn't exist and the Bible is just a book that man invented.*

Thankfully, what ensued shortly thereafter doesn't happen to everyone who decides to be an atheist. As I was travelling along at about 75 miles per hour on a two-lane highway just outside the small town of Worland, Wyoming, I came up over a rise and quite unexpectedly, I was met by an eighteen-wheel tractor trailer crossing the road and blocking both lanes of traffic. I had a split second to react. I swerved to the right, avoiding a collision with the truck, but plummeted off the highway and went down a 10-foot embankment. All of a sudden, everything seemed to be in slow motion. The car began to roll over and over—two and a half times before finally coming to rest upside down. And yes, as I had heard in others' accounts of near-death experiences, in that split second of time, I saw my whole life pass before me.

More importantly, in that critical moment, I was certain of two things:

1. I was definitely going to die (there was no way I was getting out of this alive).
2. I was definitely going straight to hell.

It is not difficult to understand the first revelation, but the second is more puzzling. Remember, just moments before the accident, I had decided that God was a myth, the Bible was a fiction book, and heaven and hell were figments of man's imagination. How is it that I was *now* so sure about hell?

When the car finally stopped tumbling and came to a halt, the interior was filled with dust and smoke. For a brief moment, an indescribable terror filled my heart as I truly believed that I had died and gone to hell. But I soon realized I was still very much alive, and proceeded to extract myself from the wreckage. I was covered with dirt and glass, as every window in the car had been smashed out. The VW was flattened like a Coke can that someone had crushed underfoot. It was hard to imagine anyone surviving such a horrendous crash.

As I was climbing out of the debris, the driver of the tractor trailer came running over to the scene of the accident. Surprised to see me alive and moving around, he asked, "Are you alright?"

"Yeah, I am fine," I replied. Amazingly, I did not have a single scratch or bruise on my body (You can't make this stuff up!).

I'll never forget the truck driver's next words: "Well, thank God."

*Thank God? Why should I thank God?* I thought. My heart was so stubborn and hard, I gave no more thought to God that day. I caught a bus back to Maryland, bought a second VW, and in a matter of weeks, I was on my way once again to California! Yes, but God "devises means"... He plots and plans to bring lost souls to Himself.

The second cross country trip went without a hitch—until I reached California, that is. Soon after coming to the place of my dreams—the

Golden State—the relationship with my girlfriend ended. I felt very confused and alone.

### *My Golden Bridge*

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.

—*John 6:44*

After careful deliberation, I reached the startling conclusion that I was 3,000 miles from home. I had no place to stay—I had no job or future. I felt like a fool, a total loser. Suddenly, I remembered my own words from a few months before: “If I can’t find something worth living for, I don’t want to live anymore.” *Suicide!* Ending my life now seemed to be the only option. The feelings of despair and hopelessness overwhelmed me to the point that I knew I meant business.

I made my way out onto a bridge over the San Jose Freeway, and was preparing to jump when a total stranger came out onto the bridge and began to strike up a conversation with me. I wondered, *here I am trying to kill myself, and this guy wants to talk? I wish he would just leave.*

This stranger, I would soon learn, was a Christian named Burt Fong. He was so persistent that I finally made a deal with him just to get rid of him. I agreed to go into the nearby Denny’s and have a cup of coffee with him on the condition that he would then leave me alone. It was probably late afternoon when we entered the restaurant, and we were still sitting there at 4:00 a.m. the next morning!

Burt shared many things about his own personal life. It seemed to be a carbon copy of mine, except for the last part—the part where he received Christ and found forgiveness, salvation, and true joy. Having exhausted every question in my mind, to my own amazement, I found myself asking one final question that fateful morning in Denny’s: “Burt, what do I have to do to be saved like you?”

“Wayne, salvation is a free gift of God’s grace,” Burt explained. “Jesus already paid for all of your sins through His death on the cross. God raised Him from the dead three days later to prove to all mankind that He is the Savior of the world. All you have to do is repent, ask God to forgive all of your sins, and receive Christ into your heart. It’s that simple. We can pray together right now.”

“OK.” Burt led me in a short prayer there at the table. All this was like a dream... standing on the bridge, meeting Burt, and now, praying and committing myself to be a Christian. Something, or more accurately, *SOMEONE*, was changing my heart! I was becoming a very different person.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;  
old things have passed away; behold, all things have  
become new.

—2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

Shortly after that, as we were leaving the restaurant, Burt asked me, “So where are you staying, Wayne?”

“I don’t know... actually, I don’t have a place,” I answered.

Burt’s response floored me: “OK then, you come and stay with me for as long as you need to.”

I ended up staying with Burt for the next month. We prayed and read the Bible together, we went to church just about every night of the week, and he tried to answer my many questions.

### ***Evolution or Monkey Business***

One of the questions that hounded me incessantly was the question of origins—where did everything come from? The controversy over creation versus evolution raged on in my mind. I had been brainwashed with evolutionary philosophy for four years in college. How could I now

believe anything in the Bible, when the very first verse emphatically stated, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1)?”

When God starts to work in our life, it is a “good work” (Philippians 1:6). He arranges circumstances and divine appointments to let us know that He is there. And He promises that anyone who is sincerely looking for Him will find Him:

“You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the LORD...

—*Jeremiah 29:13-14*

One day Burt, knowing the struggle I was having in my mind over evolution, came home from his school (San Jose State University) with great excitement. He showed me a flyer advertising a two-day debate on campus on the topic, “Evolution vs. Creation.” I honestly cannot remember the name of the scientist arguing for evolution, but the creationist was the late Dr. Duane Gish, creation’s “bulldog” and the former vice president of the *Institute for Creation Research*. The rules of the debate prohibited any mention of religion or the Bible—only empirical, scientific facts were allowed. By the end of the debate, I was 100% convinced that science was in perfect harmony with the biblical account of special creation, as described in the Book of Genesis! I realized that I had been duped “big time” in school by all the “science falsely so called” (1 Timothy 6:20, KJV) that my professors had taught me.

That weekend proved to be a watershed moment in my life. Little did I know at the time that I would one day be teaching science to high school kids, presenting to them “many infallible proofs” for divine, special creation. And through my exposure to Dr. Gish that weekend, I would end up reading scores of books published by the *Institute for Creation Research*, and listening to hundreds of radio broadcasts from

their *Science, Scripture, & Salvation* series. Was it a coincidence that I should attend that evolution debate? I don't believe so. Could meeting Dr. Gish that weekend have been happenstance? You tell me.

### *Charismatic... What's That?*

The following week, Burt invited me to a church that he said was "charismatic."

"What is a *charismatic* church?" I asked. "I've never heard of that before."

"Well, they have a lot of joy... they sing and jump around... I think you'll like it," Burt said.

"OK. Let's go." *I want all the joy I can get*, I thought.

When we arrived at the church, which in those days was known as Calvary Gospel Temple, the service was in full swing. I had never seen this kind of excitement in a church service. There were people dancing, singing exuberantly—the joy was real and palpable.

At this stage in my brief Christian experience, there were a few things I was certain of: I knew that I was a saved, born-again believer; Jesus had transformed my life; I didn't curse anymore, and I no longer had any desire for alcohol or drugs. But looking around the church that night, I recognized that these people had something I wanted. I just didn't know *what* it was.

The pastor of the church who ministered that night was Rev. Emanuele Cannistraci. He spoke about the gift of the Holy Spirit and the experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. At the end of his message, Pastor Cannistraci invited all those who wanted to receive the Holy Spirit to come forward. I ran to the altar! If God had more of His love and power for me, I wanted it. I expected the pews to empty out and dozens to respond to his invitation.

To my surprise, when I got up front, I realized that I was all alone! Here was this recently saved, long-haired hippie (and probably still

smelling of marijuana!) standing in front of the whole church. I'll never forget what ensued next. Pastor Cannistraci took a set of keys out of his pocket and handed them to me. Instinctively, I reached out my hand and took the keys. He then explained, "Receiving the Holy Spirit is just that simple. God has already given you the gift. Now all you have to do is reach out in faith and receive it."

The pastor then laid his hands on me, and within seconds, I was speaking in a language that I had never learned. I found out later that the Bible called it "speaking in tongues" (Acts 2:1-4). I was filled with so much love and joy that night, that after the service, I couldn't stop hugging people in the church.

In researching some of the details of this story, I discovered that Pastor Cannistraci, now better known as Apostle Cannistraci, is still very active in ministry after 60 years! Calvary Gospel Temple has now grown into the GateWay City Church in San Jose, California.

Burt Fong literally saved my life. Of course, the *Lord* did, but He used Burt as His instrument to bring it all about. I am eternally grateful to him for his Christian kindness. I often wonder where I would be if Burt hadn't obeyed the prompting of the Holy Spirit to go out onto the bridge and speak to me that crucial day. I was helpless and hopeless, but God sent help and now I can boldly say, "The Lord is my helper."



## 2

### GOD WILL NEVER PAY YOUR RENT

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? So do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

—*Matthew 6:26, 31-33*

**T**HOSE WHO CAN HELP THEMSELVES don't need any help. God helps those who *cannot* help themselves. He feeds the birds, clothes the lilies of the field, and the Lord loves to care for His children. Jesus taught His disciples that only pagans run after material sustenance. Peter, James, John, and the others needed to learn the secret of running after God and His kingdom, and He would in turn add everything that they needed to their lives.

After spending a month with Burt Fong in California, it was time for me to return home to Maryland. My cross-country trip back east was very interesting. Driving alone, I had hours and hours of time to

pass in my VW. And as a “newborn baby” in Christ (1 Peter 2:2), I had an insatiable hunger for the word of God. I had a small, red pocket New Testament that Burt had given me. Driving from California to Maryland, I held the steering wheel with my right hand and the New Testament in my left, reading all the way! I don’t know if an angel guided the car, but it scares me to even think about it now. I don’t recommend any of my readers trying this!

I assumed it was now time to look for a job and get back to “normal.” I tried to go back to work at the Nature Center, but every door seemed to close. God’s plans are often different from ours...

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

—*Jeremiah 29:11*

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

—*Isaiah 55:8-9*

Shortly after my arrival in Maryland, I attended a weekend Christian retreat in Pennsylvania, where I met a brother named Tom Dant. He and I were sharing the same cabin, and a very special bond immediately formed between us. This was truly a divine appointment, but we had no way of knowing at the time what the Lord was up to.

Tom and I were the most unlikely pair of guys to become best of friends. Tom had been a sergeant in the U.S. Marine Corps, recruiting soldiers to go fight in the Vietnam War; I was a long-haired hippie and an anti-war protestor! At this writing, forty-one years later, I can tell you with the greatest joy that Tom and I are still the best of friends!

He has been a faithful pastor and missionary for four decades, and we have had some of the most amazing adventures together in the Lord. God is good!

### *Selling out for Jesus*

As Jesus started on His way, a man ran up to Him and fell on his knees before Him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call Me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments... “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” He said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.”

—*Mark 10:17-21*

Tom and I discovered that we lived about 10 minutes away from each other, so once the retreat was over, we began to meet on a regular basis for fellowship. As we prayed and studied the Scriptures together, we sensed a strong call to follow Christ the same way His first disciples did—they left their fishing boats and businesses, sold all that they had, and followed Him. They lived by faith and God miraculously took care of them. We kept hearing the Lord whisper to our hearts, “Leave all and follow Me.”

So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

—*Luke 14:33 (NKJV)*

As this call burned more intensely within our hearts, we went around to different churches and sought counsel from various pastors and leaders. They all cautioned us not to be too radical or fanatical; they stressed that people just didn't forsake all to follow Christ anymore.

But the more we prayed and sought God, the louder the call became: "Sell all and follow Me." One day, I shared these feelings with my parents. This was obviously quite disturbing for them; the son they had helped put through college now seemed to be throwing his life away. My dear father, who was an accountant, asked me: "Wayne, how do you expect to live, following Jesus? God will never pay your rent." Famous last words!

A few days later, long before yard sales had become popular, we loaded up all of our possessions—golf clubs, cameras, the works—and set up tables on the side of the road with a big sign that read, "Selling out for Jesus!" While one of us was selling items to passersby, the other was on a megaphone preaching the gospel. By the end of the day, everything was gone.

### *The Arlington House of Faith*

Around that same time, I received a very interesting phone call from a former co-worker at the Gulf Branch Nature Center. The conversation went something like this: "Wayne, as you may remember, there was a vacant house situated on the park property here. Recently, there has been a lot of vandalism on the house, and the Parks Division is looking for some responsible people to live in the house as caretakers—rent-free. Do you know of anyone that might be interested?"

"Hmm, I think I might," trying to catch my breath and contain my excitement. The next day, Tom and I arrived at the house early as we awaited the arrival of my former boss, Mr. Hughes—the director of the entire Arlington County Parks Division.

The house was situated on about 10 acres of pristine forest, with a private driveway that was a quarter mile long, and a trail that led all the way to the Potomac River! It had six bedrooms, two living rooms with fireplaces, a separate guest house, and a pool in the foyer that we would eventually use for baptisms... but I am getting ahead of myself in the story!

As Mr. Hughes pulled up in his official county car, I felt my stomach tighten. *What were we going to tell him? He didn't even know that I had become a Christian. What if he laughed at us and turned us away in shame?* Suddenly this seemed like a very bad idea.

Mr. Hughes got out of his car, and proceeded to give us a tour of the property; it was very impressive. Finally, we paused in one of the living rooms beside the billiards table (yes, it even had a pool table!). Mr. Hughes stared at us and asked, "So, what do you young men have in mind? What do you plan to do with this house?"

Thankfully, Tom spoke up first, because I honestly couldn't utter a word: "Well, Mr. Hughes, Wayne and I have recently become born-again Christians, and we believe God is calling us to follow Jesus and serve Him full time. And we believe this house is an answer to our prayers; we plan to use it as our base of ministry."

I held my breath, bracing myself for either an angry tirade or mocking laughter. To my utter amazement, Mr. Hughes broke out into a huge smile, reached out his hand to shake ours, and exclaimed, "Praise the Lord, boys. I too am a born-again Christian! Here are the keys to the house—it's all yours. The phone and all utilities will be paid for by the county; my men will deliver firewood to the house whenever you need it; you can use all the furniture that is here, and there is even food in the cupboards!"

We felt like the children of Israel coming into the Promised Land. God had provided everything we needed!

When the LORD your God brings you into the land He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to

give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

—*Deuteronomy 6:10-12*

Several weeks after we moved in, we invited all of our parents over for dinner one Sunday. After the meal was over, my dad couldn't contain himself any longer: "Alright, Wayne, would you please explain all of this to us. How in the world did you get this house?"

"Dad, do you remember what you told me several weeks ago, how God would never pay my rent? Well, He is paying for this one!" We then proceeded to explain the entire story of God's miraculous provision, boldly testifying that the Lord had been our helper!

You can't make this stuff up! We ended up staying in what came to be known as the "Arlington House of Faith" for exactly one year to the day. The very day after we moved out, the county brought in the bulldozers and completely demolished the house!

### *The Ministry Begins*

During our stay in Arlington, we ministered to many different people who were in desperate need. We brought home drug addicts, paint sniffers (I'm not making this up!), homeless people, and other troubled souls; we fed them, prayed with them, and tried to show them the love of Jesus.

One night I scared everyone when I brought home a man named Richard, whom I found living under a bridge. He was wearing a leather jacket that had a big cobra on the back, and he had a tattoo that read, "Barabbas." After receiving Christ as his Savior, Richard finally

confessed to us one day that in the past, he had been a contract killer! God turned that hardened criminal into a gentle lamb. Richard lived with us for months before finally going his way, a changed man.

Then, there's the miracle of Tom's parakeet. That's right, his parakeet. One day, we found our feathered friend lying on the bottom of his cage—dead. (You will have to trust me on this one—I *am* a biologist!) The little guy was dead—stone cold, stiff as a board.

"Brother, I feel inspired to pray for the bird," Tom said. "I believe God can raise the dead—He raised Lazarus, and He raised Jesus, didn't He?"

*Oh my!* I thought. *I've never heard of anyone praying for God to resurrect dead pets! I guess it's worth a try.*

"OK, why not?" I responded.

Well, you can't make this stuff up... we picked up the parakeet, prayed for him in Jesus' name, and God brought him back to life! Hallelujah, He's a miracle-working God!

