

**TITLE: Redemption – Embracing the Power, Grace and Love of Jesus Christ**

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# Redemption

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# Redemption

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## **Dedicated:**

### **TO**

Pastor Glenn Breitzkreuz and to the Christian Fellowship Assembly in Grand Prairie Alberta, where the vision of this book was birthed forth by a request from the Pastor to come and give a testimony to the people. This resulted in the opening of my eyes to God's redemptive power over my life.

### **TO**

Irene who showed me so much grace and love, and who mentored and equipped me into who I am in Christ Jesus today.

### **TO**

Hkaw Win who showed me so much of the "love of God" and has helped me to walk and become the discipler for Jesus Christ worldwide.

### **TO**

My children and grandchildren who I leave this testimony to of how the hand of Jesus Christ has guided your father and grandpa for over the last 65 years, taking me from a life of destruction to one that has been full of His grace, mercy and love. I pray that my pilgrimage and testimony will be a light and help to you as you search out the divine presence and anointing of His Holy Spirit for your life's journey.

### **TO**

All the people that have been part of my redemptive journey. You have been used by Christ Jesus to make me and mold me into who I am by being special channels of the Holy Spirit of Christ. Plus, thank you to the church body who did not reject

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me, but gave me room to mature to the place where Christ could use me to bear fruit for His glory.

Finally, I encourage all believers to keep on keeping on for Jesus Christ. To take off the blinders and to open up the doors of one's heart, so that the Holy Spirit can be let out as a river of sweet water to all that you come into contact with each day: "when-ever and where-ever."

Fellow servant in Christ Jesus,

James Paul (JIMMERS the EVANGELIST.)

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## Preface:

The power of a testimony. We see this in the New Testament in John 4 concerning the woman at the well. Jesus speaks into her heart; she then goes into her village and all the people came out and turn their lives over to Christ.

Those who are disciples of Christ Jesus and have truly made Him Lord of their lives will have a testimony that tells of God's wonderful grace and love. These individual testimonies that God has given to us, demonstrate the fruit of Jesus Christ Who has empowered us with His Spirit.

Our testimony is made up of unique parts that God has put together, showing Who He is, both in us and through us. Our testimonies are weapons that God can use to destroy the strongholds of Satan. We should never underestimate the power of one's testimony. A testimony spoken in love and grace can, and will, break the chains that bind others to this lost world.

The title of this book has five major parts to it that I pray will help us to see why we should be always ready to give a testimony for our Lord Jesus Christ.

**His Redemption:** The act of being saved from error or evil; deliverance, ransom, salvation. Redemption, Christ's amazing gift of love through his sacrifice, saves us from the penalty of our wicked ways. This word is linked closely to the word salvation. In faith, whoever chooses to believe in Christ's redemptive sacrifice, will be saved.

As I look back, I can truly see the redemptive power of Christ in my life. In the eyes of many people I had very little value and in many ways the world itself had even rejected me. But somehow, I knew in my heart, deep down inside there must be something more to this world than what I was experiencing.

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It wasn't until I came to a place to accepting Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour that I began to experience the redemptive love, grace and mercy from God being poured forth from His heart into my heart.

**His Power:** Force or authority; having influence or control over another person's actions or behaviours. God is all-powerful. The Holy Spirit comes into disciples with power and authority, giving them the ability to overcome the strongholds of this world and the sins in their lives.

Just a short time later, God began to move me into a deeper understanding of the reality of His presence with me. He knew that I would not be able to overcome the challenges in my life alone. I needed to walk in a deeper level of commitment, moving from a life of self-will or world-focus to God-will and God-focus. I needed to allow His Holy Spirit to fill my heart and to become my teacher, comforter and companion. It would be through the redemptive power of the Holy Spirit that the chains and cords that had bound so much of my life, would be broken.

**His Grace:** Favour, blessing, adornment, blessing, mercy; express gratitude, give thanks. The concept of grace came to the world through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the heavenly Father extended grace to mankind through sending His Son as our Redeemer; Christ brought us a way whereby all mankind could be saved; it is also said that we live in the age of grace, a time determined by the Father during which mankind will have to choose whom they will serve; following that comes the day of judgment.

God uses people. It wasn't long after I was saved and filled with the Holy Spirit that I met Irene. She was a beautiful young lady in Christ Jesus. At the time of meeting her, I did not

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realize that God was going to use her, not only to become my wife, but also through our time together, teach me about the grace of God and how He forgives our sins. Day in and day out, even when I felt so unworthy to be called a Christian, Irene exemplified the redemptive power of the grace of God to me. Because of her grace and love, the spirit of rejection was broken in my life.

**His Love:** Definitions of love include having affection, to want, desire, or wish for; an intense feeling (emotion) of affection for something or someone. The Greeks had many words for love. (There are four that are commonly used; stergo, family affection; eros, sexual love; philia, meaning friendship or brotherly love and agape, God's unconditional love). For the disciple, the most important "love word" is the word "agape"; this illustrates the way God expresses His affection towards mankind. God's love is a one-way love with no strings attached. This was the Father's motive for sending His Son to this lost and sinful world. We are given a free choice to receive His love gift, or to turn away and go in another direction. Often man desires more selfish love than Godly love.

It was later in my life and after Irene's homegoing that God would bring another person, named Hkaw Win, to show me the great depths of God's love. She was a Kachin from the country of Myanmar. It seemed that, to the very depth of her being, she knew how much God loved her and how much He also loved me. Hkaw Win has, each day, been a banner of love that has been held high in our home. She has shown to me the redemptive power of love – no strings attached - that God gives to people each day.

**His Name - Jesus Christ:** Means: Saviour / Messiah. It was prophesied that a Messiah (anointed one) would come into the world, and that He would save His people. For disciples,

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Jesus Christ is the one Who enters our hearts and guides and leads us here on this earth; He will one day come back as King of kings, to take us with Him to heaven. (Romans 5:15)

I am grateful, so grateful, for the day I met Jesus Christ. I have been blessed to see Him as my Saviour, Messiah, King and Lord. On the day of my redemption God allowed me to see Him in a magnificent way, a way that I never thought would be possible. I did see Him high and lifted up and that He was the One Who would never leave me nor forsake me. This new redemptive journey did have a cost, but to me the cost seems so small in comparison of what He did for me on the cross of Calvary. I knew that if I was going to receive the fullness of His redemption I would have to die to my self-will and the desires of this world and to give myself over completely to Him as my Lord and King. Each day as I kneel before Him, He fills me with life that has purpose and value.

To conclude, these five-word pictures have been the building blocks of my life and each day I experience them repeatedly. This book that you have in your hand is a tapestry of ten unique pictures that only make up a small part of a larger picture of what Christ Jesus has done. He has been the Creator of a new creation in Him. Even when one faces the challenging times, His redemptive power is at work.

You will also see throughout my testimony how God has used different people to chisel off the rough edges and to walk with me at various times, especially when I needed some pruning or discipline in Christ Jesus. I am so thankful for His church where I could be a part of His body ministry, helping and being a servant to those in the church as well as out to the farthest parts of the world.



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Our prayer is that these chapters will encourage and give hope to you as a reader and help you to continue to move forward, not in your own strength and power, but in His redemptive strength and power. All we must do is commit our lives to His will each day. Our God given-testimony, when spoken from the heart, will bring much praise to our Heavenly Father and will be used by Him to further the growth of His Kingdom worldwide.

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## Introduction:

*“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty: ... But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption – that as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ... and my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in wisdom of men but in the power of God.” 1 Cor 1:26-27, 30-31; 1 Cor 2:1, 4-5 NKJB*

To me this Scripture has been a foundational stone for my life. I believe God is calling people, and that these Scriptures show to us the kind of people that God is calling into His service. God is not interested in the wisdom of man or in man’s righteous or in how noble a person may be. Paul tells us in this passage that God is calling the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. He is taking that which man and woman would reject and using them for His glory and honor. We are called to walk and live in Christ Jesus, not in ourselves. We are called to live a life that is under the direction of His righteousness and that, as we walk with Him, being open to confess our shortcomings to Him, Christ will continue to walk with us down a road of sanctification made possible by His redemptive power.

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We are on a journey of redemption, and as we pray, He redeems us and cleanses us with His blood, which was shed on the cross for us. Paul tells the Corinthian Church that we are not to glory in ourselves, but we are to glory in the Lord. Paul again tells the church that he has come to declare a testimony of Who God is and what God has done in his life through the power of the Holy Spirit. He states clearly to the people, that his life has been a demonstration of the work and power of the Spirit of God.

What comes in the following pages is a testimony to the glory of God and is also a demonstration of the work of the Spirit and of the power of God working through a life ... one life desiring to serve Him with all his heart. The testimonials given in this booklet are not because of my righteousness or some wisdom that I may have learned from others, but this booklet is a testimony of one who puts his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I've seen and learned that, as we begin to trust God in the little things, He then will take us on a journey where He will entrust us with much greater ministry for His glory.

To me it is key that we be willing to die to ourselves. Jesus said this, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies (breaks open), it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain"*. John 12:24. This has been a central truth when it comes to His redemptive power flowing in and through my life. It is not me; it is all of Him. He is transforming me into His likeness and image. I am just a vessel or channel that He called and has anointed to go out as a disciple to serve as His ambassador in His Kingdom here on earth.

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The Book of James tells us, that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. (James 4:8) From the point where we give our lives to Christ Jesus as our Lord, life becomes a journey where we begin a process in which we become more like Him. Our ministry of service becomes the outward expression of a life of walking with Christ Jesus. Jesus proclaims that if we truly are His disciples we will be known by our fruit. (Matthew 7:16a; John 15:8)

The chapters that follow are a true demonstration of the redemptive power of Christ Jesus. Today, in and through our hearts, Jesus is still “writing more chapters to the book of Acts”. Chapter 28 of Acts is not the end, but the beginning of thousands of years of ministry that the Holy Spirit continues to do, both through us personally and through His church as a body of believers.

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## Chapter 1

### Redemptive Power During Childhood Years

I am the prodigy of Roy Douglas Humphries and Rita Marie Stafford who were married during the war year of 1943. Of British heritage, my father's father and grandfather came to Canada over 150 years earlier, during the time when the country was being "born". My father, trained as a machinist, had worked in various factories throughout the St. Thomas area of Ontario. He also spent some time in Halifax as a homeland soldier, protecting the coastline from enemy ships and planes. It was during this time that my brother Douglas, who is 10 years older than me, was born.

Concerning my mother, Rita Marie Stafford, she was a small little petite lady who had a big heart for helping and serving others. Somewhere along the line she became a nurse's aide and worked for many years in the St. Thomas General Hospital. She was of a Catholic background and grew up in an orphanage, not knowing who her parents were. But in her early years she was adopted by a family named Stafford in St. Thomas. My mom tried, in some ways, to be a devout Catholic, but as her marriage began to undergo stresses, hurts and many heartaches, eventually divorce resulted; my mom's heart broke and she began spiraling down the pathway of destruction which eventually led to her death.

After the war was over my parents moved back to St. Thomas, Ontario. It wasn't long after that my sister Barbara was born; then there was a period of time when there were difficult years for my mom and dad, and all I can say is that after my sister Barb was born there was another pregnancy or two that ended in miscarriage. Then about three years before I came along, a sister, Mary-Lou, was born; she lived for a short period of time and died at the age of a year and a half. I remember her

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picture and baby shoes hanging up on the wall in the living room of our house. It was discovered that she had a hole in her heart and this caused her to die at a young age. There are a few pictures of her, but the main thing I know is that she is buried in the Humphries plot in West Lorne where my father is also buried with my grandparents.

It was on February 6, 1954 that James Paul Humphries entered into the world. I was born in the old hospital in St. Thomas, Ontario. From what I was told it was not an easy birth for my mother; she, in fact, had a very long labour. I was also told that she almost died having me and that I was born as a “blue baby” and I, too, almost died during my birth.

When I hear of this and realize what has gone on between my sister (who is nine years older than me) and the number of children who died between her and me, I know that God must have spared me because He had a plan for my life. I also know that, during those years, there was great turmoil in our home between my father and my mother and my father’s family. The main problem was that my father (the youngest child) came from a family who were Protestants; he had married my mother who was a Catholic. Back then this was a big issue because the Protestants in Europe hated the Catholics. My grandfather was active in the Orangemen and marched in Protestant parades, playing a musical instrument.

It wasn’t till years later, after my mother had passed away, I asked my father if I was or was not truly his child; in the last number of years when my mom and dad were still together, there seems to have been a lot of unfaithfulness on both of their parts. My father told me he thought I was his, and my sister also thought so because I look like him and have some of his characteristics, both good and bad. We also found out later that my dad had some papers hidden away that he had acquired concerning my mother’s adoption; there it was shown

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that she was a Watson and had a Scottish background. Maybe this is why my mother always enjoyed the violin and, over the years, tried to play it.

I would say throughout my younger years of growing up things were pretty well normal and, in a sense, traditional, even though my mother and father had broken up and were now both living common law with someone else by the time I was 8 years of age. I still had relationships with my relatives, acquaintances, and friends. My grandparents (John and Elizabeth Humphries) would come down at least once every two to three weeks to visit myself and my father. Also, during the summertime, I would go live one month with my grandparents and another month with my Aunty Mary and Uncle Lou Ford.

For several years, it seemed as if my father did not know what to do with me. My brother and sister had moved out and were married. My father did not want me to see my mother, and so these were the arrangements that happened year after year.

Most of the time my father was not home, due to his having a girlfriend on the other side of the city. Dad thought that I didn't know much about what he was doing. Often, he would leave after he thought I was asleep and go and stay with her, pretending he had gone to work in the morning before I got up. I knew he was going out at night, going someplace else.

On the weekends, Dad would often take me to another couple's place; they had some young children and I would go there Friday night and he would pick me up again sometime on Sunday. Although it was kind of a poor home, they were very disciplined people. They wanted you to do certain things and to eat certain foods in specific ways; if you didn't follow their instructions, you'd be disciplined for that, or my father would be

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told when he came to get me on Sunday night. I remember one night sitting at the table and they had given me two scoops of peas. I hated peas with a passion would not eat them. They said I would have to stay at the table until I finished them, so after about three quarters of an hour I began to eat these things one or two at a time but, after getting about a spoonful down, I finally threw up all over the table and they realized at that point that maybe I didn't like peas and they let me go sit in the living room.

Much of this took place in St. Thomas, Ontario. As I reflect back, I think there were a lot of challenges that I faced in the early years, watching what happened to my mother, my sister and my brother, which I have alluded to previously in this chapter. Each one of us was beaten in one form or another. I remember one event where my father was very angry at me and beat me with a roll of telephone wire. He wanted to get his point across and threatened me with all kinds of things.

Often when my grandparents would come over, I would arrange it so that my grandmother's purse would go into the back bedroom while she would go to cook meals and do other household tasks. During each of her visits, while she was busy in the kitchen, I would go to the back bedroom and steal money from my grandmother's purse. Then, throughout the day, I would spend the money wildly on junk food and other things.

I often went to live at my aunt and uncle's place for the summers; while there, they would take me to a Presbyterian church on Sundays in a place called Eagle. That was when I began to get introduced to this thing called the Bible and to a Person Whose name was Jesus Christ. It was during this time I also started to collect Sunday school papers, punching holes in each one and keeping them in a small binder.



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In our family, the many “spiritual” activities were done more in a religious sense, where this was the “religious” or the right thing to do. So, you went to church and you tried to keep good morals, but you mainly did your own thing throughout the week.

There was also a custodian who, at my public school, began to take an interest in me. He would let me come to the school early and give me little jobs to do to keep me busy – like shoveling the snow off the sidewalk, sweeping the walkways, cleaning up things in the washroom, and basically whatever needed to be done. Two things I remember about him: one was a day when he took me down to the library at the school and showed me a set of encyclopedias and said if I would read those books, that everything I needed to know for life, and understand about my world, I would find in those books. To this day I’ve kept a set of encyclopedias in my house, hoping that one day I will read through them all and really see the world as he saw it. Secondly, he and his wife asked my father if they could take me camping for a week up at a cabin. This was so exciting for me to swim in clear fresh water and to spend the days fishing and hiking. I never really experienced this in such a way before. The North was so beautiful.

During my public-school years, I had some teachers who cared, and I must say had great impact on my life, but it was very difficult because often I couldn't see, or my glasses were broken, or my clothes were ripped up. I didn't have much, and people made a lot of fun of me in grade school. This is when I learned how to fight and how to hurt other people, whatever the cost. I would do a lot of fighting and get into a lot of trouble for doing so. I spent a lot of time in the principal's office getting introduced to the strap – two times on each hand for the various offenses that I had done. These experiences got me to the place

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where my heart was really hardened. But somehow, I managed to get through school. I did fail grade three and had to repeat it. Throughout the rest of my primary years, I mostly got pushed through each grade, maybe because they felt sorry for me. As long as I seemed to show up and do something, they advanced me to the next year on probation. From there I would move on to grade seven and eight, when I realized that I'd better do something, or I would end up in a high school for dummies and I didn't want to participate in that option.