On a different occasion, a couple of brothers were out evangelizing, and they brought a crazy man back to the house. We prayed for him and God marvelously delivered him. He started attending our church, and God began to work in his life. One day, I was speaking about the need for making restitution for sins in our past, including things like stealing or cheating. He came to me afterward and explained, "Pastor, you're saying that we should pay back whatever we have stolen? Look, I have my own business, and I have not paid taxes in 15 years! What should I do? Do I have to make restitution for all of the back taxes?"

I told him, "I'm not going to tell you what to do; it's a matter of your own conscience. But whatever you decide, I'll help you."

"Should I go to the IRS?" he asked.

"Well, they might put you in jail, but then we can start our prison ministry," I joked.

"OK. I want to put this right. Let's go to the IRS."

I called the IRS and made an appointment for us to go talk to someone. I told the brother to bring any pertinent documents or paperwork with him. On the morning of our appointment, he came in his pickup truck. The entire bed of the truck was full of loose papers, boxes of receipts, and cancelled checks—it was total chaos! As we were about to enter the IRS building, he asked me if he should bring any of the papers inside that he had brought with him. I told him not to bother. We were going to have to cast ourselves on their mercy.

When we met the IRS official, I explained that I was a pastor, and my friend had been delinquent in paying his taxes for more than 15 years. The official was very understanding, and worked out a reasonable payment plan for the brother to start getting his affairs in order.

Shortly after that, my friend moved to a different part of town and I lost touch with him for the next five years. When we finally met up again, I asked him how everything was going. He told me that God had helped him pay off all of his debts, he had gone back to college and finished his degree in accounting, and he was now working for... come on, you can't make this up... he was working as a tax accountant for the IRS!

That same year that we lived in Arlington, Tom felt inspired to open a Christian coffee house in Takoma Park, called "The Way Coffee House." It was open seven nights a week—we had special music events, evangelistic meetings, and regular fellowship.

One night, we decided to have a slide show of God's beauty in nature and in natural wonders. We invited people from the entire community. There was a newcomer that night who we'll call "Big Jim." He had many doubts and questions, particularly about the baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues.

As we were moving through various slides of colorful flowers, snow-capped mountains, and stunning sunsets, we came to a photo (that I had taken while I was in California) of a friend standing in front of a giant sequoia tree. The person seemed unusually small, dwarfed by the sheer size of the enormous tree behind him. For some reason, the

projector got stuck on that one slide and we couldn't advance to the next frame for several minutes. I was getting quite perturbed when, all of a sudden, the projector finally started functioning properly again.

As we were closing the meeting, Big Jim started making his way toward the front immediately. When he reached us, he was already speaking in tongues! He went on to tell us that when the image of the giant sequoia tree stayed up on the screen for such a long time, he received a revelation of how small he was and how great God was. Right there, God filled Big Jim with the Holy Spirit, and he burst into other tongues. The Lord froze the projector just so He could baptize Big Jim with the Holy Spirit and with fire! I love it!

### *Jehovah-Jireh our Provider*

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

—*Matthew 6:7-8*

During that year in the Arlington house, we witnessed miracle after miracle of God's provision. We often had a house full of people to feed, and somehow God always provided. One day, Tom and I were sent to the grocery store with a long shopping list with specific details such as the brand of diapers and peanut butter, etc. On the way, we got sidetracked preaching and praying for people, and forgot all about going to the grocery store. When we returned home, the entire hallway was lined with bags of groceries. We learned that two Christian ladies (whom we had never met before) were directed by the Holy Spirit to "buy the groceries and deliver them to My servants"—right to our front door!

That is pretty amazing, but it gets better. Tom and I suddenly remembered the shopping list in our pocket. When we took out the list and began to unpack the groceries, *EVERY* item on the list was there, right down to the exact brand of diapers and peanut butter! You can't make this stuff up! We literally fell to our knees and began to weep, overwhelmed with the goodness and faithfulness of our God. Our Father knew what we needed before we asked Him!

Mealtimes in Arlington were always interesting. It wasn't uncommon for us to have 12 or more people at the dinner table every night. One evening, as we began saying grace before our meal, the glory of God fell so strongly on all of us that, one by one, everyone began leaving the dining room and retiring to their respective rooms to pray. No one ate—the food sat on the table and got cold! It was several hours before people began to come back and eat their food.

I'll never forget Thanksgiving that year. We had a man named Meredith staying with us at the time, and he never seemed to get enough to eat. But that day, Meredith certainly enjoyed himself. He ate and ate, and finally, with a turkey drumstick in each hand, he said he was going for a walk through the park. He never did return! We still laugh about that day. I think Meredith finally got enough to eat!

### *Can God Heal a Car?*

In Arlington, we only had one car that worked. It was a blue Datsun station wagon. (My VW had run over a large boulder in the road on my trip back from California, which had bent the front axle. We had gotten an estimate of \$600 from the mechanic to repair it, so it had been sitting idle behind the house for more than six months.) Well, the Datsun wagon needed some work done on it, and one of the ex-drug addicts staying with us told us he was a mechanic. (We found out later that his statement was only partially true—he had worked on cranes and heavy equipment, not cars!) In any event, while the brother was

trying to repair the Datsun, it caught fire and became a “burnt offering” for the Lord!

Now what would we do? We didn’t have any money and we needed some form of transportation. Suddenly, Tom remembered my junked VW. “What about the VW, Wayne? Can we use it?” I reminded him about the bent front axle and told him the car was not drivable.

But Tom has the gift of faith. It is a supernatural faith for impossible miracles. So he said, “Let’s do a “Jericho march” around the car. We will pray and shout the victory, and the walls will have to fall down.” After circling the car seven times, praying and hollering at the top of our lungs, I looked at Tom and said, “Now what?”

He said, “Get the keys and start her up.”

But my natural reasoning got the better of me, and I retorted, “Tom, the car has been sitting for six months without being started. The battery is probably dead. It won’t start.”

Well, to my utter amazement, on the first turn of the ignition key, the engine started right up. We took the car for a spin, and there was no wobble in the front end. God healed my VW! But in my heart, I still wasn’t convinced. The following day, without telling anyone, I quietly took the car to a mechanic and asked him to check out the front end. He called me by midday, saying the car was ready for me to pick up. I freaked out and yelled at him, saying, “I only wanted you to give me an estimate for the repairs. I didn’t want you to fix it before getting my authorization. How much is it?”

The poor mechanic replied, “The total for everything is \$29.

All it needed was a front end alignment.” Hallelujah, God is amazing!

### *Judge's Shoes*

Tom and I wore out shoes pretty fast; we did a lot of walking and street witnessing in those early days. One night, we were in a prayer meeting, and someone noticed holes in the bottom of Tom's shoes. They mockingly asked him, "I thought you lived by faith. Looks like God forgot to buy new shoes for you." This bothered Tom, and he went to the Lord in prayer, saying, "Lord, You promised to provide all our needs. You have always been faithful, but I really need a pair of shoes."

That same week, a well-dressed lady came to our door. She introduced herself as Mrs. Moore, and told us that she was a neighbor down the road from us and, more importantly, that she was a Christian. She went on to explain that her husband, who had been the Circuit Court Judge for Arlington County, had recently passed away. She was now in the process of giving away a lot of his clothes, and when she found some of his brand-new shoes in the closet, she felt the Lord urge her to bring them to our house. They were a perfect fit for Tom! For weeks after that, Tom would go around pointing down to his feet and saying, "Judge's shoes. I've got my judge's shoes on!" (Note: Be sure to read a recent update to this story in chapter 17, "God Knows Our Shoe Size" on page 141.)

Time and paper would fail us if I were to go on with all of the testimonies of God's miraculous provision at the Arlington House of Faith. There was the can of rice that never ran out after a year (and we ate rice every day!), the plague of flying ants that completely disappeared in minutes after a prayer of faith, and most importantly, lives that were forever changed by the power of a living God.

### 3

## CHRIST COMES TO ESTHER'S HIGH SCHOOL

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

—*Matthew 5:13-16*

**P**UBLIC SPEAKING WAS NEVER MY FORTE. I was an extremely shy person, so after becoming a Christian, the prospect of having to stand up and publicly witness or preach for Christ was quite unsettling for me.

The lowest grade I ever received in school was in my public speaking class at the University of Maryland. I dreaded each time that I would have to stand in front of my 20 classmates and deliver a five-minute speech. I would break out into a cold sweat and my stomach would

be in knots; I would nervously fumble my note cards, and in the end, completely forget what I wanted to say—it was a total disaster!

All of that was about to change just a few months after I had become a Christian. When I had worked as a Park Naturalist at Gulf Branch Nature Center, one of my duties was to supervise a group of 10 high school volunteers that worked in the park during the summer. When we were off duty, I would regularly party and hang out with these kids, often bringing my guitar along and singing for them. They thought I was the coolest boss on earth!

But now, after going to California and becoming a Christian, I had come back to live in the Arlington house on the very park property where these volunteers used to work. One of those high school workers was a young lady named Esther. She found out that I was back in town and actually living in the park, so one day she called me. Esther was in charge of organizing the all-school assemblies at her high school, and she wanted to know if I could come and sing at her next assembly. Without thinking, I told her I would be happy to come.

After getting off the phone, I realized we had a major problem: Esther had no idea that I had become a Christian, and I absolutely could not go to her school and sing the old worldly songs I used to sing. I picked up the phone to call her back and tell her that I couldn't do it, but the Lord would not let me dial her number. Finally, I heard the Holy Spirit clearly say, "You *will* go and sing My songs, and you *will* tell all of them about Me."

"No, no, no, Lord. I simply cannot do that. There is no way I can stand in front of 2,000 high school students and sing Christian songs and preach about Christ." Well, this struggle went on for days, but in the end, God prevailed. The big day of the assembly finally arrived, and I was terrified. It was hard enough giving a five-minute speech in front of 20 fellow college students, but this was going to be a throng of wild high school kids!

I prayed like I had never prayed before. To this day, I can't explain what God did, but a supernatural boldness and confidence filled me as I walked up onto the stage to sing for those 2,000 young people packed into the school gymnasium. After singing, I gave a brief testimony about my conversion and invited everyone there to receive Christ into their hearts. I prayed a quick closing prayer, left the stage, put my guitar in the case, and ran as fast as I could to my car!

Later that afternoon, the telephone rang. It was Esther. She was absolutely livid! She went on and on, screaming and yelling at me, saying, "Why did you do this to me? What is wrong with you? Now I am the laughingstock of the whole school! All the kids are mocking me, saying, 'Oh, Esther brought her Jesus friend to preach to us and get us all converted!' What in the world happened to you, Wayne?"

After 20 minutes of nonstop venting, Esther finally paused and said, "That's it, Wayne. I am coming over to your house to continue this conversation! I'll be there in 10 minutes."

As you can well imagine, I was not looking forward to "continuing this conversation" with Esther. I wasn't sure if this was going to get violent, but I prayed and asked the Lord for His peace and wisdom.

When Esther arrived at the house, thankfully Tom was also home to give me moral support. (It didn't hurt that he had been a sergeant in the Marine Corps either!) She picked up right where she had left off on the telephone, ranting and raving and fuming with anger at me. After about 15 or 20 minutes, we could see that Esther was becoming noticeably exhausted! Finally, she slumped down into the couch and stared at me for a long time. Then, in a very low voice, she asked me, "Wayne, what happened to you?"

Once again, I shared my testimony with Esther of how I had come to Christ, and found love and joy that I could never find in the world. Tears began to roll down her cheeks, and that afternoon, Esther surrendered her life to the Lord Jesus Christ and she was marvelously born again! You can't make this stuff up!

In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

—*Luke 15:10*

### *A Chain Reaction*

Two days later, Esther brought her sister to the house, and she got saved! The following week, she brought two of her classmates from high school, and they received Christ. That's when we decided to fill up the pond in the foyer and convert it into a baptistry!

A real revival began to break out in Esther's school, so much so that she got permission from her principal to start a Bible Study group after school once a week. Tom and I continued to go there every week for a long time, and we soon had a group of 25 young people coming regularly to study the Scriptures together and learn about this great God we serve!

Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are You staying?" "Come," He replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where He was staying... Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus... The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, He said to him, "Follow Me." Philip... found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth..."

—*John 1:38-45*

### *God the Great Weaver*

As I look back on the early years of my Christian life and attempt to retrace my steps, I am overwhelmed when I observe how the unseen hand of God was “steering the ship” at every turn. The Apostle Paul expressed this truth with crystal clarity in the well-known passage from Romans:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

—*Romans 8:28 (NKJV)*

I often consider the following sequence of events which I had no control over—if any one of them were missing, there would be no chapter about Esther, no chapter about the Arlington house, no chapter about my salvation—and no book period! Here are just a few:

1. If I hadn't left graduate school at Virginia Tech and returned to the Washington, D.C. Metro area, I never would have worked at Gulf Branch Nature Center in Arlington, Virginia.
2. If I hadn't worked at Gulf Branch, I never would have known Esther nor could I have learned about the vacant house that was to become the “Arlington House of Faith.”
3. If I hadn't left Gulf Branch and driven to California, I never would have met Burt Fong or Pastor Cannistraci—God alone knows where I would have ended up!
4. If I hadn't returned to Maryland from California in December of 1974, and attended the retreat in Pennsylvania shortly thereafter, I wouldn't have met Tom Dant; and here my brain starts to “short circuit” with all of the “what ifs” (that is why the Scripture talks about the “mystery of His will” in Ephesians 1:9).

It is often after many years that we can finally look back at all of the seemingly random, disconnected circumstances of our lives, and affirm that “ALL things work together for good.”

Such was the case with Joseph in the Old Testament. After being rejected by his own brothers and sold into slavery in Egypt, Joseph was able to see the hand of God at work throughout this painful chapter of his life. Instead of being bitter or vengeful about his 13 years in exile, he understood that God had lovingly “woven together” every part of the story to fulfill *His* purposes. When Joseph was finally reunited with his brothers, he made this amazing declaration:

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

—*Genesis 50:20*

In other words, “You had *your* plans, but God had *His!*” The word translated “intended” in this verse is the word *chashab* in the original Hebrew text. The word *chashab* literally means to “weave, fabricate, plot or contrive.” It is the very same word that we encountered in 2 Samuel 14:14 (the opening Scripture passage of chapter 1), where it is translated “devises”—God *devises* means to bring the banished ones back to Himself. Joseph realized that his brothers had plotted and connived against him, but he also understood that God was sovereignly plotting and weaving together every circumstance for the ultimate good, not only for his own life, but even for his brothers’:

But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.

—*Genesis 45:7-8*

What amazing insight God gave to Joseph to be able to comprehend that it was not his brothers' actions or intentions that were steering his life—it was the sovereign hand of God!

My friend, as we bring this chapter to a close, let me encourage you with this simple thought: God has a plan for your life, and even when people try to harm you, and circumstances seem to be working against you, know that *He* can make *all things* work together for your good!

Interestingly, the same Hebrew word *chashab* is translated “thoughts” or “plans” in a separate Scripture that we examined earlier in this book, namely, Jeremiah 29:11. There, God assures us that He has good *plans* for us, plans to prosper us and not to harm us, plans to give us hope and a future. Like a master playwright or movie script writer who artfully weaves together the complex plot and subplots of his/her story, so God is behind the scenes, plotting, scheming, and contriving the most amazing story—your life!



## 4

### ANGELS WATCHING OVER ME

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

—*Hebrews 1:14*

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly.

—*Hebrews 12:22*

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

—*Hebrews 13:2*

I AM OFTEN REMINDED OF AMY GRANT'S HIT SONG, "Angels" (©1984: Word Music LLC), in which she described agents that could not be seen "with human eyes," who were all around her, protecting her from reckless cars, near accidents, and enemy attacks:

Angels watching over me  
Every move I make  
Angels watching over me

Even a casual search through the Scriptures reveals that angels are not as uncommon as one might think. And they are very numerous, perhaps numbering in the millions (see Daniel 7:9-10; Revelation 5:11). They can disguise themselves as humans, and at least one occurrence is found in the Bible where angels ate food that was prepared for them (Genesis 19:3).

The word “angel” literally means “messenger.” It is clear that angels are the ministers that God often uses to bring help and aid to His people. I can confidently say that I have heard and felt the “brush of angel’s wings” on more than a few occasions in my lifetime.