One other thing that stands out in my mind during my childhood was something that I didn't understand until later. As I mentioned earlier, my mother was a Catholic and my dad was Presbyterian. For some reason that caused a lot of conflict in our home. It most likely also caused a lot of conflict in my dad's relationship with his parents because they seemed to label him as the black sheep of the family. My father was very angry all the time and upset about everything. My mother was very loving and caring. She wanted to help and care and bless anyone she could. When she would go uptown shopping, she would not only buy little dinky toys and things for me, but she would also buy them for my friends, so I and my neighbors would look forward to when she came home from shopping. There was always a treat for them, too.

The childhood years were mostly a time of pain, hurt, confusion, feeling like I didn't know how one fits in. Even my neighbors and their kids seemed to always be having difficulties and challenges; it was not unusual to see other neighbor's parents beat their kids and be cruel to them. I thought it was part of growing up. I am thankful though for my Italian neighbors who were gracious enough to take me in and feed me often. I lived across the street from them and they would feed me and give me little jobs so that I could earn some money. I

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appreciated their help and encouragement that they brought into my life. I became kind of a ward of our neighborhood where various people, probably five or six families, would feed me, look after me, and take me in and do things with me, to give me some type of life.

There were a lot of fights that took place – everything from fist fights, throwing things at each other, chasing each other around with milk bottles, and things like that. In some ways, one would want to block it out of your mind, but this was the reality of what my home was about. My mother would try to leave for periods of time; she would break into my dad's safe box, steal from it and go off to another town. Most of the time we would move to London, Ontario, or somewhere in that vicinity. We would try to hide there for a little while, but Dad would always seem to come back, or they would talk and get back together again.

By the time of their last separation, my brother was already married, and my sister was living on her own. I remember the day was a beautiful sunny spring day. My dad had gone off to work at Weatherhead (he was a machinist) and my mom had a moving van come to the house. She took a bunch of furniture, put it in the van, and I remember standing on the porch as she was getting ready to get in the truck to leave. She said to me “I can't take you, because your dad would never let me. We're always fighting over you and so you're going to have to stay here.”

By 10:30 my mom and this moving van and the driver left. I remember just standing there thinking that my father didn't want me, and my mother didn't want me either. My lifestyle was going to change from here on in.

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After that, my mother's lifestyle changed dramatically. She became an alcoholic, a woman who began to live with many different men. My father also changed. It wasn't long after that, that I found out that he had a girlfriend and that he was going over and seeing her.

As I got a little older, my dad eventually took off permanently and I lived at home by myself; he would bring home groceries occasionally. I had to quickly learn how to feed myself, and I am thankful that I had my Aunt Mary who helped me in those younger years when I would go over and stay at her place in the summer. She taught me how to sew and cook and look after myself.

My dad finally did permanently “move out”, as it were, and leave me at home. On one hand it was really exciting – I had the house all to myself. On the other hand, I was very fearful because now I was all by myself. I had to try to figure out how to deal with life

There was a lot of stress during that time. During those years I had a very difficult time in school and the seeds of rejection were planted in my own heart. It wasn't until years later, when I was married, and some things came up, that it was brought to my attention that a lot of the anger and hostility I had in my life was because of what went on when my parents rejected me and went their own ways. From that point on, my mom and dad stayed separated and never again came back together as husband and wife.

Now as I look back, I can see the redemptive hand of my heavenly Father with me during these times. Even though I did not know or understand who He was, He was still a Father to the fatherless (Psalm 10:14; 68:5; 146:9). He took me under His wing and kept me close to His heart. One may ask why? I

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believe it is because He has a redemptive plan of grace and love for our lives through Christ Jesus.

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## Chapter 2

### Redemptive Power During Youth Year

In my early teen years, it seemed that there wasn't a whole lot of reason for living other than living for oneself and whatever felt good at the time. There was a variety of trouble that I got into over those years. Mostly, I was fortunate to stay out of trouble with the law, but I got into trouble with a lot of other things. Because of that I was very careful not to get caught by the police, but at the same time, did many things of which I am not very proud.

In the early teenage years, I began to do a lot of drinking. Alcohol was easy to come by, as were drugs. So, it wasn't very long after the age of 13 that I was using drugs to some extent but was using alcohol a great deal of the time - because my mother was an alcoholic, I figured this would be a way to numb myself, so I wouldn't have to deal with reality. I found myself in a place where I did not want to live. I really grasped the hippy movement, with the long hair, the dress and the lifestyle and I wanted to be cool. I went to dances and tried to do things that would show that I was a somebody, even though I had very few friends and most people didn't care what happened in my life.

During this time, I had the need for money, so I would do a lot of breaking and entering into houses and factories and places like that. I remember breaking into a lot of homes – back then homes were very easy to break into, because a lot of people were trusting, and you could steal money, alcohol, or whatever you wanted so that you could have your fun time out.

Another thing I did a lot was stealing in stores. Going into stores in town with a shopping bag and coming out with a

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whole shopping bag full of different items - that was how I did a lot of my Christmas shopping! I would go into department stores, steal a bunch of stuff, then come home, wrap it up over the Christmas season. A lot of times my brother and sister and father and mother would get things that I got by stealing from various stores.

I would also steal things from convenience stores. I did get caught once. It was interesting. I had gone into the store and stolen a bottle of model paint. I needed the paint because I had stolen a model earlier from another store and I wanted to paint it. Well, sure enough, I got caught. They said they were going to call my parents. So, I had to call my mother, who was also a thief. She said she would discipline me, and the store was happy that this would take place, but it never did happen.

High school was kind of an interesting time. Because of my being pushed through public school year after year, I never learned any really good study habits and was very poor in spelling and grammar. Much of the time in high school I went just to have fun. I usually got thrown out of high school an average of two or three times a year for a variety of reasons. Much of the time the only thing that interested me in high school was shops – working on cars and different types of things like that. I wasn't interested in going to a lot of the other classes. Back in that day in St. Thomas, the John Scott Hotel was not too far away from my high school. I do remember one time where I was in a science class when I think I was only 16 or 17 years old (totally underage), and during the lunch hour I was buying rounds of drinks for the teachers and the teachers would buy rounds of drinks for us. It was during exam week; I had another friend named Spanky – he had an afro and kind of looked like Spanky from the movie – and we got so hammered during this time that, when we went to do the exam that

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afternoon, we both staggered into the classroom. Spanky held me up on the chair, so I wouldn't fall over during this science exam. I remember saying to him “Spanky, why don't we put all A's on the first page (it was multiple choice), and all B's on the second page, etc?” We did that and within about three minutes we were finished the exam. Spanky answered the last two written questions but I didn't bother. We asked the teacher to excuse us, and of course we went back to drinking and things like that. A week later we were called down to the office. What had happened is that Spanky had got the highest mark in the class, and I had got the second highest mark in the class, and they were accusing us of cheating. I told them we didn't cheat, because we were too drunk to know what we were doing. They ended up throwing us out of the school for being drunk. It was always a big laugh to think about how those things took place.

The dating scene was something I was into and it seemed that every two or three different months I was dating a different girl, trying to find somebody who would meet my needs and care about me. Again, I was involved in a lot of relationships, trying to use these relationships to fill this emptiness that was in my heart.

From those early years all the way up until the teen years, there were a lot of terrible things we did in school. I finally quit school half way through grade 11. One of the reasons I quit school during the teen years was that my mother tried to commit suicide several times. It began to get to me. Several times she would cut her wrists and her throat, then call me up and I would go over there, and I would have to call the ambulance. Then I would have to clean up all the blood afterwards. She was trying so hard to kill herself and it bothered me an awful lot. Another thing that took place – I was out in the car with my father and he maybe suspected I might be doing



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drugs or something like that. He had a gun with a silencer that he had built for it, in the glove compartment of his car. While we were driving he reached over and pulled out the gun and stuck it up on the side of my head and said that if he ever caught me doing drugs, he was going to blow my brains out. That's just how my family was.

Anger so often spread from me towards other people. I remember one time one of my neighbors, Ron Barnia, had a new bicycle. I wanted to ride it and he wouldn't let me. So, I proceeded to strangle him, knock him off the bicycle, and start to kick him. If it wasn't for the neighbors coming out and literally pulling me off him and helping him get his air back, I would have killed him. That's how angry I was. I was so angry that, on weekends, I would often go down through the streets of St. Thomas and just look for people to pick fights with because I didn't care about myself, and I just wanted to take it out on anyone and everyone – to beat their heads in. My family relationships during this time were nonexistent. They couldn't have cared less about me and I couldn't have cared less about them. So, there was a lot of hostility and anger.

One thing I did get into a little bit was the music of the sixties. I know it didn't help in my maturity, but I know that I got really heavily into music by Led Zeppelin, Jimmy Hendrix, the Guess Who and the Beatles. I would buy their albums and it seemed to be the thing to do – listen to their music and get together with other young people and smoke up, do drugs, get drunk and sleep with anyone who would allow you to sleep with them.

I also had a variety of different cars during that time. I never had enough money to buy a half-way decent car but would buy cars and end up blowing the engines out of them or destroying them through racing or whatever. My favorite car

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was a '63 Chevy Impala SS. We had a 327 engine in it with a Hurst shifter with a three-speed truck transmission. It would really have a tremendous takeoff at the lights but was very poor at the “top end”. A lot of times in a quarter mile race, as long as you beat your opponent at the bottom end you could usually get them over the long haul. Eventually that engine ended up blowing up. My cars in later years were my survival, my place of sanctuary, picking up friends and being recognized because I owned a car and that made me cool amongst my friends.

It was later in those years that Dad finally introduced me to the person who would be considered my common-law or step-mother. Her name was Irene and she lived with my dad for over 25 years. She did have some sympathy for me. She had two children of her own. Often, I would see them, and Irene was nice enough to have me over for Sunday meals. She was of Polish background and had come through the wars and was pretty hardened during that time. So, when my dad would get angry at her she had no problem dishing it back to my father. They were kind of like two porcupines living together, but somehow, they ended up making it work. My step-mother would try to help me with clothes and meals and “get on my dad’s case” about looking after me. I’ve always appreciated Irene very much for standing up for me as much as she could.

There was a lot of inner turbulence during my youth years; many times, I did not want to live, and kept trying to figure out where to fit in. At 17, I began to realize that my life was not going anywhere, and I needed to do something different. Many people thought that, by the way I was living, I would not make it out of my twenties; several of my friends had committed suicide and many thought that I was heading down that same pathway.

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You could say that, over the early years, I had various encounters with God and with religion. I can remember, when I was going to Locke's school in St. Thomas, we had a grade five teacher named Dave Herbert. He taught us a religion class that those who are in grad five could attend. It was also during this time that the Gideons come to the school and gave out little new Testaments (which I still have to this day). And after looking through this little New Testament there is a sinner's prayer in the back that you can read, date, and sign. It was signed and dated 1965.

Also, in the early years I would spend time with my grandmother and grandfather Humphries and also with my uncle Lew and Aunt Mary Ford. It was during these times that I began to learn things about prayer and Bible reading and sometimes went to Sunday school. My grandparents, when they could, attended a Presbyterian Church in West Lorne and my aunt and uncle attended a Presbyterian Church in Eagle. It was during these times that I used to collect some Sunday school papers and three-hole punch them and put them in a binder. I was fascinated by the stories that people told from the book called the Bible. I also remember, when I was young, I went through a confirmation service at Elma Street Presbyterian Church in St. Thomas. I remember going through a little white picket fence they had put up across the front of the church to signify, when you walked through the gate, that you were now part of God's family.

It was during my time as a scout leader in the United Church at which time that I was dating a girl from the United Church. If you can imagine – I was a long-haired hippie and she was a nice young lady from the church who taught Sunday school. One night I was waiting for her while she was attending a Sunday school teachers' meeting. After waiting a while, I

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finally went up to the room where she was, and they were still discussing how they were going to recruit teachers. Then, out of nowhere, one of the teachers asked me if I had ever taught before; I said I had taught a little bit in cubs and scouts. He said, “That will do, would you like to be a Sunday school teacher, teaching our junior high class?” I thought in my mind I would try anything once, so I said yes. They handed me a bunch of books, told me to study them, and showed me where my classroom would be. The following Sunday I had 13 students at the United Church in St. Thomas. They were very excited to see me, because they had this skinny long-haired hippie, teaching them the Bible.

It was also during this time I met a couple named Doug and Lori Burke. They lived on the opposite end of the city from me, but Lori began to befriend me and opened up her home to me. She worked with the youth at the United Church. It seemed like her greatest gift was a gift of pouring love into people’s hearts and telling them that, even though they had been abandoned and abused, Christ would still love and accept them. I spent many days and nights over at their house sleeping on the couch and eating a lot of their food. There was a lot of confusion in my mind about what was happening in my life, and sometimes, I must admit, I thought a lot about committing suicide because, for me, it seemed like no one cared for or loved me. But God was using the Burke family to take me off the streets and pour His love into my heart.

Another interesting thing took place while I attended the United Church. Once a month, I believe, they did a radio program; they asked me to read, on the radio, one of the poems I had written (see appendix Radio Poem). In some ways I thought this was so funny because, in a congregation where all the spiritual-looking women who wore beautiful hats – here was

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me, a long-haired hippie, speaking to them. But through all these different kinds of events and, in spite of still walking deep in sin, God was not leaving me alone, but in a small way kept calling out to my heart.

After several months I was invited to go to a church conference where they were talking about the Sunday School curriculum. As many of you know, I don't have the gift of sitting quietly and saying nothing, so I raised up my hand and asked a very simple question. "How come the curriculum that we were using did not line up to the Bible – what happened to all the miracles and exciting things that God did for His people throughout history – they seem to be gone from our curriculum?" I was told that this was a modern age and that these were stories that were to help us understand principles and truth by which we were to live, and that they were not necessarily miracles, but just stories that would help us for our life walk here on earth. It wasn't long after that that I quit being a Sunday school teacher, because I felt that the Bible was a Holy Book and that we should believe in it, and that we should do what it says – and that what was written within its covers was truthful and that we could believe it.

Unfortunately, I still continued in my old ways, drinking and getting involved in drugs. Alcohol seemed to be my favorite way of numbing my brain and running away from the pains and hurts of life. I also smoked a small package of cigarettes almost every day. All I know from one particular night is that I ended up behind the John Scott Hotel in St. Thomas. I'd been drinking heavily, and someone had put some drugs into my alcohol and I found myself outside behind the hotel lying in a snowbank, not able to get up and walk. But I do remember that it was sometime in the middle of the night that a man and woman came to me and picked me up off the snow pile, asked me

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where I lived, and then drove me home in my car. It seems that throughout the night they stayed with me as I was getting sick and passing in and out of consciousness. I knew that they had stayed all night until morning and, when I finally woke up, they were gone. To this day I do not know who they were, but sometimes I think that God had sent two guardian angels to watch over me that night; it was during that time a voice came to me saying, “Are you through throwing your life away?” – the voice seemed to be coming from heaven itself. I replied, “Yes, I am”. I did not know clearly at the time to Whom I was talking, but it would not be long before it would be made clear to me.

May 24 in Canada was often the beginning of the summer party season. The year was 1971 and at the age of 17 I was heavily bound up in the things of the world. I decided to hitchhike to Windsor, Ontario, where I heard that a big weekend party was going to take place. I got to the St. Thomas/London 401 interchange. I waited to begin hitchhiking because I noticed on the other side of the overpass were two men, also hitchhiking. The traffic was going by them first and then coming to me next. The next thing I saw was a VW bug picking them up and, within a moment, it was picking me up also. Here we were – the two owners of the car in the front seat and the three hitchhikers in the rear seat. The two young men that were picked up were clean-cut and what I would call “goody two shoes”, and then there was me, the skinny long-haired hippie with my long goatee and long black mohair coat.

It wasn't long before the other two hitchhikers began to talk about Jesus Christ to the people in the front seat. They shared with them their need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Because of my little bit of background with Sunday school, I was able to speak the right

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words at the right time, making it look like I knew what they were talking about when, in reality, I had no idea at all.

After about an hour we were dropped off at a place along the 401. Next thing I knew, these two guys were praying that God would provide them with a ride. Out of respect I bowed my head, but when I looked up after the prayer, a car had already stopped to pick us up. I remember thinking to myself that this was a real cool way to hitchhike, and that I should remember to do this in the future!

Again, these two young men continued to witness their faith to whoever would listen. They were so excited about what Jesus had done in their lives. They could not stop talking about Him. Soon we were in Windsor and we all got out of the car; they headed to the bridge while I headed towards the tunnel area of the city. But, after saying our goodbyes and going two different directions, we all ended up in the same restaurant! They told me it wasn't a coincidence, and that God's hand must be in this and that I should come with them to the United States for the weekend. I said I didn't have a lot to do anyway so I thought that I might as well go with them and see what was going on. They called their relatives on a payphone and explained to them about me, what I looked like, and asked if they could bring me along. After some discussion, their relatives said yes.