### *A Hand Just Paid Our Toll*

Some years ago, I was driving a group of ministers from Lanham, Maryland, to Baltimore, Maryland, to conduct a house meeting in the home of some Christian friends. As we were approaching the Harbor Tunnel, I suddenly remembered that we needed \$1.00 for the toll. Unfortunately, that was \$1.00 more than all of the ministers combined had to their name!

In a panic of unbelief, I pulled the car off to the shoulder just before the toll booth. I had everyone look for any loose change under the seats and floor mats, in their pockets or purses, or anywhere else in the car. Ultimately, we could only scrape together 57 cents! So I decided we would just have to cast ourselves on the mercy of the toll booth operator; we began to make our way toward the little stall where he was stationed. As we were approaching the booth, everyone in the car saw a hand reach around from behind and toss \$1.00 worth of change into the coin basket. The light turned green, and we were waved on through. For the

next minute or so, we were all speechless—too stunned to utter a word! Finally, we all realized that an angel had paid our toll. You can't make this stuff up!

### *How to Drive a Car 90 Miles on Empty*

No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

—*Psalm 91:10-12 (NKJV)*

On another one of our road adventures, I was taking a group of young missionaries from Lanham, Maryland, to York, Pennsylvania, a trip of about 90 miles each way. This took place in 1979 during the gasoline crisis, when they instituted odd-even gas rationing. For my younger readers who may be clueless, let me explain. If the last number of your license plate was an odd number, you could only buy gas on odd-numbered days of the month; if it was an even-numbered day and you needed gas, tough luck!

Well, wouldn't you know it—the day of our trip was the wrong day to purchase gas. We had just a little gas in the tank, so we decided to go by faith. We made it safely to York, had a marvelous evangelistic meeting, and started our return trip to Lanham. As we were leaving York, everyone in the car noticed that the gas gauge was already on “E” (empty). I was driving, and I told everyone to pray hard because we needed a miracle. For the final 30 miles of the trip, we literally felt like angels were carrying the car—they took charge of the situation! I have never again experienced anything like what transpired that night!

Miraculously, we reached Lanham safely by around 2:00 a.m. We praised God for bringing us back, and because everyone was so exhausted, we went straight to bed.

The next morning, I had to run an errand, and without thinking, took the same car we had driven to York the night before. I started the car and began to back out of the driveway. Literally, after going about five feet, the car ran out of gas. Only then did I remember our angel escort the previous night and realize the great miracle that God had done. You just can't make this stuff up!

### *A New Song in Heaven*

On a separate occasion, I was very ill in bed with a raging fever. It so happened that the church was having a prayer meeting that night in the mission house where I was staying. As I drifted in and out of consciousness, I knew everyone would be praying for me.

Suddenly, I was sitting up in bed, tears were streaming down my face, my hands were lifted up in the air, and I was saying over and over, "Thank you, Lord, for the angels! Thank you for the angels!" As I became fully awake, I was conscious of the fact that for some time, I had been listening to the most beautiful music I ever heard in my life. This was unlike any earthly music. There were no refrains, no repetition—it was like a river of sound that was continuously new—it was always a "new song." I desperately wanted some paper or a tape recorder so that I could remember the melodies, but to no avail. Oh, the music that awaits us in heaven!

And just a side note: after my excitement over the angelic symphony began to subside, I realized that I had been completely healed! The fever had left me; I felt completely strengthened and well, so I got out of bed, and went to tell everyone at the prayer meeting what had just occurred. Come on, man, you just can't make this stuff up!

### *Prayer Requests Anyone?*

Pastor Tom Dant and I used to have a landscaping business as our "tentmaker ministry" (see Acts 18:3). One Friday, we had hauled tons

of shredded hardwood mulch up a steep hill to landscape a large estate and gardens. It was backbreaking work... literally! Friday night was our church prayer meeting, and when Tom and I walked in that evening, we were bent over like the Hunchback of Notre Dame!

There were already quite a few people in the church, including a visitor whom we had never met before. As he saw us hobbling in, his first words to me were, "Looks like you've got a hot disk in that back of yours." He greeted us and told us he was a chiropractor. I honestly don't remember him giving his name.

As the prayer meeting progressed, there were many prayer requests mentioned, including the pastors' entreaties for their ailing backs. We noticed something very interesting about our first-time visitor—he had a notebook in which he was carefully jotting down every single prayer request. In 41 years of ministry, I have never seen another visitor doing that!

As soon as the prayer meeting ended, our chiropractor friend left, never to be seen again! And what is more amazing, as Tom and I were leaving the church, we both realized that our backs had been completely healed. You can believe whatever you want, but as for Tom and me, we believe that we were visited that night by an angelic chiropractor who wrote down all of our prayer requests and hand-delivered them to our heavenly Father! Can you make up stories like this? I can't! Angels are all around us!

### ***Instant Radiator Repair***

One weekend, I was making a trip from Washington, D.C., to Brooklyn, New York, with my dear friend and brother in Christ, Terry Harris (you will be hearing about him again in chapter 12, "Baptizing Moses in the Red Sea," on page 103). We were driving a beat-up old Ford that probably should have been put out of its misery in a junkyard years before.

After travelling about 70 miles north on I-95, we noticed a large amount of steam coming out of the engine compartment, so we pulled over at the next rest stop. We opened the hood and could see steam coming from the radiator itself, a pretty clear indication that the radiator was blown. As we stood there feeling very helpless (Hallelujah, God helps the helpless!), a very nice man came over and asked us if we needed help. He took one look and told us it looked like we had burst the radiator. But with a gentle, reassuring calm, he told us not to worry... he would take care of it.

He sent us inside to get a jug of water. When we returned with the water, he poured it into the radiator and said, "Everything should be fine now. You're good to go." And off we went, relieved and rejoicing.

"He was such a nice man," Terry commented.

"Yeah, there was something special about him," I added. Suddenly, Terry and I looked at each other and exclaimed simultaneously, "That was an angel! An angel just fixed our car!" Indeed, angels are everywhere—heavenly messengers sent by God in the service of the heirs of salvation!

### *Angel Abe*

One night, a group of us was out witnessing and evangelizing in the streets of Takoma Park, Maryland. It was a cold night and to be honest, we were all a bit discouraged. Suddenly, a very tall, slender man began approaching us. He had a black top hat and looked just like Abraham Lincoln! As he passed by us, he was smiling and seemed unusually joyful; he spoke a few words of encouragement to us, saying, "You guys are doing a great job, keep it up!" And then he kept right on walking. After he had passed by, I kept feeling that there was something very unique about this man. Before I could say anything, Tom came running to me and said, "Brother, did you see that guy dressed like Abraham Lincoln."

“Yeah, I did.”

“That was an angel! Brother, I’m telling you, that was an angel!”

When we looked down the sidewalk, he had already disappeared!  
Indeed, “some have entertained angels unawares.”



## 5

### ROCKING A COUPLE OF ROCK CONCERTS

Jonathan said to his armor bearer, “Come on now, let’s go across to these uncircumcised pagans. Maybe GOD will work for us. There’s no rule that says God can only deliver by using a big army. No one can stop GOD from saving when He sets His mind to it.”

—*1 Samuel 14:6 (MSG)*

I SPENT 12 YEARS OF MY LIFE AS A ROCK MUSICIAN; I played lead guitar in bands for dances, fraternity parties, and for a host of other events. I attended hundreds of rock concerts that featured stars like Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, Iron Butterfly, Led Zeppelin, The Who, Chicago, Grand Funk Railroad, Black Sabbath, Jethro Tull, Pink Floyd... need I go on? I think you get the picture—I was a rock ‘n’ roll addict before the Lord got a hold of my life!

God often gives you a burden and compassion for people who are trapped in the same addictions or bondages that you were once in. That was certainly the case with me. Shortly after I became a Christian, I had a great desire to reach people who were lost in the rock subculture. I tried to share my faith with all of my former band members, but they thought I had gone off the deep end! Then I began

to pray for all of the millions of misguided youth who were attending rock concerts and getting caught in Satan's trap of alcohol, drugs, and deception.

### *Clouds of Glory Rain on the Rolling Stones*

One day, I was sharing this burden with Tom Dant, and shortly thereafter, we heard that the Rolling Stones were coming to the Capital Centre in Landover, Maryland, for a concert July 1, 1975. We decided to do something. There were seven of us who joined together for this mission. We spent seven days fasting and praying, right up to the day of the concert. We created our own gospel tract entitled "Repent or Perish," and we printed 10,000 copies to hand out to the rockers as they poured into the parking lot.

We arrived at the Capital Centre parking lot early, and began handing out the pamphlets to people as they were entering the arena. Red alert! The police came and told us we were prohibited from distributing any literature on the arena grounds because it was private property.

Our hearts sank. I felt so discouraged. We had fasted seven days, and worked so hard, all for nothing! As we began to load all of the tracts into the back of our pickup truck and prepare to leave, something astounding began to happen. From all over the parking lot, people began to converge on our truck, requesting one of the handouts. It seems that God fooled them into thinking we were passing out programs for the concert!

In a short amount of time, all 10,000 of the leaflets had been distributed and we were on our way. We were left to wonder... until the following day, that is.

The next day, my brother called me asking me if I had heard what happened at the Rolling Stones concert the night before. I didn't know that my brother was one of the attendees, nor did he know that I was outside in the parking lot!

I played dumb and acted like I didn't even know there had been a Rolling Stones concert. My brother proceeded to explain how disappointed he was because the hot group, Little Feat, that was to open the concert for the Stones had cancelled at the last minute. Instead, they brought in a gospel singing group called the *Clouds of Glory!* (I promise you, I am not making this up!) They sang and preached the good news of Jesus Christ to the 18,000 adoring Rolling Stones fans inside the arena. And don't forget, 10,000 of the concertgoers had already received their Christian literature outside in the parking lot!

What are the chances of a Christian band opening for a Rolling Stones concert? Nothing is impossible with God! He doesn't need a big army to accomplish His work. He can turn the Capital Centre upside down when a little band of believers calls on His name.

### *A Divine Encounter with Alice Cooper*

Our next adventure at the Capital Centre was to be totally different from the first. I have found that God likes variety. He rarely does the same thing twice.

I learned that the group called Alice Cooper was coming to the Capital Centre for a big concert. I tried to enlighten Tom ahead of time about Alice Cooper's style of music, which was known as "shock rock." (Known as "The Godfather of Shock Rock," Alice Cooper would regularly employ guillotines, dueling swords, electric chairs, fake blood, and boa constrictors as part of his stage performance.) Understandably, Tom had never heard of such things! He was even more amazed when I told him about Alice Cooper's devoted followers who were called "glitter freaks" (they would cover their bodies with paint and glitter before coming to the concert).

Well, the same "Capital Centre Seven" banded together again for seven days of fasting and prayer. Our faith was a lot stronger after seeing what God had done at the Rolling Stones concert. But God's

strategy was different this time. No pamphlets or literature. We took our guitars and tambourines, and did a “Jericho march” (Tom likes Jericho marches—it sure worked with my broken VW!) seven times around the arena, singing and praising God. As we were completing our seventh lap, we were directly above the underground tunnel where the limos enter to drop off the performers. And there was Alice Cooper! You can’t make this stuff up! As he was getting out of the limousine to enter the Capital Centre, he heard our singing and guitars, and stopped. He looked up and understood immediately that we were Christians. He smiled and said, “My dad is a pastor,” and went in for the concert.

About 25 years later (from 2006 onward), Alice Cooper began to speak openly to the media about his Christian faith, declaring himself to be a born-again Christian. Indeed, both his father and grandfather were pastors. God answers prayer. How great is His faithfulness!

## 6

### IF YOU WERE ARRESTED FOR BEING A CHRISTIAN... WOULD THERE BE ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CONVICT YOU?

Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On My account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

—*Matthew 10:17-20*

**J**ESUS PROMISED HIS FOLLOWERS that they would be persecuted and hated for their Christian faith. We don't need to go looking for trouble, but when we choose to serve the Lord with our whole heart, we will face opposition.

In the early years of our ministry, we loved to do street witnessing and evangelism. Sometimes, we would take our guitars and musical instruments, sing and preach in the shopping centers; on other occasions,

we would pass out gospel tracts and literature; and other times, we would go door to door sharing Christ with people.

Occasionally, we were met with resistance and hostility. One Friday night, I was standing out in front of a liquor store, passing out flyers and talking to the people as they were going in to buy their alcohol. A group of young guys pulled up and we became engaged in a rather heated discussion about heaven and hell. As they were leaving, I was standing in between their car and another parked car, still trying to convince the driver of the car of his need for Christ. Suddenly, as this man was backing out the car, he deliberately swerved into me and the parked car behind me, pinning my leg between the two cars. My first thought was that I was going to lose my leg or be paralyzed for the rest of my life. As the car sped away, I could see that the force of the impact pressing my leg against the parked car had left a deep dent in the fender of the car. Amazingly, I had no pain, no bruises or injury to my leg. It seems that the Lord bent the steel fender of the car to make room for my leg so that it would not be crushed!

Sometime after that experience, a dear Christian brother named Jeff visited me and gave me a little card that read, "If You Were Arrested for Being a Christian, Would There Be Enough Evidence to Convict You?" The message stirred my heart, and I kept the card on my dresser as a reminder.

That very week, we decided to take a group of brothers witnessing at the local shopping center in an area known as Langley Park, Maryland. We took a guitar and some evangelistic flyers, and began to have a small open air meeting in front of some of the stores there. Suddenly, a number of police cars converged on us, and the next thing we knew, seven of us were being handcuffed and taken to the Takoma Park jail (these were not the same seven that marched around the Capital Centre except, of course, for Tom and me).

We spent the night in jail, and had the most amazing praise service with the Lord there! There was such an anointing and powerful

presence of God that we couldn't keep quiet. The sheriff kept coming in and telling us to lower our voices, saying we were so loud they couldn't hear the police dispatches as they were coming in. We would try to comply, quieting ourselves for a short while, but within minutes, we were again exploding in praise and song! The Lord gave us just a small taste of what Paul and Silas must have felt in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:25).

The following morning, we were taken across town to stand before a judge. After the charges were explained to us, we were released. It was only later that day, after reaching home, that I saw the little card sitting on top of my dresser, "If You Were Arrested for Being a Christian, Would There Be Enough Evidence to Convict You?"



## 7

### GOD'S FOURTH OF JULY FIREWORKS

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.

—*John 12:32*

**T**HE FOURTH OF JULY PARADE has been a long-standing tradition in the city of Takoma Park, Maryland. Floats, bands, crowds of people—it seems like just the kind of event that Jesus would attend if He were in the area.

In the summer of 1975, a group of us decided it was time for Jesus to make an appearance in the Annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade! At the time, Tom Dant was working with Teen Challenge in Washington, D.C. He made contact with Cookie Rodriguez, a former gang member and ex-drug addict who was saved through David Wilkerson's ministry of Teen Challenge. Her autobiography, *Please Make Me Cry*, published in 1974, chronicles her miraculous conversion and transformation through the power of Christ. More importantly, she was the founder of New Life for Girls, in Dover, Pennsylvania—a home to help recovering female drug addicts, gang members and prostitutes.

After securing a permit to enter a float in the parade, it was decided that the float would consist of a flatbed truck carrying Cookie's

Christian band from New York and some of the girls from her New Life for Girls ministry, who would sing praise songs as the float moved along the parade route through the city. Arrangements were also made to have an airplane flying overhead during the parade carrying a big banner that read:

“JESUS SAID I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH  
AND THE LIFE.”

In addition, we organized an “army of foot soldiers” who would walk behind the float, distributing thousands of gospel tracts to the spectators lining the streets and sidewalks.

The day before the parade, Cookie brought her band and a “few of her girls”... 45 ex-prostitutes and ex-drug addicts to be exact! Where in the world were we going to put up 45 young ladies for the night? At our Arlington house, of course!

I am not making this up... I almost lost my salvation (and killed Tom!) the next morning, trying to cook breakfast for a house full of girls! We finally got everybody over to the staging area for the parade. Tom was driving the truck with Cookie's band on the back; I was with the “ground troops” ready to march. Our float was next to last in the parade, just in front of the Buddhists!

It was a hot July day. We waited, and waited, and waited in the blistering sun. Everyone was getting restless, the girls all needed to use the bathroom, and people were starting to complain. And where was the plane? There was no banner in sight. Just when it was looking like a total disaster, the parade began to move. Our float started to go forward, and the praise music began.