After about an hour we arrived at their house in the northern part of Detroit. The house was a bungalow type and after I got in, they showed me a bedroom where I could sleep. It was later in the day and during the meal they asked me if I would like to go to a Christian camp the next day. They told me it would be fun and there would be lots of other teenagers there. After a meal with them, I decided to take a shower and go to bed. After getting all cleaned up, I went into the bedroom and

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saw this beautiful bed where the sheets were all ironed and wrinkled free. I pulled the one side back and slipped into the sheets ... it felt like I was slipping into a glove. What an amazing feeling to have clean sheets, a warm house and a room all to myself!

The next morning, we got up early for breakfast where there was lots of food. They all seemed to be so happy and excited. After we prayed over the meal, we ate some delicious food. When breakfast was over, the lady of the house put a \$20.00 US bill on the table, saying that I would need this for our day out at the camp. I was so shocked that they would give me something even when they didn't know me or know anything about me. They just wanted to bless me and hoped that I would have a good time.

The day was full of all kinds of different activities and games that we could do, but towards the end of the day one of the last big events was the grease pole. It must have been 20 feet high completely covered in grease and at the top was a ribbon that you had to grab and if you were the first, you would get some type of prize. Well, the game was on and after a period of time I won the competition, but now I was all covered in grease, so I decided the best thing to do was to run off the end of the dock and jump into the water. But for some reason I forgot that I had glasses on and within a few seconds they were gone, somewhere at the bottom of the lake.

That evening after we arrived at home, a number of the youth came to the house and we sat around the living room talking about the day and about their faith in Jesus Christ. Again, because of my Sunday school experience, I was able to carry on with some of the religious words that I needed so that it looked like I knew what they were talking about. But after a period of time they decided to pray. They took turns praying,



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but there seemed to be one prayer that stuck out in my mind. It was by a young man who prayed that his alcoholic father would get saved and come to know Jesus as his personal Saviour.

After the evening had come to a conclusion, the family asked if they could take me to various services the next day. I thought this would be cool and I tried to find some of my cleaner clothing that I could wear.

The next morning after breakfast we were on our way to church and the first thing, I went to was a Sunday school class for youth. Again, I heard more about the Bible, and they were still taking time to pray about various things in their lives. After this came the morning service. I was ushered up to the front, about two rows back and was given a bulletin. I saw what the service was going to be like and I learned that I was in a Baptist church and the pastor was named Murphy - the reason I remember this is because it rhymes with Humphries.

While I was waiting for the service to start, a young lady, who I had learned earlier was the pastor's daughter, came up to me. She said that the Lord had spoken to her about giving me her personal Bible. I said thank you and she went back to her seat and I began to look through the Bible. I saw how it was so marked up and underlined with notes beside the text. Within moments something began to overcome me. I couldn't believe that something that was so personal to another person would be given to me. I could see how much she loved this book and now she freely gave it away with no strings attached. My father had taught me that "no one ever gives anything away free" and that "there is always some string attached someplace," but I was so deeply moved by this gift, I got up, went out of the service and, once outside, began to weep bitterly. It was like rivers of tears that had been pent-up inside for years were flowing out of my heart. I experienced true love for the first time in my life by

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receiving a gift that this girl so obviously cared about. I gained control of my emotions and went back into the church. I sat inside looking over and over the pages of this book and the words that were underlined. It seemed like I was in my own little world as I looked through this special gift.

That afternoon we went to a jail to put on a church service for the inmates. In a way you could say I fit in quite well with my long hair and the appearance and demeanor of a hippie. But it wasn't long before my heart was being touched again, this time seeing white and black people sitting in the same row with their hands lifted up and praising God together. You need to know that I grew up during the time when there were a lot of riots in Detroit between black and white people. Now, seeing them together, worshipping God, showed me that there had to be a real God because only God could bring these two groups together who had hated each other so much over the years. I could see that these men were hungry for God and, because of what Jesus had done in their lives, they were now brothers in Christ Jesus, ready to help and serve each other where they could.

After having something to eat, we headed back to church again for a youth service that was held before the evening service started. Again, what stood out to me were their prayers, especially praying for one teen's alcoholic and abusive father at home. This was the same person that we were praying for the night before.

Then came the evening service. That night they had a missionary (whose name I've forgotten) from some country. What I do remember is that he played an accordion. Now you have to remember I came from the rock music scene listening to Jimmy Hendrix, Led Zeppelin and other groups; to me, listening to an accordion was like someone taking fingernails

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and scraping them along a blackboard. After the music was over and the preaching and testimony was given, the pastor got up and began to share about receiving Jesus Christ into one's heart. He had not yet finished his talk when a man from the back came running up down the aisle and falling down at the altar. I knew in my heart that this was the alcoholic man we had been praying for and that was enough for me. I got up and went forward, too. Here we were, two men broken in our hearts, and for the first time we experienced genuine love from Jesus Christ. We both prayed the sinner's prayer and asked Christ to forgive and help us in our new walk with Him. When we got up from the altar and gave each other a hug, we knew that Christ had flooded His love, grace, and mercy into our hearts. It was a new day. We died to ourselves and were now living for Jesus Christ.

The next day I was so excited about what had happened to me and how my heart was changed from anger and bitterness towards a call to serve Jesus Christ. That morning we went to a Christian bookstore and with the money that was given to me I bought about 75 pounds of Gospel tracts. For, you see, I had lived in St. Thomas all my life and never heard anyone speak to me about Jesus Christ in such a way. I now felt it was important that I take this "Good News" back to St. Thomas and tell others about this great news that had changed my heart.

I gave away the few clothes that I had. Then I packed my backpack full of the tracts and began to head back to Canada. I remember when I got to the border, the security agent asked me what was in the bag, and I said, "75 pounds of Christian tracts". I said, "Would you like to see them?" and he said, "No, thank you, I believe you, go ahead." I could've had anything in that bag and because I said the words "Christian tracts" he did not want to touch it.

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It wasn't long after getting home that I went up and down the main street of St. Thomas, Ontario, handing out Gospel tracts and trying to tell people as best I could why they needed Jesus Christ in their hearts. I sometimes wonder now whether some of these people became Christians because they were so afraid of me with my long hair and big "Go T". Maybe they thought it would be easier to pray a sinner's prayer and go on their way rather than to talk to me. You could probably say my method of evangelism was very strong and aggressive, but I really wanted the people to have what I had - something that only Christ Jesus could give.

Another thing that occurred during this time was that I began to witness to my neighbours and found out that some of them were also Christians and going to church. Now, you need to understand that the first time I heard about Jesus Christ I took Him into my heart as Lord and Saviour, and my life began to change dramatically. The thing that bothered me about my neighbours was they had seen how I lived, they knew about my parents and that they were divorced, and they knew I lived in a house all by myself all these years. They knew I had been involved in all kinds of terrible things and not once did they share with me their faith in Jesus Christ. I was angry inside and wondered how anyone could not share Jesus when they had received from Him such a great gift of eternal life and forgiveness.

During those first few weeks in St. Thomas I knew that something had changed inside me. I was not part of any church and I had only the Bible that the pastor's daughter had given me as well as the various tracts I had brought home from United States. I decided to at least read what I was giving out. I also took time to read the Bible that was all marked up. In my ignorance, when I began to pray to God, all I knew was that He

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heard and talked with me through the name of Jesus Christ. I knew He was now living in my heart and I was told that He wanted to direct my life to help me to become a new person in Him.

It wasn't very long after this that I felt I needed to go back down to the United States to try to find out more about God and His Bible. I got there on the weekend and visited with the pastor's daughter and her boyfriend. He asked if I wanted to go to some meetings where young people were planning to gather. It was on the University campus grounds. I said, "Sure, let's go."

On the campus, everyone was meeting in an auditorium. After hanging up my coat, I followed others into this large room where I heard a lot of weird noises coming out of the room where we were going. The doors were open, and it seemed like everybody was sitting in circles. There was a main hall and, in the center of this room, people were sitting in a circular form going from the center out. Some were sitting on chairs and others were sitting on the floor. There was much enthusiasm and excitement in the air, and I remember walking towards the archway of the door thinking to myself that I wanted to have what they had. I wanted to have that joy that seemed to be running over with all these young people. Some may have said it was nothing but chaos, but to me it represented the beauty and fullness of God Almighty.

As soon as I walked in the door, under the archway, the best way that I can explain it, is that I was baptized in the power of the Holy Spirit and fire. I look back now and everybody, I know, was speaking in a heavenly language, sounding like a beautiful choir before the Lord and, at that moment, God gave me a heavenly language to join in right with them without missing a beat. It was so wonderful, and it was like I was

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released from everything that had bound me in the past. I sensed a new hope and power within. I moved from being a long-haired hippy to now being a “Jesus Freak”.