But we were two hours behind schedule. The parade was to have commenced at 10:00 a.m., but it was now 12:00 noon. What about the plane that we had spent so much money on? Disappointed, we assumed it

had come and gone already. Amazingly, just as our float started to move, the plane arrived with perfect timing, and there was the banner flying overhead:

“JESUS SAID I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH  
AND THE LIFE.”

In an instant, we all looked into the sky and saw the banner; a thunderous roar of praise erupted. Such a power fell on us that we began to run through the streets, passing out tracts and preaching to everyone!

When we reached the end of the parade route, we couldn't stop praising God for the amazing way He showed up that day in the parade. But there is more... (I am convinced that God has a sense of humor!)

Even though it was the last thing on our minds, our float ended up winning a prize for Best Float in the parade! And the next day, the pilot of the plane called, apologizing for being two hours late to the parade. He explained how he had been delayed by some unavoidable challenges, but had come as soon as he was able. Nonetheless, we assured him, “No, you were right on time... right on God's time!”

You can't make this stuff up! I like to think that on that 4<sup>th</sup> of July, the Lord “rode across the sky” to help us:

There is no one like the God of Jeshurun [Israel], who  
rides across the heavens to help you and on the clouds  
in His majesty. The eternal God is your refuge, and  
underneath are the everlasting arms...

—*Deuteronomy 33:26-27*



## 8

### MAKING FRIENDS IN BROOKLYN AND QUEENS

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the LORD. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

—*Romans 12:17-21*

**D**URING THE FIRST 23 YEARS OF MY LIFE, I lived a fairly sheltered existence in green suburbia of Montgomery County, Maryland. When I decided to follow Jesus, I knew it meant going *wherever* He might lead. The call finally came in 1980, when I was sent to pastor a church in Brooklyn, New York. By that time, I had already made missionary trips to England, France, India, Sri Lanka, and Israel. But this was different: this was a one-way ticket, possibly with no return!

I'll never forget my trip to Brooklyn. A fellow minister and I drove from Maryland by car, and by no coincidence, we arrived in New York City on the night of July 4<sup>th</sup>. I honestly could not distinguish between the sounds of fireworks and gunfire! As we pulled up to the ministers' quarters, a brick row house on Lincoln Road, the pastor whom I was replacing (and was close friends with) was standing out on the front porch. He greeted us with a smile and these words: "They murdered the owner of the dry cleaners up at the corner yesterday, and there was a stabbing down at the other end of the street this week. Praise God, I will be leaving at 7:00 a.m. tomorrow. Welcome to Brooklyn!"

That night, I got settled in my new bedroom and quickly crashed into bed, exhausted from our long journey. In the middle of the night, I needed to go to the bathroom, and I made my first big mistake after coming to New York—I turned on the lights. When I flicked on the light switch, it revealed an army of previously unseen inhabitants who were sharing my bedroom—cockroaches! Thousands of cockroaches were scurrying for cover, running up and down the walls, and even crawling over my bed. Right then and there, I cried out to the Lord and told Him, "Lord, there is no way I am going to make it here in this place. Without Your help, I will not last for even 24 hours. Help me, Lord! Please give me strength."

It was only months later that I came to fully appreciate how marvelously God had answered my prayer that night: He helped me! He helped me get rid of the cockroaches, and more importantly, He gave me amazing grace to adapt to my new life in Brooklyn. I fell in love with Brooklyn and the people there, so much so that two years later, when I had to leave on a new assignment, I wept and wept.

### *Karate Kicks, Big Knives and Fire Escapes*

Every morning, all of the ministers and missionaries who were a part of our ministry in Brooklyn would gather together on the ground

floor for a time of prayer, praise and Bible study. Because we lived in a row house, our building was directly attached to our neighbors on either side. Each unit had three floors, and it was common knowledge that all of the people living in the unit on one side of us were drug addicts.

One morning, we were all seated on the floor, praising and worshipping the Lord. I was playing my guitar and having a wonderful time singing and rejoicing. My eyes were closed and I was totally lost in the presence of God. Suddenly and quite unexpectedly, I was laid out on the ground in the middle of the floor, seeing stars and also seeing one of our drug addict neighbors standing over me with a 12-inch butcher knife!

Welcome to Brooklyn! (I later learned that he had come in through the back door, and had run straight toward me, giving me a hard karate kick to the head.) Obviously demon-possessed, the man went on shouting and screaming obscenities; what is more amazing, he was repeatedly trying to stab me with the knife in his hand, but some invisible force was restraining his hand. After numerous failed attempts to lower the knife into my chest, he became frustrated and finally left.

The Lord helped me! I was powerless and helpless, but the Lord helped me. (I doubt you would be reading these lines today if He hadn't!) We read in the New Testament how the Apostle Paul's life was threatened countless times, but he acknowledged that the Lord had always been his helper:

Some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike.

*—Acts 26:21-22*

Later that day, I was in my room which looked out onto Lincoln Road, and there I saw my demonized, assailant neighbor walking down

the sidewalk. I heard a voice speak clearly to me, “Go out and talk to him.”

I immediately responded, “I rebuke you, Satan. Get behind me!”

I heard the voice a second time, “Go out and talk to him.”

This time I knew it was the Lord, not the devil, so I reluctantly went outside. Before I could speak, the other man approached me, now like a gentle lamb, saying, “Please forgive me. I don’t know what came over me in there this morning, but I am truly sorry.” Well, I knew *what* came over him—it was the devil—but I just didn’t feel like this was the best time to give him a long Bible study on demonology! So we shook hands, and I assured him that he was forgiven.

But God works in strange ways. When we have enemies, the Scriptures teach us to love and forgive them; we are not to seek revenge or repay evil for evil; but God also says: “Leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE. I WILL REPAY,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:19, NAS) and “Do not touch My anointed ones; do My prophets no harm” (Psalm 105:15).

King Herod learned that lesson the hard way. He had the Apostle James executed, and then he imprisoned the Apostle Peter; but it wasn’t long before the angel of the Lord struck him down and his body was eaten by worms (Acts 12:1-23)! You really don’t want to mess with God’s servants!

About a month after the knife incident, late one night, there was a bad fire in the same unit next door. Several of the residents were trapped on the third floor. We heard people screaming and crying for help, and we were able to rescue them by means of the fire escape. Thankfully, no lives were lost, but the entire building was gutted, and God scattered all of the drug addicts from next door! We had peace from that day on. You just can’t make this stuff up!

We used to sing a song in Brooklyn that was taken from Psalm 124—the psalmist’s words seemed to resonate more powerfully in our

hearts after seeing God's amazing hand of protection with us there on Lincoln Road:

If the LORD had not been on our side-- let Israel say--  
 -if the LORD had not been on our side when people  
 attacked us, they would have swallowed us alive when  
 their anger flared against us; the flood would have  
 engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, the  
 raging waters would have swept us away. Praise be to the  
 LORD, who has not let us be torn by their teeth. We have  
 escaped like a bird from the fowler's snare; the snare has  
 been broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the  
 name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

—*Psalm 124:1-8*

On a lighter note, one of the ministers with us in Brooklyn had a three-year-old boy who used to love singing the aforementioned chorus. But he substituted a few of his own words, and it was quite humorous to listen to his version:

Instead of...

My soul escaped, like a bird,  
 Out of the snare of the fowler...

He would sing...

My soul escaped, like a bird,  
 Out of the *snails* on the *flowers*.

Thank God He has delivered us from the "snails on the flowers!"

### ***If Your Enemy Is Hungry, Bake Him (or Her) a Cake***

As our ministry in New York began to expand, we had a large group of believers that was raised up in Queens. It was decided to plant

a separate church there, and after some searching, we found a suitable location to rent. Once all of the necessary building permits had been secured from the city, we began extensive renovations on the building to get it ready for our church services.

As the work was nearing completion, we announced the date of our first Inaugural Service for the new church throughout the community. Unfortunately, we had a neighbor who was not at all happy about having a church next door. She was a woman of great influence; she filed a complaint with the city, and the city came in and revoked our Use and Occupancy Permit.

Everything came to a halt. We had spent thousands of dollars on the renovations and repairs to the building... all for naught! And we had already advertised our first service quite extensively in the surrounding neighborhoods. Now we had to cancel everything.

I was so discouraged, but more than discouraged, I was downright angry—angry at the woman who was causing all of this trouble. One morning, I was praying about the situation, asking the Lord to deal with this woman (“Lord, call down fire on her like you did in Elijah’s day”) and to help us to proceed with our church plans. As I was praying, I kept sensing that still, small voice of the Lord inside saying, “Bake a cake for her.”

*Bake her a cake? That’s ridiculous!* I thought.

Again the Lord spoke to me, “Have one of the ladies in the church bake a cake and *you* take it to her.” Well, after a long battle with the Lord, I finally surrendered. I had one of the ladies bake a nice cake, and when it was ready, I took it over to our neighbor’s house. As I climbed the steps to her front porch, my heart was pounding. I didn’t know what I was going to say. I rang the doorbell and waited. No answer. I rang it again and waited. No answer. I was relieved.

Now we would go to Plan B. I had already written out a note to leave with the cake in the event that no one was at home. I placed the

cake along with the card in front of the door, and started to walk away. Unexpectedly, I heard the front door creak as it was slowly opening.

“Hello Mrs. X (I honestly cannot remember her name now), I am Pastor Wayne Pratt from the church down the street, and we wanted to express our love and thanks to you for being such a great neighbor; we’ve brought you this cake. God bless you!” She was literally speechless. That’s right. She never uttered a single word! But within 24 hours, the city contacted us, informing us that our Use and Occupancy Permit had been approved. We could go ahead with our church plan! And guess who was seated in the first row for our Inaugural Service there in Queens? Yep, the cake lady! You’ve got to be kidding me: you couldn’t make up a story like this one, even if you tried! God is so good!



## 9

# I LEFT MY HEART (AND LIVER!) IN SAN FRANCISCO

On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

—*Matthew 16:18*

**O**CCASIONALLY, WELL-MEANING BELIEVERS have asked me, “Pastor, would you please come to our town and help us start a church?”

My answer has always shocked them (which may explain why I am seldom asked anymore): “I don’t know how to start a church.”

They get that puzzled look, and I can see the “wheels” turning in their heads as they wonder: *You’re a pastor... you’re supposed to know how to start a church, aren’t you?*

Jesus couldn’t have been any clearer when He told Peter, “I will build *My* church.” The Church is a “building from God, a house *not made with hands*” (2 Corinthians 5:1); it will not have a single human fingerprint on it! It will be *His* workmanship (Ephesians 2:10) for the praise of His glory!

So why does God need apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11) if He can do all of the work Himself? Well,

the answer to that question is complex, certainly beyond the scope of this little book, but in a nutshell, God wants us to learn to “co-labor” with Him:

For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.

—1 Corinthians 3:9

As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain.

—2 Corinthians 6:1

In other words, we work *alongside* Him. We find out what He is doing, and we work with Him. I often envision our co-laboring with the Lord to be very much like an apprentice son learning a skill or trade under the tutelage of his more experienced father.

Jesus knows how to start a church... read Acts chapter two! The birth of the first church was supernatural: it was not the result of a one-year demographic study or the formation of a fundraising committee. It came about through the outpouring of God’s Spirit. Yes, God used Peter to preach on the day of Pentecost and 3,000 came to Christ, but it is actually the *Holy Spirit* who convicts people of their sins (John 16:8) and it is the *gospel* that is the power of God that brings salvation (Romans 1:16).

A passage of Scripture that has often been a “lighthouse” to me in my ministry is, quite interestingly, ascribed to Solomon, the builder of the most glorious temple ever constructed on earth:

A song of ascents. Of Solomon. Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.

In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food  
to eat—for He grants sleep to those He loves.

—*Psalm 127:1-2*

Unless God builds a church, all of our well-laid plans and hard work are for naught. But it is a beautiful thing to behold when the *Lord* builds *His* church!

### ***A Church Is Born***

In 1983, a Christian lady that I knew in Newark, New Jersey, contacted me and explained that her sister, her mother, and a few other relatives lived in San Francisco, California. She shared the burden of her heart for them to get saved, and pleaded with me to visit them and try to lead them to the Lord.

After praying about it, I felt inspired to go. I stayed in the basement of the house where the sister and mother lived. I didn't know what to expect, but God began to do something truly amazing. The mother and sister both received Christ; then two nieces got saved. After a week, we had 14 new believers who were ready to be baptized. We got permission to use a lady's swimming pool for the baptism, and how cold that water was in the middle of December! (See more about baptism in chapter 11, "Streams in the Desert," on page 97).

God kept adding to the little group (see Acts 2:47), and before long, we had 25 people. Shortly after that, we asked Pastor Luis Lozano and his wife (who were part of our ministry team) to come help shepherd these precious souls. The numbers continued to increase... there were marvelous testimonies of healing, deliverance, and salvation. Before long, we had 40 people gathering three times a week in the house. We had a church! God eventually raised up several full-time pastors and missionaries from the group, and sent them out to different parts of the world. What a blessing!

I reiterate what I stated at the beginning of this chapter: *I don't know how to start a church. But I've seen God start churches!*

### *In the Shadow of Death*

Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead,  
but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

—*Luke 9:60*

Every few months, I would travel from Newark, New Jersey, to visit the group in San Francisco. The church eventually outgrew the house where they were meeting. On one occasion, I flew out to help Pastor Luis look for a proper facility to rent—a place suitable for the church as well as a pastoral residence.

One morning, we found a few properties advertised in the newspaper, so we made necessary arrangements to go and look at them. After viewing several places that were either too expensive or not suitable for our purposes, we were on our way to look at one last building, and we got lost (this was long before GPS!). In the process of trying to return home, we stumbled upon a vacant house for rent that was not even listed in the paper.

We called the realtor, and the next day went to see the place. It was a nice house in a perfect location. And the rent was quite reasonable. Wow, what not to like? We signed the lease and within a day or two, had moved into our new church home which was located in a part of San Francisco known as “Visitacion Valley.” The area purportedly gets its name from the fact that, in the 1800s, there was a great *visitation* of God and mighty revival that took place there. (I am not making this up!)

Several weeks later, we were talking to one of the neighbors and began to understand why such a nice house had been vacant for so long, and at such a reasonable price. He asked us, “You *do* know the history of that house you're in, right?”

“What history?” we asked.

“Someone was murdered in that house about six months ago. No one else wanted to rent it but you!” the neighbor explained.

Well, as the saying goes, “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.” But we were in now, so there was no turning back!

### *Liver Again?*

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

—*Philippians 4:12-13*

At this point, you are probably wondering about the “liver” part in this chapter’s title. Glad you asked.

After scraping together what little money we had in order to rent our “new” house, we went through a time of great necessity. The house needed a good coat of paint on the outside, but we had no money to buy paint. One afternoon, we were rummaging around in the cellar, and we came across four or five different cans of old paint. We decided to mix them all together and give the exterior of the house a face lift. I can’t exactly describe the color, but it was a cross between salmon, pink, purple, and burgundy... whew, it was unique!

More importantly, our food supplies finally ran out except for two things: rice and liver! We ate liver for 10 days... fried, broiled, ground. The pastor’s wife lovingly prepared it every way imaginable. At last, I went to Pastor Luis and told him, “Brother, I just can’t eat any more liver. You do what you want, but today I am declaring a fast until God sends *something* else for us to eat!”

Several days later, a brother from the church who had just recently been converted came to the house carrying a McDonald's bag in his hand. The pastor was quite excited, thinking, *Hallelujah, the Lord provides! It must be a Big Mac!* When Pastor Luis asked him what was inside the bag, he opened it, and to Luis' disappointment, no Big Mac! Instead, there was a .38 caliber pistol! The brother explained that before becoming a Christian, he had been a member of a street gang, and his job had been to carry the weapons. Now that he had found a new life in Christ, he wanted to get rid of this emblem of his past. He and the pastor drove to a bridge nearby, and the brother threw the pistol into the San Francisco Bay, screaming, "I don't need you anymore!" (And you think being a pastor is unexciting?)

The very next day, the same brother and his wife brought bags and bags of groceries to the house. Thank You, Lord! Miraculously, God sent us abundance! I don't want to offend any "liver-lovers" who might be reading, but I have never again eaten liver since 1983. I left my liver in San Francisco!

## 10

### PASS THE GARROBO AND CUSUCO, PLEASE

The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.