After a few days I headed back to St. Thomas but, now excitement wasn't just on the outside - it was coming out from the inside, from my heart, from a reservoir full of love. I desired to tell as many people as possible about this Lord who not only forgives you, but also fills your heart with His Holy Spirit. Of course, it was a life most people didn't want to hear about but, at least this time, I didn't feel alone. After a few weeks of doing street ministry, I began to get a nickname from amongst the Jesus People. I became known as, “Jimmer the Evangelist”.

As one reads this part of my testimony, once again it is obvious that God's redemptive hand and plan was at work in my life. He was being a Father to the fatherless. Into me He was pouring His living waters, changing my heart from the inside out. He was filling my heart with His Holy Spirit, empowering me with a call to be a disciple of Christ Jesus, no matter what the cost would be. This song and especially these lines were always on my heart:

*I have decided to follow Jesus.  
I have decided to follow Jesus.  
I have decided to follow Jesus.  
No turning back no turning back.  
No turning back no turning back.*

*The cross before me the world behind me.  
The cross before me the world behind me.  
The cross before me the world behind me.  
No turning back no turning back.  
No turning back no turning back.*

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## Chapter 3

### Redemptive Power During Marriage (Irene)

I was with a group of Jesus people and we had just moved to a farm outside of St. Thomas. It was an old farmhouse and we had to do some repairs on the roof, as well as some painting inside to get the place livable. It was at that time we began to have larger groups of young people coming out and having Bible studies together. Late into the night we would sing different hymns, but because we were still all young Christians coming out of the hippy movement into the Jesus people movement, a lot of things didn't change in our actions or conduct. We knew Jesus and had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but we were continuing in the ways of the world.

On one of the nights that we are having meetings at the farm, Irene Haight, with Brinda her friend, came to see what we were all up to and it was during that evening we talked, and I shared with her some of the things that were going on at the farm. She told me that if I ever needed a ride to get away, she would gladly come and pick me up. Just a day or so later I called Irene and said I was ready to leave, so she picked me up and took me back to her apartment where she and two other friends lived.

Somewhere along the line I met Irene's pastor whose name was Rev. Don Fitchett. He mentioned to me if I was ever in need of a place to stay, no matter what time of the day or night, I could come to his place. He lived close to the church and, because he was not married, had a whole house to himself.

That night Irene and I talked late into the night about God and spiritual things. There were many things that I did not know or understand, but after a late night, they let me sleep on the

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couch. The next day I spent most of my time wandering around the city until that afternoon. Then Irene picked me up again and later in the evening we went over to Don Fitchett's place and knocked on the door, and sure enough, he invited me in to stay.

It was a very nice house and he gave me my own room to sleep in; he showed me where the shower was in the bathroom and how it worked. I got cleaned up, but it seemed like that night was again going to be one in which I wouldn't get much sleep because Don began to speak to me about what he saw in my life, and that if I would give my life completely over to the Lord Jesus Christ, he believed that God would really use me – if I would just trust him. Late into the night he spoke positive and encouraging words into my heart and slowly some of the negative things in my life were removed and replaced with the love of God.

During the next few days I had supper and spent the evenings with Irene, talking about things, wondering what God was going to do with my life. And I remember on the third night we got talking about marriage and whether I would want to get married. I'm not even sure how we got on the subject. It was a Friday night and all I can remember is that we were jokingly talking to each other that we should get married in the fall. And I said no, I didn't want to get married in the fall because I had hay fever and I didn't want to be standing in the service, constantly sneezing. So, then we thought: why not get married during the summer? But, for some reason, that wasn't going to work either, so we decided on the date of July 6. Now you need to remember we had just met each other, we had not started dating and now we were setting a wedding date only six weeks away. To this day, I still don't believe what we accomplished in six weeks. We ran into positive encouragement and also a lot of



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negative discouragement, but we continued to push ahead anyway.

It was on one of those three nights (a Thursday) that I talked to Pastor Don about Irene, because Irene was his church secretary. I said to him that I thought she would really make a nice wife and he agreed with me, but that's all we discussed. So, when Sunday came along, and the morning service was over, I waited for most of the people to finish greeting Don at the door as they left. Finally, as Irene I went out the door, I turned back and opened the door again and said to Pastor Don, "Irene and I are going to get married in six weeks' time – can we have your blessing?" and then I closed the church door. He quickly reopened the door and said, "Get back in here." We were surprised at what we next heard from his mouth. He told us that he would normally not be in favor of two people having a wedding so quickly after such a short time of getting to know each other, but he sensed in his spirit that God was doing something special here, and that he was now going to give his blessing and help us to get ready for the wedding.

You need to know that Irene was a beautiful 98-pound Christian woman, who was four years older than me; she had completed her RNA degree and had also spent some time at Three Hills Bible College in Alberta. Then there was me, 111 pounds, a long-haired hippie who was trying to find his way in this new adventure of life – at age 18! You could say that Irene and I were the complete opposites, and most people would have felt that this surely wasn't God putting us together. Many church women had conversations with Irene telling and asking her whether she really knew what she was getting herself into.

The next weekend we drove down to Union, Ontario to meet Irene's parents. Irene had her own car, a Chevelle, and of course, I had my driver's license, so I drove out to her parents'

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home. Her mom and dad were waiting outside as we drove up and the first thing that her dad said to me was, “Oh, look he’s a Billy goat, too”. You need to remember that I had long hair that was way past my shoulders and I also had a moustache and goatee. So, that is how I started off my relationship with her parents; but over time I became accepted and blessed by them for so many years.

Now we found ourselves in this five-week countdown, where we had to work, go for marriage counseling, get wedding invitations out, get a wedding dress made, figure out who would be our best man, maid of honour and who the rest the people in the wedding party would be. And, on top of all that, we decided to do our wedding banns through the church; this meant that the pastor had to read out our proposal for marriage and, if anyone could show any just reason why we should not get married, they needed to speak with the pastor. Somehow, I made it through a church of six hundred people and was approved.

Fortunately, Irene had a secretarial job and, although I was not working at the time, it wasn’t long before I found a job as well. Both of us together had hardly enough money to pay for a wedding.

Since we’d met the first time, six weeks had now passed by and, after meeting with Pastor Don Fitchett for marriage counseling, it seemed that everything was now in order for the big day. Friday night we went over and had our wedding rehearsal at the church. Then, after a late night, I headed back home to get ready for the big day. Irene’s mom had made Irene’s wedding dress and veil. Myself, the best man, and the groomsmen would be wearing three-piece chocolate-coloured suits.

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On the day of the wedding I decided it would be a good time to give Irene's Chevelle a good tune-up. So here I was, at 8 o'clock in the morning, washing and cleaning the car, changing the spark plugs, wires, and then turning on the motor so I could set the timing. This was how I started off the day which would be my first day as a married man. By about 10:30 I was all cleaned up and ready to head over to the church.

About four weeks before our wedding day we had picked out a little upstairs apartment above that of another couple. We had moved Irene into the apartment; before that she had been living with a couple of girlfriends. We thought she should go and begin to set things up for our life together.

Following tradition, I did not see Irene until she came from the back of the church with her maid-of-honour and bridesmaid. Irene was dressed in all-white; her maid-of-honour and bridesmaid were dressed in greenish-yellow floral colored dresses. We also had a flower girl at our wedding.

Pastor Don Fitchett did an excellent job with the wedding service. Everything had come together beautifully, and we had lots of guests to celebrate with. Irene's mom and dad and family members came, as did my mother, brother and sister. Also, a number of my aunts and uncles came. The only one who did not show up to our wedding was my father.

After the wedding, we took time to drive down to Waterworks Park to take pictures. We had decided to give rolls of films to our friends; one would follow Irene around and another would follow me, taking pictures of our day. After this was completed, we headed back to the church for a reception time. For the reception, we had put out a variety of finger food, sandwiches, and dainties with some tea, coffee and different kinds of pop to drink. Then we had the time of giving toasts to

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various people and, at the end, we concluded with the cutting of the cake. One person also took off one of Irene's shoes and passed it around to our guests, and people began to fill the shoe with money. I praise the Lord for this because these would be the funds that we would use for our honeymoon.

It was beginning to get late in the afternoon and so, after taking our gifts back to our apartment and changing, we headed off on our honeymoon. At first, we thought we would just go to London, Ontario, but as we were driving along the highway, we thought that maybe we should go to Niagara Falls. But, as we got further along the highway, we thought maybe we would just stay in a hotel at Kitchener, Ontario. But then we soon found out that all the places were full, and so we had to end up staying at a place that was run down – a little wayside inn on the side of the highway.