—*Psalm 27:1-3*

**E**L SALVADOR IS A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY. But from 1980 to 1992, the nation was ravaged by a civil war that claimed the lives of more than 75,000 Salvadorans. And because of the U.S. involvement in the conflict, El Salvador was a very dangerous place for Americans during that time. On June 19, 1985, four off-duty U.S. Marines and nine others had been killed at sidewalk restaurants in the Zona Rosa section of San Salvador. To say the least, January 1986 was not exactly the safest time to plan a mission trip to El Salvador. However, when we walk with the Lord, our safety is not dependent on circumstances—*He* is our safety!

I had been invited to join an American pastor and a medical doctor from the Dominican Republic to attend a church conference in San Miguel, El Salvador. Our plane landed at the San Salvador airport without incident, but we then needed to take an internal flight from San Salvador to San Miguel, because all public ground transportation had been halted, and it was far too dangerous to travel by car.

### *You're the Pilot Now*

Our plane was a small four-seat Cessna of 1945 vintage! These planes were so old, they were literally falling apart! With rapt attention, I watched the plane that was taking off before ours; I could not believe my eyes. As the aircraft was moving down the runway, I saw a young boy running alongside the plane trying feverishly to slam the door shut from the outside! *Oh, this flight is going to be fun!* I thought.

We boarded our plane, ready for takeoff. For some reason, I was seated in the copilot's seat (maybe my two friends knew something I didn't know!). Once we were airborne, I noticed that none of the gauges on the instrument panel were working. I asked the pilot about it, and he chuckled, "Oh, those quit working a long time ago." That made me feel a lot better!

El Salvador has many volcanoes, and at least 20 of them are active. (On a more recent visit to San Miguel in 2012, I was able to hike to the summit of the famous Volcán Chaparrastique, which ended up erupting again on December 29, 2013!). As we were approaching San Miguel, I was marveling at the beauty of El Salvador's landscape. Then I posed a second question to the pilot that turned out to be near fatal. Pointing to the controls in my copilot's seat, I asked the pilot if they still worked. Suddenly, he flicked a switch, and with a mischievous smile, he announced, "You're the pilot now... you are flying this plane!" At first, I thought he was joking, but I soon realized *I* was now the pilot!

I quickly discovered that steering a plane is very different from driving a car, as evidenced by the fact that our plane was now heading straight down into the cone of one of El Salvador's beautiful volcanoes! My two companions both began to scream to the pilot, saying, "Take the controls away from him. He's going to kill us all!" (It's in situations like this that we find out just how much our friends trust us!)

Thankfully, the pilot regained control of the aircraft and landed us safely in San Miguel. We were greeted by Pastor José Rivera, a precious man of God and lifelong friend. The pastor drove us directly to the church, as our first meeting was scheduled for that evening.

### *Joyride into a Guerilla Camp*

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

—*Psalm 91:1-8*

We had a wonderful service in the church that night, and afterward I noticed that many of the church members were loading into the back of a large flatbed truck. I asked Pastor Rivera what they were doing. He explained that most of his people had no transportation, so this was the

“shuttle” that would take them back home. I asked him if I could ride along, and he tried his best to discourage me, saying, “Pastor, it would not be wise. Americans like you are prime targets in the country now, and you would be like a sitting duck on the bed of that truck. Please don’t go, it would be too dangerous.”

Pastor Rivera was right, but I still insisted in going. So there I was, standing on the back of a flatbed truck with 40 Salvadorans, travelling around in the dark of night in the middle of a civil war! (Sometimes my wife tells me, “You just won’t listen, will you!” I often seem to be lacking what one senior man of God used to call “sanctified common sense!”)

After we had dropped off most of the people, one mother with several small children still remained on the back of the truck. What took place next left an indelible mark on my life; it still brings tears to my eyes 30 years later. We continued for some distance, and finally stopped in the middle of nowhere: it was a dark, desolate jungle area, with no lights in sight. The driver shut the engine off, and the mother with her children climbed down, said “Good night,” and started walking up a steep slope into the darkness.

I couldn’t believe my eyes. I asked the driver, “Where are they going?”

He explained, “They live about three more miles up that mountain. There are no roads to their house. She and her children walk that distance each way to come to church; they come faithfully for every meeting—they never miss a service!”

And we can’t make it to church because it’s raining, or a little too hot outside? Oh, we make so many lame excuses! God help us!

Two days later, we were back in church. After the service, Pastor Rivera introduced me to one of the church members who was an officer in the Salvadoran Army. The pastor explained to him how I had ridden along in the flatbed truck several nights before. The officer was quite shocked, and when he heard about our last stop in the desolate jungle area, he said, “It’s a miracle that Pastor Wayne is still alive. That whole

jungle area was a guerilla camp, and the army had a major firefight with them there the very next day!”

Thank God for His marvelous protection on my life and for keeping me safe that night. But I want to say a few words about brave men and women like José Rivera: pastors, missionaries, and Christian workers, who literally risk their lives to take the good news of Jesus Christ to the hurting and lost in dangerous places. I was only in El Salvador for about 10 days on that 1986 trip, but José and others stayed there for years, facing incredible hardships and hazards that we can't even comprehend. Several different times, their church compound was right in the crossfire of fierce gun battles between the Salvadoran Army and the guerilla fighters. In one instance, the pastor and missionaries had to take cover under their beds for 12 days in order to dodge the bullets, going without food, and sneaking out at night to get water when there was a break in the fighting.

### *The Best Cure for Food Poisoning*

During the civil war in El Salvador, there were often long, protracted periods of time called *paros*. These were stoppages in transportation or strikes by workers or companies—basically, all services came to a halt. When we arrived in San Miguel in January of 1986, the country had already been suffering from a 10-day *paro*. Buses weren't moving (that is why we had to fly from the Capital to San Miguel), no food or goods were being transported, and the people were suffering great hardship.

One day, Pastor Rivera told us that he had a surprise for us: he wanted to take us out to lunch to the new fast food burger restaurant in downtown San Miguel. Wow, a cheeseburger! I certainly did enjoy myself... until later that night.

I developed the worst case of food poisoning I have ever had, and I've had more than my share on the foreign mission field! It never

dawned on me that, with the extended halt, no fresh meat or food had been coming into San Miguel. Not to mention the frequent power outages that may have caused meat to spoil.

I basically spent the whole night and all of the next day camped out beside the toilet, with severe vomiting and diarrhea. I was sharing a room with the Dominican doctor, but there wasn't much he or anyone else could do to relieve my suffering. Late that second evening, there was a knock at my door. It was Pastor Rivera. Rather sheepishly, he began explaining, "Pastor Wayne, I know you're not feeling well, but one of our poorest families has come from far away with some special food that they have lovingly prepared for you. Just come and eat a little bit so their feelings don't get hurt."

"Ugh... what kind of food is it?" I groaned.

Very diplomatically, the pastor responded, "Well, you don't need to know that, but if you must know, it's called *garrobo*."

"*Garrobo*... what's that?" I inquired.

"*Garrobo* is actually iguana, but don't worry, it tastes like chicken," the pastor smiled. (Why is it that any weird food always tastes like chicken? Poor chickens!)

As I dragged myself out of bed, the Dominican doctor, who had been keenly listening to this whole conversation, followed us to the dining room, muttering under his breath, "This I've got to see!"

After greeting the family who had so affectionately brought this delicacy for me, we prayed and blessed the food. And believe me, I *really* prayed an earnest prayer of faith, claiming God's promise to bless our bread and water, and remove sickness from among us (Exodus 23:25)! I nibbled on the *garrobo* and it tasted quite good (not surprising, as this was the first food I was eating in nearly 48 hours!)—it tasted like fish, not chicken, however! The family went on their way, and I went straight to bed again.

About a half hour later (you can't make this stuff up!), there was an additional knock at the door. It's Pastor Rivera again. "Wayne, I am so

sorry to bother you, but *another* family has come from afar with some special food that they have lovingly prepared for you. Come and eat a little bit so that their feelings don't get hurt."

This drill is now becoming quite familiar, complete with the doctor again stating, "This I've got to see!"

"José, do I dare ask what this special food is?" I queried.

"Honestly pastor, it's not important," José replied. "You don't need to know, but if you must know, it's called *cusuco*."

"What in the world is *cusuco*?" I asked.

"*Cusuco* is actually an armadillo, but not to worry... it is quite tasty," the pastor reassured.

By the time I was finished with the *cusuco*, I was surprised to see that I was starting to feel much better. I suddenly began to praise God, telling everyone at the table that I had been healed. To this day, I joke with Pastor Rivera about this whole incident, reminding him that "A cheeseburger made me sick as a dog, but God healed me with *garrobo* and *cusuco*!"

Pass the *garrobo* and *cusuco*, please!



# 11

## STREAMS IN THE DESERT

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to... Gaza.” ...on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official... he was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah... “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth...” Then Philip... told him the good news about Jesus... They came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” ... Philip baptized him... the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

—*Acts 8:26-39*

**G**OD LOVES PEOPLE. He loves big crowds of people, small groups of people, and He seems to have the same love for one solitary person.

The evangelist Philip learned this lesson in his experience with the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip was at the height of revival in Samaria—he was preaching to “crowds” in Samaria, and many were being saved, healed, and delivered of evil spirits. There were numerous miracles, signs, and wonders, and many were being baptized in water and receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit (see Acts 8:6-17). This is the kind of ministry every pastor dreams about!

Then suddenly (and without any explanation), the Lord pulled him out from the revival and sent him down into the desert—for one man. How God loved that Ethiopian! God will move heaven and earth (and His servants) to reach one hungry soul! We read in Psalm 68:6 (NKJV) that “God sets the solitary in families.” God is often looking for “one man” who will stand in the gap for Him (Jeremiah 5:1; Isaiah 59:16; Ezekiel 22:30). Surely David was contemplating this mystery of God’s amazing love when he wrote:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what  
is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man  
that You visit him?

—*Psalm 8:3-4 (NKJV)*

What is man—what is *one* man—that the Creator of the universe should care so much for him? What shepherd, but our Shepherd, would leave the ninety-nine sheep to go in search of the one that wandered off, not willing that even one should perish? (see Matthew 18:12-14).

Once Philip had preached Christ to the Ethiopian and baptized him, his mission in the desert was finished. The Holy Spirit literally whisked him away to a different city more than 30 miles away!

### *Anyone Know Where We Can Find Water?*

Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.

— *John 3:23*

In what has come to be known as the Great Commission, Jesus taught His disciples to make other disciples, and specifically, He instructed them to baptize them (Matthew 28:18-20). Over the years, this has at times presented me with some interesting challenges in the ministry, particularly in situations where water was scarce.

I remember one instance in Caracas, Venezuela, where another pastor and I had a group of new disciples who wanted water baptism. But we couldn't find any place to baptize them. Then one of the brothers taking baptism came up with an ingenious idea. He lived on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor of a high rise apartment building in downtown Caracas. Somehow, he managed to get permission from his building manager to allow us to use one of their large plastic laundry tubs on wheels. We wheeled it out onto the balcony, filled it with water, and had our baptismal service! (Sometimes you have to use both sides of your brain!)

I have baptized in bathtubs, swimming pools, ponds, lakes, and oceans—I even had to break up the ice on a river in Canada one time to baptize a few brave souls. (I never want to do that again!)

In 1987, I was pastoring a church in Houston, Texas. We were supporting a missionary who was working in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. He contacted me, sharing how he had won a number of young people for Christ there, and requested that I come down to help him baptize this group of new believers.

With great joy and excitement, a small band of us drove from Houston to Juarez for the baptism. Upon our arrival, we were quite impressed with the missionary's work, and decided to move forward

with the baptism immediately. Only one problem: no water! We couldn't find any place suitable for a baptism.

Then one of the young people said, "I know where we can go. Follow me!"

In hindsight, I probably should have gotten some more information before we piled into the vehicles and took off, blindly following this young man into the "wild blue yonder!"

We drove, and drove, and drove. We went for miles through the desert, until finally there were no houses, no utility poles... nothing but cactuses and sand! I suddenly remembered movies that I had watched where Americans were kidnapped and taken hostage for ransom (that is no joke now in Ciudad Juarez, which has sadly become a very dangerous home for the drug cartels). *Where was this young man taking us?* I wondered.

All of a sudden, we came upon a large agricultural aggregate in the middle of the desert. We could see lush, green fields, so I understood they were irrigating the crops—they had water! As we got closer, I could see large concrete tanks that held the water, and there was a man named Pedro working near the tanks.

We approached Pedro and I explained, "Sir, I am a pastor from Texas, and we have a group of new Christians here who want to take water baptism. We have travelled from Ciudad Juarez, and I was wondering if we could use one of your water tanks for our baptism. We will only take a short while, and then we will be out of here."

I wasn't sure what his response would be, but I was totally unprepared for what came to pass next. Pedro was a big strong man, but suddenly, there he was, weeping like a baby. I didn't have a clue what was going on.

Pedro finally regained his composure and began to tell the most incredible story: "As you can see, we are out here in the middle of the desert. No one ever comes here to visit us, and we never leave this place. But six months ago, a preacher passed through here, and he gave me

a Bible. Every night, my wife and I kneel down to pray, and we read a little bit from the Bible.

“About four months ago, we both invited Christ into our hearts and a miraculous change took place in us. We are now born-again believers, and we truly want to follow Christ. Shortly after that experience, we read about baptism in the Bible, and we began to feel a great desire to be baptized. Ever since then, we have been praying every night and asking God, ‘Lord, please send a man of God here who can baptize us.’

“So you see, the reason I am so overjoyed today is because God answered our prayer. I believe He brought you here, all the way from Houston, so that you can baptize my wife and me. Once you have finished baptizing everyone else, do you think that we could also be baptized?”

I melted. I have never experienced anything like that. I cried more than Pedro! We embraced, and I told him, “Get your wife. We will baptize the two of you first!”

What an amazing God we serve. He moved heaven and earth just to answer Pedro and his wife’s cries from the middle of the desert. Don’t ever think that you are not important to God! He loves you with an everlasting love!

After the baptism was over, Pedro invited all of us to his “home”—a small hut with a dirt floor—for a cup of tea to celebrate this great day. Oh, how we rejoiced there! Sitting on the ground, I was trying to comprehend the “breadth, and length, and depth, and height” of God’s great love (Ephesians 3:18-19)!

Now you know what I am going say as I close out this chapter: You just can’t make this stuff up!



## 12

### BAPTIZING MOSES IN THE RED SEA

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

—1 Corinthians 10:1-2

**I**F YOU HAVE JUST FINISHED READING the previous chapter, you may be wondering: *Another chapter about baptism? Haven't we heard enough about that?*

Well, please bear with me, but the story you are about to read is so incredible, it needed its own chapter. With the exception of my own conversion, this is probably the most amazing miracle that I myself have witnessed in my short span of 64 years.

The year was 1977. I had just returned from a four-month missionary stint in India and Sri Lanka. I was tired of trains and boat and planes—I was looking forward to a long “furlough” back home in the USA. But once again, God had other plans!

We had a group of seven young people in our fellowship in Washington, D.C., who had a burden to take the gospel to Israel. They had formed a Messianic Jewish singing group called *Yeshua*, which, of course, is Hebrew

for “Jesus.” They had learned some Hebrew worship songs, and the group leader, Terry Harris (mentioned back in chapter 4, “Angels Watching over Me,” on page 55), had learned quite a bit of Hebrew.

For several months, we gathered together nightly to pray for this mission, and God began to miraculously open doors. Finances for all of the expenses of the trip were provided, contacts were made with key people on the ground in Israel, and a feeling of great excitement began to build.

At the last minute, one of the members of the group was unable to go, and his replacement was chosen—yours truly! I didn’t know any Hebrew; I had never played or sung with the group, so I began a crash course, preparing for the upcoming trip.

One weekend shortly before our departure to Israel, the entire Yeshua group went to minister in a church in Dubois, Pennsylvania. We spent the first night with a dear pastor in Jeannette, Pennsylvania. The ladies were given accommodations in the pastor’s home, but the eight men had to sleep on the floor of the church sanctuary. It was a very old church that was a little “spooky” looking, but we happily spread out our sleeping bags on the altar and soon dozed off.

In the middle of the night, all eight of us were awakened suddenly... and simultaneously! We all felt something so dark and evil that, without any communication amongst ourselves, everyone began to rebuke the devil and pray out loud. After a few minutes of fervent prayer, we heard a window in the ceiling of the church fly open, and the dark presence left. You can’t make this stuff up!