The next day we headed off to Algonquin Park and eventually over to Ottawa for a few days. It was at that time we both decided that maybe we would just cut this honeymoon short and head back home. There were two reasons: one reason was that we were running out of finances. The second reason was that our church was having some really great revival meetings and we did not want to miss them. So, we drove back to St. Thomas and began to take part in what God was doing at Faith Baptist Church. Many people were getting saved and each night the church was filling up with more new people wanting to hear about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Within a few more days we were both back at our places of work. I was over in London welding trailer hitches on cars and trucks. Irene was back at her two jobs – one with Jesus to the Communist World and another as part time church secretary at Faith Baptist.

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Now it was late Friday afternoon and I had just received my paycheck and was beginning to head out of London for home. I had just pulled onto the main four lane highway that led out of the city. I pulled up to a traffic light and looked over at the car beside me – an old white Dodge. I knew this car because it had a slant six with a pushbutton transmission. I nodded to him and he nodded back to me – where I came from this meant that “the race was on”. It was his old 59 Dodge against my Chevelle (actually my wife’s Chevelle – that made it her fault for what I was about to do. She gave me too much power!).

The moment had come, and the lights turned green. I went squealing out of the standing start. I had gained a considerable lead and I could see the black exhaust coming out of the back of his car. I was weaving in out of the traffic, clocking in at about 115 miles per hour, but finally I had to slow down because I was approaching the 401 cloverleaf and I didn’t want to hit the ramp too fast.

At that moment the old Dodge caught up to me and he honked his horn; I looked over at the driver and watched him proceed to put on his OPP (Ontario Provincial Police) hat. I had just raced a policeman! I knew I would now lose my license and, worst of all, how was I going to explain this to Irene?

I pulled over, and then got out of the car. The first thing that the policeman said to me was, “What do you think all the people thought as you were weaving in and out of traffic with a car covered with Christian bumper stickers? What kind of a testimony were you giving?” It was at that moment that I began to realize that I had not only brought shame on myself but more than that, I had brought shame on my Lord Jesus Christ. I knew that my life and actions were not glorifying Him, and now I had shown others how much He really didn’t mean to me – because if He really was the Lord of my life, I would be obeying the

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laws of the land. The policeman told me that I would be getting a ticket for speeding and reckless driving; he took my information and promised that, within a few days, he would bring me the ticket with all the incriminating information to my house in St. Thomas.

As I got back into the car to drive the rest the way home, I felt nothing but darkness clouding over me, knowing that I would lose my license, and now I wouldn't have the ability to drive back and forth to work – this would mean I would also lose my paycheck. When I got home, I told Irene what had happened, and she was not very pleased with me, but all we could do at that time was to pray and ask God to forgive me, guide and direct us.

The first thing we did the next day was to trade the Chevelle in on a VW beetle. This would take the temptation away from me when it came to racing others. Then, in the evening a few days later, the policeman showed up at our doorstep and he came up into our small apartment and sat down with us in the living room. I don't know if he could see that I was a broken man, but I felt terrible about what I had done. He began to explain to us that he was a deacon in a Baptist church in London, Ontario, and that he was concerned about my testimony for Jesus Christ. He asked me if I had learned anything over the last number of days as I thought about the ticket I was going to get. I said yes, I had. I said the biggest thing that I had learned was that I had brought shame to my Lord Jesus Christ, because I had committed to be a true disciple of His.

At that moment he pulled out the ticket; holding it in his hands, he said to me, "I believe you have learned from this event," and he proceeded to tear the ticket into small pieces. And then he exhorted me to be careful and to know that everything I do can and should be a testimony for Jesus Christ.

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What an amazing moment! Again, when everything seemed to be the darkest in my life, God's love and redemption was going to turn things around and give me another chance to live a life that would bring honour and glory to His Name.

After a number of months of married life, I was sensing in my spirit the need to go away for a quiet night of prayer. Before we got married, I had taken time to explain to Irene the bad things I had done in the past. I knew Irene had lived in a fairly good Christian home and had gone to Bible School and that she had given her life completely over to serving the Lord Jesus Christ. You can say she was, in every way, the complete opposite of me and I wanted her to know that. But after I told my story she asked only one question. She asked if God had forgiven me. I replied saying that I believed He had. Then she said, "Who am I not to forgive you also?" That day Irene taught me, through her words and actions, what the love and grace of God was all about.

But, even after we got married, I was still struggling with a number of issues. Most of the ones in the physical realm I was able to resist, but I was still being harassed and bombarded in my mind and in my spirit. So, Irene and I decided that we would go to London, Ontario, and stay overnight in a hotel and use the time for prayer and fasting – because I needed to come to the place where, if I was going to totally serve Him with all my heart, I needed to be set free from the garbage of the past.

So, we checked into our room and spent some time talking and then went into prayer. We were both kneeling down beside the bed in the room talking to God and crying out to Him that He would deliver me from these cords, ropes and chains that bound me – many of which originated when I was a child and early teen. Once the door is opened, actions readily become

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habits. Then as you do them over and over again, they become second nature in your life.

It seems to me that it was around 10 o'clock or even later that night when God gave me a vision. I believe this was the first time it happened to me in my young walk as a new believer in Christ Jesus. What I saw was a large blackboard – the kind you see in a school – and on it were written all my past sins. There were so many words that the whole blackboard itself seemed to be covered in writing. But as I looked at it, I began to see coming over the entire top of the blackboard a red liquid. It didn't take me long to realize that this was blood and it represented the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed for me. As I continued to look, the blood kept flowing over the whole blackboard until it reached down to the very bottom ledge where you would keep the brush and chalk. It was at that point I heard God saying to me, "Do you see anything else on the board?" and I said, "Lord, the only thing I see is a board covered with blood." It was at that moment God gave me the understanding that all my sins had been covered by Christ's blood and I was forgiven. Just like I couldn't see them, He also could not see them anymore. At that moment, I knew I had been set free from my past and all its guilt, and that I didn't have to look back at past sins. I could walk forward in Jesus Christ, knowing I was covered by His blood and that I was truly forgiven and delivered from my past.

As Irene and I continued to pray, He brought to my mind this passage of Scripture in Matthew chapter 16 verse 19: "*And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*" It seemed like at that very moment that God was speaking this verse directly into my heart and was now showing me that I now had authority to deal



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with the things in my life. At first, I was not sure what this verse meant, but as we kept on praying, He showed me that, not only could I be delivered, but He was also going to use me in a deliverance ministry to help others. He gave me power and authority whereby I would do battle for Him in the kingdom of heaven, liberating people through Jesus Christ – people who, like me, had become entrapped in the snares of the devil.

This verse has become foundational for my life. He has continued to pour His Word into my heart and it has helped me over the last 44 years – all over the world. I personally know and understand clearly that God is a God Who, when we call upon His Name, and ask to be set free, He will deliver us because of His love, grace and mercy. He truly sets our feet on a firm eternal foundation of life in Him.

It was during this time while we were living on Daniel Street that one morning I heard on the radio about a bank robbery. They had various roadblocks around the city to catch the robber. The person had gone into the Royal Bank stating that she had a bomb in her shopping bag and got the teller to put a large sum of money into the bag. The radio gave a description on what this person looked like. The description was of a short lady, who wore a blue overcoat with an orange scarf and who had red hair. It did not take me long to put 2 and 2 together: it was my mother.

I called my friend Bob Gal to come over as I knew this was my mother and I was going to need prayer and words from God my Father on what I should do. I remember laying on the living room couch crying and Bob laying his hands on me praying for me. The thoughts kept coming to my mind: what kind of a son would I be if I turned my mother into the police? What would she think of me?

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Later that afternoon I went to my mother's house because she had called me and said that she had some money for me that she received from an uncle who had died. She wanted to buy us a washer and dryer plus she wanted to give me some cash to help us out. She had already gone ahead and bought the washer and dryer and was having it sent to our house. While we visited, she gave me about \$1000 cash. The problem I had with my mother's story was that I knew she was an orphan and that she didn't have any relatives.

So I went back home to pray, seeking the Lord on what I should do. It was around suppertime when I received a phone call from a hotel telling me that I should come right away, because my mother was bragging about how she got the money and she was buying rounds of drinks for people in the hotel. Within a few moments I was there, and I escorted my mom out to the car. It was then that I decided to take her to the mental hospital that was in St. Thomas. She had been there several times before when she had tried multiple times to commit suicide by cutting her wrists and throat. So, while she was passed out in the car, I reached into her purse and took a large envelope of money from her wallet. When we got to the hospital, they admitted my mom as long as I would sign her in.