The next morning we headed out to Dubois. All weekend, we had glorious meetings in the church there, and a mighty visitation from God. This was just a preview of coming attractions...

### *Seven Coffins*

At last, the tickets were purchased, all of the arrangements finalized, and the time came for our official sendoff by the church. It would be

our last Sunday service in the U.S. for the next six weeks, and we truly coveted everyone's encouragement and prayers.

That morning in the service, a well-meaning sister stood up to share a testimony: "Last night, I had a dream about a plane that flew out of the U.S., and later returned with seven coffins on board." That is all she had to say, so she went and sat down.

*Oh, now that's encouraging!* I thought. *There are seven of us flying to Israel tomorrow... and we're all coming back in coffins!*

I am now very careful with other people's dreams, visions, and personal prophecies. Please don't misunderstand: I believe that God speaks through dreams, visions, and prophecies, but they are normally a *confirmation* of what God has already been speaking to you, and there will be a witness from the Holy Spirit in your heart that the vision or prophecy is true.

I would be lying to say that the "seven coffin dream" didn't shake me a bit, but thank God, we didn't let fear determine our course. We proceeded with the plans we believed God had been preparing for us over a long period of time. We boarded our El Al flight to Tel Aviv, and after landing safely, we drove on to Jerusalem, where we set up our base in an apartment.

Sometimes at night, such a spirit of intercession would fall on us, we would go down into a bomb shelter to pray, to avoid waking up everyone in the apartment with our loud cries and shouts. God was giving us a taste of what the prophet foretold:

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on Me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

—*Zechariah 12:10*

### *A Night to Remember at the Beach*

Our first few weeks in Israel were pretty uneventful. We travelled around, singing and ministering wherever God opened doors, but nothing earth-shattering was taking place. Then one weekend, we decided to go to Eilat, a popular beach resort on the northern shore of the Red Sea. We had learned that many soldiers from the Israeli Army went there on weekends and holidays, in addition to large numbers of vacationers and tourists.

We arrived Friday afternoon, situating ourselves around several tables out on the beach. As we began singing our songs, more and more people were coming out to enjoy the seaside. Suddenly, a large contingent of soldiers arrived. They were in their full army uniform, and all were carrying their rifles.

Quite unexpectedly, the soldiers began to march on top of our tables, stomping their boots in our faces. They obviously understood who we were and what we were singing about, and they became quite enraged. Their commander, we would soon learn, was Sergeant Moshe (*Moshe* is the Hebrew form of “Moses”). Moshe was not at all happy that these Christians from America were ruining his weekend, singing about *Yeshua* the Messiah.

As the soldiers continued pounding their boots on our tables and shouting angry epithets in Hebrew, the air was becoming increasingly tense. I suddenly remembered the sister’s dream about the seven coffins. I then heard the devil whisper very clearly in my ear, “All of you are going to die tonight. You should have listened to the warning and stayed home!”

At that moment, I made a very critical decision in my own mind: *OK. If I am going to die, I want to die praising the Lord. I am going to close my eyes, and we are going to keep singing, so help us God!* Meanwhile, the leader of our group, Terry Harris (who spoke more Hebrew than the rest of us), took Sergeant Moses off to the side to

try to reason with him and calm him down. The rest of us started singing the same song over and over... it was a song we had learned from Psalm 3 (KJV):

Lord how are they increased that trouble me  
Many are they that rise up against me  
Many are they which say of my soul  
There is no help for him in God

But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me  
My Glory and the Lifter of my head  
But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me  
My Glory and the Lifter of my head

I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people  
That have set themselves against me round about  
I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people  
That have set themselves against me round about

Every few minutes, I would open my eyes and look over in the direction of Terry and Moses to see if everything was alright. At first, Moses was pointing his finger into Terry's face, yelling and making threatening gestures. Each time I would peek over, Moses seemed a little calmer. We kept singing Psalm 3.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity (it was actually only about 15 minutes or so), I glanced over in the direction of Moses and Terry. I absolutely could not believe my eyes: there, in front of all his men, Sergeant Moshe knelt down in the sand with Terry and surrendered his life to *Yeshua Ha Mashiach*: Jesus the Messiah!

Aw, come on, you know I've got to say this: You can't make this stuff up! But it gets even more amazing.

After Moses finished praying in the sand, he stood up on top of one of our tables and pounded his rifle to get everyone's attention. He then told his men, "These people are followers of Jesus the Messiah. They are good people; listen to what they have to say."

That night, we shared the gospel with everyone on the beach there, and one other Israeli named Lior also gave his heart to the Lord.

The following morning, we were all still together at Eilat. After a brief time of prayer on the beach, we sat gazing out at the beautiful Red Sea. Out of the blue, Moses straightaway asked, "We have the sea right here in front of us. What prevents me from being baptized today?"

I explained to Moses that if he truly believed in Jesus and wanted to be His disciple, we could baptize him right away.

"Yes, I believe," Moses exclaimed. "I want to follow Jesus the rest of my life."

Without any further delay, we waded out into the water, and in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we baptized Moses in the Red Sea! Now you just can't make this stuff up!

### *Invading Israeli Military Bases*

Afterward, Sergeant Moses told us how he had a month's leave from the army. He then begged us to let him travel with us. He explained how he had top security clearance and could get us into any army base in Israel. We agreed to let Moses tag along with us. God used him in a singular way to open doors for us throughout the whole country of Israel, taking us into camps where they allowed us to sing, have meetings with the soldiers, and even pass out Bibles and gospel literature printed in Hebrew.

One evening, having finished our visit to an army base, we stopped in a city square to sing for a while. It was beginning to get dark, and we had no place to stay that night. There were 12 of us now in need of accommodations (Moses, Lior and three other American missionaries

had joined us). Quite unexpectedly, a total stranger invited *ALL* of us to come and stay at his house that night! God is faithful.

### *Back to Jerusalem*

When our time in Israel was drawing to a close, we all returned to our base apartment in Jerusalem. But God still had two more life-changing experiences planned for us.

One day, we were invited to sing at the Garden Tomb, the place believed to be the cave where Christ's body was laid after His crucifixion. I'll never forget what occurred after we had finished singing. We started walking up the path, and there on a small sign in the ground, was the Scripture:

“Declared to be the Son of God  
by the Resurrection from the Dead!”  
—Romans 1:4—

The power of God fell on me, and it finally hit me: *The tomb is empty! Christ is risen from the dead!*

Then, there was an Arab Christian family living just below our apartment. They knew we were believers, so one day the lady knocked on our door, and asked if we could come down and pray for her husband who was quite sick.

A number of us went down, including Sergeant Moses. Moses always wore his army uniform and carried his rifle wherever he went, so when the Arab woman saw him, she became noticeably startled. We calmed her down, reassuring her that Moses was “one of us” and she didn't need to worry.

What ensued then was the “icing on the cake” of this amazing six-week adventure in the Holy Land! As we gathered around the Arab man's sickbed and began to pray, Moses laid his hands on the

man. Immediately, God baptized Moses in the Holy Spirit and he burst out speaking in tongues; the sick man jumped out of bed, instantly healed; and the two men, Arab and Jew, embraced each other as tears of joy rolled down their cheeks! Man, this is good stuff—you can't make this up! How I wish we'd had a video camera rolling that day!

After leaving Israel, we stayed in touch with Sergeant Moses through letters and written correspondence for some time, but eventually lost all contact... until a few years ago, that is. A brother whom we knew from a large church in our area phoned me one night, saying, "Wayne, you know that story we've heard you tell about baptizing Moses in the Red Sea (I've told it everywhere I go!)? Well, you're not going to believe this, but Moses came to our church here in Maryland tonight! And what is more, he is in full-time ministry; he travels around to different churches, teaching them about intercession for Israel and the Jewish people!"

I tried to contact Moses, but he had already boarded his plane and was headed back to Israel. But God let me know that after 35 years, Moses was still going on with the Lord, and serving Him full time!

I promised you at the start of this chapter that this was likely the most incredible miracle I have ever observed in my life. I hope I didn't disappoint you! Only God can weave together a plot like this, but it isn't fiction—it actually happened! No, you can't make this stuff up!

## 13

### YOU *WILL* MARRY A TAMIL BOY

“Haven’t you read,” He replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

—*Matthew 19:4-6*

**N**OTHING EVER SEEMS TO COME EASILY IN MY LIFE. Time and again, I find myself in challenging situations where I am in desperate need of God’s help. But, as we have been discussing throughout this book, how can we experience God’s help if we don’t need any? And how can we boldly say, “The Lord is my helper,” if *we* have everything under control?

In this chapter, I am going to talk to you about something very personal—a situation where a mighty miracle from God was needed—I want to talk about my marriage. (Note: You can be certain of one thing—this chapter has been carefully edited and proofread by my wife Sherine!)

At this writing, my wife Sherine and I have been married for 26 years. She is originally from Sri Lanka, an island nation off the coast of India. Sherine moved to Maryland in 1984, and I first met her later that year at a church conference in Puerto Rico. I was pastoring a church in Puerto Rico at the time, and she was visiting the conference with a mutual friend, Laurine De Zilwa.

Sherine and Laurine (also a Sri Lankan) were members of a church in Washington, D.C., that was a part of the same fellowship of churches that had organized the conference in Puerto Rico. We met, and that was that! There was no “love at first sight”—no goose bumps—or any of the other signs of “love” as portrayed in the Hollywood myths and fairy tales!

But in 1985, I was asked to move back to D.C. to pastor... you can't invent this stuff... I was asked to move back to D.C. to pastor the very church that Sherine and her parents were attending! Hmm... very interesting!

### *A Match Made at a Bible Study*

Shortly after that, I started a weekly Bible study at the World Bank in downtown Washington, D.C. I would soon learn that Sherine worked just down the street at the World Bank's sister organization, the International Monetary Fund. She began attending the Bible study, and a friendship started to grow.

Sherine is a very beautiful woman, so it wasn't long before I started wanting this to become more than a “friendship.” One day, I very cunningly asked her, “How are your mom and dad? I would love to visit them sometime.” True, I *was* their pastor, but there were undoubtedly some ulterior motives at work here!

Sri Lankans are very hospitable, and having visited Sri Lanka in 1976, I knew how much they loved to prepare food for visitors. So I deliberately skipped dinner the night of my visit, fully expecting a big

Sri Lankan meal. To my surprise, when I arrived, all I was given was a cup of tea... that's all folks!

However, with the passing of time, and frequent lunch dates after the Bible studies, a serious relationship began to develop. We felt very strongly that God wanted us to become man and wife. But how would Sherine's mom and dad feel about that? One day, Sherine casually mentioned her interest in me to her parents.

Sherine lived with her mother and father, and they were very traditional, "old school" Sri Lankans. In their Tamil culture, the parents play a very active role in the whole process of their children's marriage. It was automatically assumed that a young Tamil lady would marry a nice "Tamil boy"—a young man from the same ethnic background. So when she hinted at the possibility of marrying this American pastor, they responded emphatically, "NO! Absolutely not! You *will* marry a Tamil boy!"

### *Life from the Dead on Easter Sunday*

Over the next few weeks, we put the whole matter before the Lord in prayer, but each time Sherine mentioned the subject to her father and mother, they insisted, "You *will* marry a Tamil boy!" Finally, we met one day to discuss the future of our relationship. I'll never forget that day—it was Good Friday. Sherine described how her mom and dad were still adamantly opposed to our getting married. That day we decided that we did not want to proceed any further without her parents' blessing. Eloping was not an option; therefore, we would have to break off the relationship.

The calendar may have said, *Good* Friday, but that day was the *worst* Friday of my entire life! I was so disappointed and downhearted that whole weekend. On Easter Sunday, she and her parents attended the church service, but we didn't even speak. I was totally devastated and

heartbroken. I “hid” behind my bass guitar as I played with the worship team that morning.

Later that afternoon, I received a message from Laurine, saying, “Wayne, you need to call Sherine right away. Her folks want to speak with you.”

I wasn’t sure what this was all about. Did they want to threaten me to stay away from their daughter? Had they decided to leave the church to keep their daughter from seeing me anymore? I was totally confused when I called, and Sherine picked up the phone.

“Hi, what’s going on?” I asked.

“Oh, just come over. Mom and Dad want to speak with you.”

Great! More suspense. I still didn’t know what to expect! When I reached the house, I was as tense as a bowstring. The parents had me sit down, and Sherine’s mother started the conversation: “So, we understand you would like to marry our daughter.”

I wasn’t sure if this was a “set-up,” but I was going to go ahead and speak my heart: “Yes, I would very much like to marry your daughter.”

“OK then,” the mother responded (her father also smiling and nodding affirmatively). “It is fine with us. How soon would you like to get married?”

Are you kidding me? And you think I can make this stuff up? NO WAY!

I would learn from Sherine later that, after returning home from church that day, her mother had called her and said, “So, Sherine, I have been thinking—I am getting old and sickly—it is about time you get settled. You said that Wayne wants to marry you. Ask him to come over—we want to give him our blessing. Today at church, the Lord spoke to me and said to give Wayne a chance.”

When Sherine’s mother asked how soon we wanted to get married, I understood clearly that we’d better strike while the iron was hot! I didn’t want her mom to change her mind in a few days like Pharaoh did shortly after the Israelites left Egypt! It was already the end of March,

and right then and there, we finalized our wedding date: May 27<sup>th</sup>. When my wife and I think about it now, it sounds totally insane: to get married less than two months after your engagement.

Anyway, Sherine's mother didn't change her mind. The wedding took place without a hitch, and my wife's parents and I had the greatest relationship until the day the Lord took each of them home to glory!



## 14

### THIS IS WHY I TEACH

Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it  
after many days.

—*Ecclesiastes 11:1 (NKJV)*

**T**EACHERS ARE UNDERPAID, overworked and underappreciated. We hear it all the time. Why on earth do they do it? Perhaps I can share a little insight in this chapter as to why teachers teach—I can at least tell you why *I* teach.

I have been actively involved in Christian education since 1977. That was the year our church in Washington, D.C., decided to start its own Christian school. We began with 45 students our first year, and I was chosen to be the pastor of the school. That experience was to change my life forever.

Over the years since that time, I have helped three other ministries start their own Christian schools. Because of my educational background in science, I have taught the whole gamut of science classes from middle school right up to high school biology, chemistry, and physics. And I am happy to tell you that I am still actively employed as a secondary science teacher in a fine Christian school in Gaithersburg, Maryland, called Living Grace Christian School.

Sometimes, when I tell people that I am a pastor *and* a high school physics teacher, they look at me like I've lost my marbles! "How can you be both?" they ask.

"Easy... I love both! God never told me I had to choose one or the other. Monday through Friday, I teach in my science classes about God and how He created the universe, life and mathematical laws; on Sunday, I teach my church about Fibonacci numbers, the wisdom of the ant, and the laws of sowing and reaping! For me it's the most natural thing. In the end, it's all about God."

But make no mistake... teaching *is* hard work. And I can assure you that most of the teachers I know (teachers in private Christian schools) are not doing it for the money; they could be making a whole lot more money elsewhere. So why do we teach? Perhaps the following two stories from my own experiences will help you understand.

### *The Least Likely to Succeed*

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him.

—1 Corinthians 1:26-29

We'll call her Suzie. That's not her real name, but she could have been Melissa, or Janie, or maybe even you! In 1990, Suzie was a student

in my high school science class. She was an average student—a nice girl, but Suzie only did the bare minimum in all of her classes.

Suzie didn't seem to have any motivation, and whenever I asked her what her plans/goals were, she would shrug her shoulders, and with her body language, reply, "I dunno."

If you had asked me at the end of that school year who I thought was the least likely to succeed, I probably would have voted for Suzie. I just didn't see any vital signs indicating that this girl was going to turn the world upside down! That was the last time I would see or hear from Suzie, until...

Well, fast forward to 2003. My daughter was now 13 years old, a 7<sup>th</sup> grader in the same Christian school where I was a teacher. That year, the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes went on a week-long mission's trip to California under the supervision of the school vice principal, who was also a pastor with a heart for missions and evangelism.

Our school teamed up with YWAM (Youth With A Mission) in California, and organized street evangelism and nightly open air outreaches there. In one of the evening meetings, my daughter was asked to come up and share a testimony. She was introduced by name, and after the meeting was over, one of the YWAM workers approached her and asked, "What is your last name again?"

"Pratt," my daughter replied.

"Oh, that's interesting. I had a science teacher in high school named Mr. Pratt. He used to tell us all these amazing stories about his experiences on the mission field in places like India, Israel, and Puerto Rico."

"Where did you go to school?" my daughter asked.

"Oh, this was back in Maryland where I grew up," the YWAM worker answered.

"Yeah, that was my dad!"

"Well, please tell him that you met me; and listening to his stories about God's miracles inspired me to give my life to the Lord to serve

Him full time as a missionary. I have worked overseas in Thailand, China, and many other countries!”

You guessed right—that was Suzie whom my daughter met! Sometimes God chooses and uses the least likely people; He’ll choose a David, the eighth and last son of Jesse, who wasn’t even invited to the “Who Wants to Be the Next King of Israel Contest;” He’ll call uneducated fishermen and despicable tax collectors to be His first “kingdom representatives” here on earth! What are the chances that my daughter would meet Suzie 3,000 miles away from home, 13 years after I last saw her in high school? You just can’t make this stuff up!

### *Dennis the Menace Revisited*

And then there’s Dennis. Actually, his name wasn’t Dennis, but the “menace” part is entirely accurate! Dennis was a graduating senior in the class of 1991. He was the kind of student that gives teachers ulcers, nervous breakdowns, and causes them to make career changes!

By the end of the first month of school, I had already lost count of the number of pink slips that I had issued to Dennis (I think pink was the color of the Principal’s Discipline Slips we used at that time). Pink slips for excessive talking, disrupting class, shooting rubber bands and spitballs... for generally being a constant menace to my class.

Dennis put forth very little effort in my class, but the one thing I absolutely did not want to do was fail him. Dennis *would* graduate at any cost! I could not possibly endure another year of his antics.

I’ll never forget how happy and relieved I was to see Dennis graduate. *Praise God, he’s gone! No more menace!*

Now, let’s jump to 1996. I was attending an ACSI (Association of Christian Schools International) educators’ conference in Maryland; it was a large gathering of several thousand, and the morning session was just finishing. The speaker had closed in prayer, and my head was still

bowed and my eyes closed when from behind, two big arms wrapped around me in a tight bear hug, as I heard, “Mr. Pratt!”

The voice sounded eerily familiar, but when I turned, I made the connection in a split second: “DENNIS!” I must confess, my first thought was, *How did he get in here? Oh my God, he’s come to sabotage the teachers’ conference!*

“What are you doing here, Dennis?”

“Oh, Mr. Pratt, God has been so good to me. I have graduated from college, and I am now a history teacher in a Christian school. And I teach my students all of the things I learned from you in our high school class!”

*Could Dennis have learned anything in my class?* I wondered. Then I suddenly comprehended that behind all the talking and disruption was a hurting, confused young man who was groping for answers. All of the noise had simply been a front.

“That’s wonderful, Dennis. I am so happy for you.”

“Oh, there’s more Mr. Pratt. Next year I am entering Bible school, and I will be preparing for the ministry. I want to become a full-time pastor!”

Wow! God’s wonders never cease! Indeed, Dennis went on to complete his pastoral training and is now the senior pastor of a thriving congregation in the Washington Metro area. There’s no way you can make this stuff up!

This is why I teach. We sow seeds by faith into young lives and wait—sometimes for a decade or two—we wait in hope for those seeds to germinate, sprout, and mature; we cast the bread of God’s word on the waters, and at times it is after *many* days that it returns to us. There is no greater joy than to know that somehow God has used you to touch, mark, and inspire another life for His kingdom!



## 15

### OHIO, AMERICA'S MOVING ADVENTURE

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

—*Hebrews 11:8*

**T**HERE ARE NUMEROUS PROMISES IN THE BIBLE in which God assures His children that He will guide and direct their paths. Consider just a few verses among many:

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

—*Psalms 37:23 (NKJV)*

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

—*Isaiah 30:21*

In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

—*Proverbs 16:9*

But the Lord never promised to explain everything to us! Nor did He guarantee there would be a full road map showing every twist and turn in our journey. And He certainly never said the path would be free of dark valleys or tangled thickets! To the contrary, true believers are called to walk in the footsteps of our father Abraham's faith (Romans 4:12), and when Abraham was called by God, he obeyed and moved, "not knowing where he was going."

That is completely insane—picking up and moving, and you don't even know your destination? But such is the great adventure that God has called us to: to live and walk by faith.

One of my all-time favorite songs composed and sung by Steven Curtis Chapman, a man of God whom I respect very deeply, is "The Great Adventure" (©1992: Sparrow Records). The lyrics describe to a tee what this chapter is all about. The song speaks about launching out to discover new horizons, blazing new trails, and traversing both mountain heights and deep valleys. It likens our Christian journey to a great adventure, following our Leader into the glorious unknown. Here is part of the song:

Saddle up your horses, we've got a trail to blaze  
Through the wild blue yonder of God's amazing grace  
Let's follow our leader into the glorious unknown  
This is a life like no other, this is the Great Adventure

### *All Eyes on O-HEE-O*

It was February of 2005. My wife and I had been comfortably settled and pastoring in Maryland since our marriage in 1989. After more than 15 years, one starts to send down roots... you get attached to a place. But if you're not careful, you can also begin to stagnate.

During those first few months of 2005, God was speaking to me through a strange Scripture in Jeremiah 48:11:

Moab has been at rest from youth, like wine left on its dregs, not poured from one jar to another—she has not gone into exile. So she tastes as she did, and her aroma is unchanged.

We began to sense a kind of restlessness in our spirits that I have come to recognize when God is “stirring the pot;” in other words, when He is getting ready to move and bring some significant changes into our lives. I once heard a pastor make an interesting observation: “The only thing that never changes is *change* itself. Change will always be a part of our experience.”

In February, Sherine and I were attending a large church conference in the beautiful island of Puerto Rico, a place that I had visited dozens of times and where I had also lived for two years, pastoring a church in the Capital of San Juan. The ministry that we were a part of at that time had a Training Center in Ohio where all of its new workers and missionaries were sent for a time of instruction and ministerial preparation. One day during the conference, we were approached by the ministry leadership about the possibility of our moving to Ohio to help with the workers’ training.

At first, the idea seemed crazy and quite impossible. My wife and I owned a house in Maryland, we worked and pastored a church in Maryland, and our daughter’s school was in Maryland—we had roots! But as we prayed and waited on the Lord, He seemed to confirm that this move was His plan.

In March, we made a trip to Ohio, and spent several days in fasting and prayer there. The call seemed to get stronger and stronger: “Move to Ohio!”

We made an additional trip to Ohio in April to look at prospective homes. We had prearranged for a realtor to show us a number of

properties, and by the end of the weekend, we had signed a contract on a house there. Things were happening very fast!

After returning to Maryland, we started getting our house ready to put on the market. One day my wife was cleaning out her closet; she came out holding a newspaper in her hands, tears streaming down her face. Sherine has a peculiar habit of saving an entire newspaper whenever there is a significant event or important headline on that date. The paper she held bore the headline from the 2004 Presidential election that read: "ALL EYES ON OHIO." Confirmation #1!

Several days later, my wife was seated in our family room watching the preacher Rod Parsley on TV. As I entered the room through one door, my daughter was coming in through a separate door, and at that very moment, the first words we heard from the TV were, "Why Ohio, Lord? Why Ohio?" (Rod Parsley was sharing his personal testimony about how God called him to leave Kentucky and move to Columbus, Ohio.) The three of us froze! Confirmation #2!

Then in early May, our dear friend, Pastor Mohan Joseph, came from Sri Lanka to visit and stay with us for several weeks. I had gone to the airport to pick him up, and as we got into the car, his first question to me was, "Wayne, as I pray for you and your wife, I keep sensing that He is calling you to something new, and over and over I am hearing a word that I don't understand."

"What is the word?" I asked.

"O-HEE-O," the pastor replied. "O-HEE-O."

(Pastor Mohan was not familiar with the names of all 50 states—he had never heard of Ohio!)

"Pastor, it's not 'O-HEE-O.' It is pronounced 'Ohio.' It is the name of a state in the Midwest. We haven't had a chance to talk to you about any of this—we were waiting until you came—but we have bought a house in Ohio, we will be settling on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of this month, and we will be moving there in July!" Confirmation #3!

Two days before the pastor's arrival, we had officially put our house up for sale. The day after he arrived, Pastor Mohan stood on our front porch as we were leaving for our Sunday church service and prophesied, "This house will sell today!"

Now, I have to be painfully honest: sometimes I am a bit skeptical about prophecies and predictions like this one. But literally, by 5:00 p.m. that Sunday afternoon, we had a contract on the house! Confirmation #4!

### *The Great Adventure Begins*

In June, I made reservations online to rent a U-Haul truck so that we could take a load of furniture to our new house in Ohio. The day that the truck was to be picked up, I had my wife drive me to the U-Haul center. As we were entering the parking lot (which had hundreds of U-Haul trucks), there was one truck conspicuously situated right at the front entrance with a motto on the side of the truck in big letters, "America's Moving Adventure: OHIO."

"That's our truck," I shouted. "That's got to be our truck!" Sure enough, that was our truck! Confirmation #5! Come on man, you can't make this stuff up!

Before going any further, let me say a few words about confirmations. When God gives so many clear confirmations about His will and direction, as He did in the case of our relocation to Ohio, it is often because He knows we will be facing fierce battles and very difficult trials further ahead in our journey.

In Acts 16, we read the account of Paul's call to take the gospel to Macedonia:

During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision,

we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

—*Acts 16:9-10*

With such a clear vision, they set sail immediately, fully convinced that God had called them. After reaching Philippi, they met Lydia, and she and her whole household responded to the gospel and were baptized (vv.12-15). Shortly after that, Paul cast a demon of divination out of a woman and she was marvelously set free (vv.16-18). Up to that point, everything seemed to be going according to plan. They were seeing confirmation after confirmation that the Lord was with them, and that they were right where He wanted them to be.

But things suddenly changed when Paul and Silas found themselves being dragged before the authorities, beaten and flogged, and finally thrown into prison, their feet fastened in stocks (vv.19-24). God would shake the prison with a violent earthquake and set Paul and Silas free, ultimately causing the jailer and his entire household to receive Christ and be baptized (vv.25-34), but not before Paul and Silas had suffered greatly.

It was late July of 2005 when our move to Ohio was complete, a mere four months after we had first begun praying about leaving Maryland. Everything had transpired so fast! We were now settled in a beautiful home, more spacious and luxurious than anything we had ever owned, and everything was going so smoothly. Most of all, we were very hopeful and excited about all of the ministry prospects and open doors of opportunity that awaited us. I remember one day, shortly after coming to Ohio, telling my wife, “It’s all like a dream: one minute we were in Maryland, and the next, here we are in Ohio.”

But that bliss was short-lived. In late August, the remnants of Hurricane Katrina came blasting through Ohio, bringing torrential rains and flooding—even flooding the basement of our new dream home! After phone calls and pleas for help to realtors, the previous owner of the house,

our home insurance company, and even after arranging meetings with a lawyer and the builder of the house (who was our next door neighbor!), we quickly came to understand the famous Latin phrase, *caveat emptor*: “buyer beware!” No one was going to help us—we were on our own.

As the nightmare unfolded (I’ll spare you all of the boring details), the entire foundation of our house had to be excavated so that it could be properly waterproofed. Our yard was filled with backhoes and bulldozers for months, and the entire property looked like an archaeological dig! And we even made headlines on the front page of the local newspaper the first day the excavation began. The soil bank caved in on one of the workers, and he was nearly buried alive; nine fire trucks and rescue vehicles descended on our quiet street, responding to the 911 call! Never a dull moment!

Just when you think things can’t possibly get any worse, sometimes they do! As the dig was going on, the contractor discovered that our entire garage was sinking and separating from the rest of the house, so they had to jack up the garage and drive huge steel piers into the ground underneath to support it.

Total cost of repairs: a mere \$50,000!

Let me get back to my point about confirmations. It is at times like this that you need to *know that you know that you know* that God called you and that you are where He wants you to be. There were many days when we wanted to throw in the towel and call it quits, but God kept whispering to us, “I brought you here. I will be with you.”

We ended up staying in Ohio for five years. We had amazing times of ministry, and we fell in love with the people there. But we went through some very dark valleys of trial and disappointment, particularly with our daughter.

While living in Maryland, our daughter had always attended private Christian schools from pre-school right through middle school. When we moved to Ohio, we were forced to put her into a public high school.

There, she got involved with the wrong crowd of peers, and that ended up taking her far away from the Lord.

One thing I can confidently say: We learned how to pray in Ohio! We spent *weeks*, not days, fasting and praying and agonizing for our daughter's deliverance. And it was there that my first book was written, *My Confession of Faith*. It was never intended to be published—it was simply our “war manual.” We used it every day to help us put on the whole armor of God and battle the powers of darkness with the Sword of the Spirit by confessing the word of God out loud.

One day, we were going through a part of the confession taken from Deuteronomy 28:7 that read:

The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven.

Suddenly, I stopped and told my wife to wait a minute. I jumped up, began running from room to room throughout the entire house, and then came back to where we had been praying.

I think my wife thought I had finally cracked up (which wasn't all that far-fetched, because there were days when only the Lord kept us from losing our minds!), and when I returned, she asked, “What in the world are you doing? Have you lost your mind?”

“No,” I said. “I just went through the house and counted the doors... this house has a total of seven doors. The Lord said that the enemies would come at us from one direction but flee from us in seven. So let's tell the devil right now, ‘Satan, we resist you in the name of Jesus. You and all of your demons must go now. This house has seven doors; take your pick which one you're going to use, but you must get out right now!’ Thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph!”

We were determined to stay in Ohio until God said our assignment was finished. We were not going to run away in defeat or discouragement.

God brought us there with incredible signs and miraculous confirmations, and He would have to tell us when it was time to go.

### *What Are You Doing Here?*

After battling with Jezebel and 850 false prophets at Mount Carmel, and calling down fire from heaven, shortly after that, the prophet Elijah found himself afraid and running for his life (1 Kings 19:1-3). He was tired, discouraged, and he felt so alone, he prayed that he might die:

He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, LORD,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”

—1 Kings 19:4

O, man or woman of God—have you ever been there? Have you ever been so weary with disappointment and discouragement that you wanted to die? I have! Elijah did! Well, we’re in good company—be encouraged!

After that, the angel of the Lord brought food and water to Elijah twice, strengthening him for his journey. Elijah then went into a cave, and there God asked him the same piercing question two times:

“What are you doing here, Elijah?”

—1 Kings 19:9, 13

When God asks you, “What are you doing here?” you are in a very critical situation. It is time to stop, retrace your steps, and get back on course. We should never be *anywhere* if the Lord doesn’t want us to be there. Moses understood this when he prayed:

“If Your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.”

—*Exodus 33:15*

In May of 2010, Sherine and I were in Connecticut, doing a week-long seminar in a church there on the Tabernacle of Moses. My mother had recently had knee replacement surgery, and was making a nice recovery in a rehab center when she suffered a sudden setback. She had developed internal bleeding, which put her back in the hospital. But thankfully, the doctors got everything under control after a few days, and the day after my wife and I were leaving Connecticut, Mom was to go home from the hospital.

That morning, we had to wake up by 4:00 a.m. in order to catch our flight from Boston back to Ohio. As we were packing our suitcases, I suddenly felt a release in my spirit and I told Sherine, “We are finished in Ohio. I just felt the release in my spirit. God says our assignment there is done.”

After reaching Ohio, our plan was to unpack, do some laundry, repack, and prepare for the six-hour drive to Maryland the next morning. We wanted to reach there by the time my mother was coming home from the hospital. Tragically, that same evening, we got word that my mom had a massive stroke and went into a coma. We quickly tossed our things into the car, and drove through the night, reaching the hospital by early morning.

Mom never did regain consciousness, and six days later we were having her funeral. After the funeral service was over, many of our family and friends came back to her house—the very same house in which I had grown up from early childhood—to comfort us and spend time with us. I found it very strange that three or four different people came to me independently of one another and asked, “So, are you going to move back into this house now that your mom is gone?”

“No, we are living in Ohio,” I answered. “We have no plans to move back to Maryland.” About a week later, we returned to Ohio. Shortly after that, I was in prayer one morning, and I heard the Lord clearly ask me, “What are you doing here?”

*What am I doing here?* I thought. *Lord, You know why we are here. We came here to serve You.*

With my mom’s illness and death, there had been such a flurry of activity that I had completely forgotten what had taken place that morning in Connecticut several weeks earlier. Everything suddenly became crystal clear: we were done with Ohio!

So, by the end of summer 2010, we were back in Maryland, living in the very house I grew up in. Truly our move to Ohio and back had been a great adventure!



## 16

### HEAVENLY JAVA IN HONDURAS

When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it.

—2 *Chronicles* 7:1-2

I HAVE ALWAYS LIKED COFFEE—but I was about to like it a whole lot more after my first visit to the country of Honduras in June 2011.

Pastor Luis Lozano, my friend and “partner in crime” for over 35 years (whom you met in chapter 9, “I Left My Heart (and Liver!) in San Francisco,” page 83, is originally from Honduras. In 2011, he invited me to travel with him to Honduras and minister in a few small churches that he was helping. Luis knew of my great love for java (no, not the software... coffee!), so after I arrived there, he informed me of his plans to visit a coffee plantation in the mountains—a place called Marcala. He also expressed his desire for us to have a small retreat somewhere with a few pastors that were working with him.

Well, through a series of divine appointments and miracles, we learned of a pastors' retreat house that had been built by an American missionary in... you can't make this up... in Marcala! Unfortunately, the missionary died before they ever had their first retreat in the new facility. After his death, his wife had returned to the U.S., and the home had been sitting vacant ever since.

We met the caretaker of the house, and he gave us permission to use the house for five days. It was a beautiful, spacious house with eight bedrooms... more than we needed (or so we thought!)

On our way, we stopped at the coffee plantation to buy some green (unroasted) coffee beans. I ended up bringing back 50 pounds to Maryland with me, and ever since then, I roast and grind all of my own coffee! I wouldn't have it any other way now.

There were only six or seven of us coming to Marcala, so I was looking forward to a relaxing, quiet time with the Lord in the beautiful mountains of Honduras. One of the brothers who came with us had a guitar that was missing one string; that was the only music we had for the entire weekend! And he only knew four songs, but we met together the first night and started worshipping the Lord.

Words cannot begin to describe what happened that night (and continued for the next five days and nights): God visited us with His sweet presence and glory in a way I have only experienced one other time in my entire Christian life. Hour after hour, we were lost in Paradise somewhere; the words from the old hymn sum it up best:

Heaven came down and glory filled my soul.

But then, something quite remarkable took place. I honestly can't explain how, but more and more visitors began arriving at the house; by the end of the second day, we had 25 staying there. Pastor Luis needed to drive into the nearest town to buy 20 sleeping pads, food and other supplies for our growing retreat! On our last night in Marcala, after

our final meeting in the house, I took a group photo and counted 45 people! Where did all these folks come from? This was in the middle of nowhere! No advertising! God seemed to draw them there like He brought the animals to Noah on the Ark!

### *Fishing for Fishermen*

And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

—*Matthew 4:18-19 (NKJV)*

On a different occasion, we were invited to preach one Saturday at a large church convention in a place called La Ceiba. La Ceiba is a beautiful port on the northern coast of Honduras, famous for its Caribbean beaches. We had preached in the morning service, and we were invited to preach again in the evening. We had a long lunch break in between, so I asked pastor Luis, "Pastor, we are so close to the sea. Is there some place where we can get fish or seafood for lunch?"

He wasn't too familiar with the area, but after getting some vague directions ("Go to the third coconut tree, turn left when you see a cow," etc.), we headed off to our destination. After going around in circles for quite some time, we arrived at a small village called *Triunfo de la Cruz* which means "Triumph of the Cross!" (This is getting very interesting now!) We finally came to the restaurant, but it was closed.

Then we found a young man on the beach named Arnold. We asked him if he knew of any seafood restaurants in the area. He said, "Follow me."

Arnold took us to his mother, who proceeded to cook a tremendous shrimp and fish lunch for us. In the course of the conversation, we

learned that Arnold was a fisherman. One of the pastors with us began to share with Arnold about Christ, explaining to him how most of Jesus' disciples had been fishermen. Arnold seemed quite closed to the pastor's message, and suddenly disappeared.

I would soon learn that Triunfo de la Cruz was a very unique part of Honduras. It is home to a large population of what is known as the "Garifuna" people—descendants from West Africa, who speak their own Garifuna language in addition to Spanish. They are isolated from the rest of Honduras, and generally despised and rejected by Hondurans, in much the same way the Samaritans were despised by the Jews (see John 4:4-9).

Arnold had gone down to the shore to cut some coconuts for us, and I soon found myself sitting all alone with him there on the beach. Suddenly, the Holy Spirit came on me in a powerful way and I began to prophesy to Arnold, saying, "Arnold, one day soon, you will be running up and down this beach preaching Christ to all of the people here." I was shocked hearing the words that had just come out of my own mouth!

Arnold looked like he had just seen a ghost. His eyes became as big as saucers, and he took off running! I wondered: *Why is this young man so afraid of Jesus Christ?*

Around that time, the lunch was ready, and they called us to a little hut made of palm leaves where we sat down to eat. While we were enjoying our seafood meal, Arnold was there waiting on us. Pastor Luis began to speak to Arnold: "Arnold, you are a fisherman... Jesus loves fishermen. Most of His disciples were fishermen. Would you like to pray and surrender your life to Him today? We can pray with you right now if you like."

To be honest, I didn't expect a positive response. All afternoon, Arnold had been running every time Jesus was mentioned. But to my surprise, he said "Yes," and right there at the lunch table, he gave his heart to the Lord!

As we were heading back to the convention, I told him, “Arnold, you have plenty of water here. If you want, we can come back tomorrow and baptize you.”

“Oh, I would like that,” Arnold smiled.

We then told him to invite others from his village, and we would have a small open air church service Sunday morning out on the beach. He agreed.

When we returned the following day, Arnold had set up 10 chairs under the palm leaf hut where we had eaten the day before. He had already brought eight people who were seated there, waiting for the service. We sang, preached a short message to them, and waded out into the Caribbean to baptize Arnold! I couldn’t make up a story like this, even if I tried!

As we were leaving, I told Arnold, “That didn’t take very long!”

“What do you mean?” Arnold asked.

“What the Lord spoke to you yesterday about running up and down this beach preaching Christ to all of the people here: it has already come to pass!”

With that, we left. I have never seen Arnold since then, but I have to believe he is still fishing for men on that beach in Triunfo de la Cruz. Without a doubt, the cross triumphed in Arnold’s life that weekend!



## 17

### GOD KNOWS OUR SHOE SIZE

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

—*Matthew 10:29-31*

Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

—*Matthew 6:8*

You have searched me, LORD, and You know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue You, LORD, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and You lay Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

—*Psalms 139:1-6*

**G**OD KNOWS MORE ABOUT US than we know about ourselves! Case in point: Do you know how many hairs you have? For most, that might be quite a challenge (although for a few of us, getting a total “hair count” would not be all that difficult—bald is beautiful!) But God knows.

God knows what I need before I ask Him. He knows and understands my heart better than I do. As the psalmist so rightly determined, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.”

I have found that every so often, God likes to let each one of us know just how special we are to Him. He may single us out of a crowd and call us by name, as when Jesus called Zacchaeus to come down from the sycamore tree:

When Jesus reached the spot, He looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”

—*Luke 19:5*

Or, He may tell us (or someone else) that He knows our address and what we are doing, as with Saul of Tarsus:

The Lord told him [Ananias], “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.”

—*Acts 9:11*

He may even deliver your favorite peanut butter—Skippy Extra Crunchy—right to your front door, as He did when the two ladies brought a truckload of groceries to our Arlington house one day (read more in chapter 2, “God Will Never Pay Your Rent,” on page 35).

### *Got Any Gorilla Glue?*

In October 2014, my wife and I were in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, for a three-day convention of churches from the South Florida area. I like to travel light, so I had only brought one pair of dress shoes for the weekend. When I returned to our hotel after the opening meeting on Friday night, I discovered that the sole of my shoe had completely separated from the rest of the shoe!

I questioned, *why do these things seem to happen to me so often? Oh, that's right... if we don't need help, God can't give us fresh revelation of Himself as our helper!*

Knowing that I had to preach Saturday night, I started to panic a bit at the prospect of standing behind the pulpit barefoot! Sherine and I decided to wait until Saturday morning, when we could walk to a nearby mall and purchase some new shoes. Unfortunately, when we reached the mall the next morning, all of the stores were still closed, and we had to start making our way back to the Saturday morning service.

Then I decided to call Dary Cabrera, a good friend of mine who is a leader in one of the churches, to ask for his help. All I needed was some strong glue to hold my shoes together temporarily, and since he is an auto technician, I was sure he either had some in his car or he would know where I could purchase the glue.

No answer...

OK, Lord, if You want to humiliate me, so be it, but I'll have to go to the morning meeting with my old beat-up shoes!

As soon as we reached the church, my friend was standing by the entrance, greeting people as they were coming in. I pulled him aside and said, "Dary, I have a small emergency. Do you have any Gorilla Glue in your car?"

Looking at me a bit strange, he asked, "Why do you need Gorilla Glue?"

Whispering in a low voice so as not to be heard, and pointing toward my ailing shoes, I continued, “Brother, my shoe is falling apart. I just need some glue to hold it together.”

“Can I ask you a question... what is your shoe size?”

“Oh no, I know if I tell you, you’ll run out right now and buy me a pair!” (And he is that kind of person. God bless true brothers like that!)

“OK. I promise I’m not going to buy anything,” Dary said. “Just tell me your shoe size.”

“It’s 11.5D.”

“What color?”

“Black.”

“Any particular brand or style?”

“Rockport,” I answered reluctantly.

“OK, pastor, here’s the deal. For two years, I have had a brand-new pair of 11.5D black Rockport shoes still in the box, sitting in my closet; the Lord told me they were not for me, but I was to keep them for one of His servants. They are *your* shoes now, pastor. I will bring them to the evening service.”

You can’t make this stuff up!

I was stunned and overwhelmed. I thought, *God loves me that much that He’s had these shoes waiting for me here in Florida for the past two years—my exact size! Such knowledge is too wonderful for me!*

Knowing that I had to preach the Saturday evening service, I must confess, I was a bit apprehensive about waiting until the last moment to try on a pair of new shoes just before the meeting. But the Lord had shown that He had everything under control, so I knew it would be OK.

Man, did we have a surprise waiting for us when he got to our hotel room! Dary had driven across town to get the shoes from his closet, and then gone all the way to our hotel. He then got permission from the hotel staff to leave the box containing the new Rockports on our bed, with the following note:

“Dear pastor, these are not ‘judge’s shoes’ (he had heard Pastor Tom’s testimony about the judge’s shoes), but they are ‘prophet’s shoes.’ I hope they serve you well. May God richly bless you!”

And people say being a Christian is boring? No way! I must confess, every time I heard Tom’s testimony about Mrs. Moore bringing his “judge’s shoes” to the door, I used to wonder, *Lord, You gave Tom special shoes—You never did that for me.* Well, God put that question to rest!

And just when you think it can’t get any better, it does!

### *Healed by Prophet’s Shoes*

Only my wife knew about a chronic condition that I had for several years in my left foot known as “plantar fasciitis.” Sometimes called “heel spurs,” it is a very painful ailment that feels like nails are being driven into the heels of your foot whenever you stand or walk.

About five years previously, I had suffered from the same disorder in my right foot. Then, in January of 2011, during a 21-day fast in our church, I was coming down the stairs in my home one morning, when I was suddenly conscious of the fact that my right foot had been healed. The pain never again returned to my right foot. Praise God!

But then about a year later, I started having the same pain in my left foot. The condition worsened with time, to the point that a week before leaving on our trip to Florida, I had gone to the doctor hoping he would give me a cortisone shot in the foot to relieve the pain and inflammation. He told me that the shot would not provide any significant relief—I should just keep doing stretches and exercises, etc.

So, not only were my shoes falling apart in Florida, but my feet were as well! I needed healing in my left foot.

God is my witness, when I tried on the new “prophet’s shoes,” they were a perfect fit. But more importantly, my left foot was instantly healed! No more plantar fasciitis! God healed my foot! That night when I shared the testimony at the conference, I was jumping up and down on the stage like an NBA star! And to make the whole story even more incredible, Dary told me after the service that he too had once suffered from plantar fasciitis!

Our Father is truly amazing! He knows what we need before we ask Him. As was the case with my shoes, He has all our needs “pre-provided!” He loves each one of us so specially and uniquely—we are the apple of His eye, and He wants us to know that we are worth more than many sparrows:

Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me in the shadow  
of Your wings.

—*Psalm 17:8*

## EPILOGUE

**G**OD IS ABLE TO HELP US, and He wants to help us. That has been the theme of this book. The Bible is basically the story of man's weakness and helplessness, and God's gracious desire to help man in his plight.

Several years ago, the Lord used a particular narrative from the Old Testament to speak to me very profoundly about this truth. That account served as the "seed" for this book. It was the story of King Asa. In the early years of Asa's reign, he sought the Lord's help whenever he was in need or trouble. When Zerah the Cushite had marched against Asa and his people with a massive army, Asa called on the Lord for help, and the Lord helped them:

Then Asa called to the LORD his God and said, "LORD, there is no one like You to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, LORD our God, for we rely on You, and in Your name we have come against this vast army. LORD, You are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you." The LORD struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah.

—2 *Chronicles* 14:11-12

Asa rightly recognized that God “helps the powerless.” At that stage in his life, he had not yet been corrupted with the idea that “God helps those who help themselves.”

However, some years later, in the 36<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, when he was again facing a formidable enemy, he chose to put his trust in man rather than God. When Baasha king of Israel was preparing to attack Judah, Asa made a treaty with Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, and sought his help in fighting against Baasha. The plan worked, and Baasha withdrew. But this time, Asa didn’t seek God or cry out to Him for help—he decided he could help himself. He didn’t need God’s help. But God was very displeased with Asa’s actions, and He sent a stern message to the king through the seer Hanani:

At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him: “Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.” Asa was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison... In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians.

—2 *Chronicles* 16:7-12

God wasn't looking at the *results* of Asa's actions; He was looking at his *heart*. Asa's heart was slipping away from the Lord. Despite his successful start, Asa's end was very tragic. But interwoven in the story is a profound message to us all: God *wants us* to need Him, He desires our dependence on Him, and He is saddened when we do not seek His help. You can almost hear God's heart crying out at the end of Asa's life, "Oh, how I longed for you to turn to Me for help. If only you had sought Me, I was ready to help you."

In a strange way, Asa's story motivated me to start seeking God's help more in my own circumstances. It was clear that God wanted to help Asa, but Asa acted foolishly by not seeking His aid. God knows when we need help, and He wants to help us. It has often been preached, "We don't have a problem—we just need a miracle!" God wishes to change our *tests* into *testimonies* so that we can boldly say, "The Lord is my helper!"

As I mentioned in the introduction to the book, this entire project has been a most amazing journey for me. God is real, and every experience described in this book is real. I have taken great care to communicate the details of each story as accurately as possible, without trying to embellish or exaggerate any of the narratives. I have discovered that God doesn't need my help inventing incredible tales about His miraculous works—He already *is* "awesome in glory, working wonders" (Exodus 15:11). His works are incredible enough without me trying to add anything more to them!

The psalmist sang, "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). This book is written to encourage the faith of fellow believers. But it is also written for seekers, doubters and yes, even for those who might boldly argue, "There is no God!"

It has been said that "a man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument." In other words, someone may try to tell me, "Wayne, God doesn't exist... He is just a figment of your

imagination. He doesn't save or heal or provide or answer prayer. If you want something done, you have to do it yourself."

My humble response would be, "I know what I have seen and heard and experienced... God is very real in my life. You are entitled to your arguments, but I will hold onto my experiences. I have tasted and seen that the Lord is good! Too many times, I have been in desperate need of help, and God has always shown up in His own miraculous way. Now, I can boldly say,

"The Lord is my helper!"

It is my hope that every reader who sincerely wants to know the truth would pray as I did years ago, "Lord, if You are real, I want to know You. Show me the way." If you search for Him with your whole heart, you will find Him! Then, as you walk with a living God, He will give you your own stories and testimonies of God's miracle-working power, so that you too can boldly say,

"The Lord is my helper!"

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