The next thing I did was to head to the St. Thomas police station. When I got there, I asked if there was any way that they would know who the person was who robbed the bank. Of course, they asked me why I was asking, and I said my mother seemed to have a large amount of money that she said she got from a relative. But I knew that she didn't have relatives, so I wasn't sure what was happening. At that point the constable pulled out a sheet of serial numbers that belonged to the money that was taken. I pulled out the money that I took from my mother's wallet. It wasn't long before we found that the serial

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numbers on the money from my mom's purse matched up to the serial numbers from the sheet the constable provided. The next thing he wanted to know was where she was. I told him that she was at the mental hospital. Within a few minutes, a police cruiser was on the way to the hospital to pick her up and bring her back to the police station. I waited at the police station wondering what my mother would say when they got back. I knew I had to stay there for her arrival, being with her was the least I could do. When they returned, she was fingerprinted and the police took her mug shot. It was at about this time when my mother began cursing and swearing at me telling me and saying things like, what kind of a son would turn his own mother into the police?

After about a day or two at the jail, they took my mother back to the mental hospital where they wanted to try to deal with my mom's drinking problem and her mental state. It was because of this that for some strange reason, they gave her some pills and released her on bail as long as she would appear when she was summoned to come to the court. To me it was such a weird idea to give an alcoholic a whole bunch of medication and then send her off by herself to deal with what she had been going through.

It wasn't long after - about three weeks later - that my mother acquired a pellet pistol and decided to rob the Toronto Dominion Bank in down-town St. Thomas. The story has both some funny parts to it and some very sad parts too. The funny part was when my mom was coming out of the bank with a gun in one hand and the cash in the other, that she dropped most of the money onto the ground. Polite as Canadians are, people saw what happened and stooped down to help my mother pick the cash up and put it back into her shopping bag. All they saw was

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an old lady who had just dropped her money. Not one person saw or questioned the gun that was in her other hand!

From there she ran down the street and behind a Catholic Church. However, it wasn't long before a policeman caught up with my mom. Seeing that my mom was running with a gun, the policeman pulled his own gun. My mother, seeing what was happening, turned to shoot at the policeman. Amazingly, in that split second, the policeman realized that the hole in the barrel of my mom's gun was too small to be dangerous (it was only a pellet gun), so instead of shooting and killing my mother - which would've been his right to do - he ran up to her and tackled her to the ground. He then handcuffed her and took her back to the police station. I found out later that my mother had hoped that when she turned and aimed the gun at the policeman, that he would shoot her and put her out of her misery so she wouldn't have to suffer and struggle any more.

Eventually, the day came when she was in court to answer for her crimes. I had been asked to testify against my mother, and after some consideration I agreed. Again, in the court room she cursed me and asked what kind of a son would turn his only mother into the police. In my mind, I thought that as a Christian, it was the right thing that needed to be done. You might call it "tough love." My hope was that she would get help and finally break through the bondage that controlled so much of her life.

My mother got two years less a day in jail. At first she spent time at a formal jail, but then after a short period of time they sent her to a halfway house type of setting where she would have her own little apartment. It was during this time she got off alcohol and drugs and it was like she became a new person. It was at that time, she asked if I would help her set up an apartment in the city. I said yes, and this later became regret,

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particularly when I agreed to cosign for her for \$2,000 to buy some furniture.

The next sad part of my story with my mom came just a few weeks after getting out of jail and setting up an apartment. She had met a man who was an alcoholic. It wasn't long before she moved out of her apartment, sold her furniture and took off with her new companion. Two months later I got a call from the finance company saying I needed to pay for the loan because I had agreed to be the co-signer. This was so heartbreaking for Irene and I and our two little children, because we made so little money and I had to figure out a way to pay off this debt.

My mother was gone for 12 years and I never knew where she went. We never talked again during that period. But I must admit that during this time, God was always faithful and provided for Irene and me. It wasn't easy, but through it all we learned to trust Jesus Christ in a deeper way.

Jesus Christ continued to show me His redemptive power, grace and love, and that He calls disciples to be soldiers of His kingdom here on earth. We are in His hands and, if we trust Him as our Father and King, He will guide us and show us His divine purpose and will for our lives.

JUN 24 1974

*Crime*

# Woman gets two years in jail for St. Thomas bank robberies

Rita Marie Humphries, 52, of Jackson Street, received a jail sentence of two years less one day when she appeared in Provincial Judge's Court, today, for sentencing in connection with two bank robberies.

Mrs. Humphries pleaded guilty to the May 22 armed robbery of the main branch of the Royal Bank of Canada in which \$1,975 was taken and she also pleaded guilty to the June 5, robbery at the Toronto Dominion Bank, 462 Talbot Street, in which \$4,816 was stolen, when she appeared in court June 14.

St. Thomas lawyer Harold Stafford told the court the accused "had a drinking prob-

lem," and was unaware of the fact she had robbed the Royal Bank of Canada while carrying a shopping bag in which she said there was a bomb.

He told the court Mrs. Humphries robbed the Toronto-Dominion Bank, "just to prove it could be done."

Provincial Judge Fred R. Barrum said, prior to sentencing: "The main consideration is that the woman does not go into the federal system."

He sentenced the accused to one year less one day for the first charge of armed robbery and to one year on the second count of armed robbery. He also recommended the accused

be given psychiatric counselling.

In the May 22 robbery, a woman walked into the Royal Bank just prior to closing time, and told a teller she had a bomb. She walked out of the bank and was not apprehended until the following day.

The second incident, June 6, was similar in nature, except the accused used a pellet gun. She was disarmed by City Police Constable Mike Van Berkel, after attempting to flee from bank employees and police through the crowded yard at the rear of Holy Angels' School.

## City woman charged with bank robbery; second in 15 days

Rita Marie Humphries, 49, released from custody, Wednesday, on a charge of robbing the main branch of the Royal Bank of Canada in St. Thomas May 22, was arrested and charged with the Thursday afternoon robbery at the Toronto-Dominion Bank, 462 Talbot Street. She was remanded in custody for a week when she appeared in court today.

A woman was disarmed in the crowded yard of Holy Angels' Separate School just minutes after the bank was robbed of a modest amount of cash about 4 p.m.

Mrs. Humphries had been

remanded to the St. Thomas Psychiatric Hospital on the May 22 charge, but was released Wednesday and appeared in court the same day. She was then remanded out of custody until July 3.

Mrs. Beatrice Gordon, an employee of The Times-Journal was conducting business in the bank when she witnessed the entire holdup from the next wicket.

She said that a woman entered the busy bank and stood in line at the wicket next to her.

"I heard her talking to the teller, but she talked through

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JUN 7 1974

*Crime*

# Redemption

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## Chapter 4

### Redemptive Power During Ministry

#### Sherman Tank

Another amazing thing that took place in my life that year was that I had a vision of turning a school bus into a “church on wheels” which we could drive from place to place, holding services in these various locations. God showed me how to build it and even what name we should call this ministry. What would be born became known as the Christian Fountain Fellowship. Our first place of outreach would be Port Stanley, Ontario.

Now let me take you back to the vision. I saw in the vision a large school bus that we painted red and white; inside we would put curtains on all the windows. We would take out the first row of seats, so we could install an electric organ on one side and a puppet booth on the other side. The back door would be modified in such a way that we could open it and stairs would come down to the ground, which people could climb and join us for the service. There would be two other people who would join us in this venture – Brothers Brian Mansell and Mark Ormiston, both of whom had gone to Bible school, just as Irene had.

Before all this could take place, we would have to raise funds to purchase a bus AND have enough money to do all the renovations on it. I believed it would take about \$600.00 to do all of what I saw in the vision. I didn’t know if this would be enough money to purchase a school bus, but I had faith that God was doing something in my heart. A few days later on Irene’s day off, while sitting around our breakfast table, we decided that we would just trust God and that He would show us where



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this bus would be, and all that we would have to do was get in the car and follow His leading. I know that this is not normal, but at the time, we believed that God could show you anything and everything and that, if it was His will, He would walk before us and guide us.

We went out and got in our black little VW and began our journey which seemed to be leading us into the direction of Aylmer, Ontario. After getting to the town we sensed that God wanted us to turn left off the highway and drive down some side streets, and it wasn't long after that when we came across a yard full of school buses.

The owner of the busses took us into the backyard where the old buses were kept – the ones no longer being used for school. The first one that he showed me was about \$600 and its age was somewhere around the 1963 or 1964 vintage. But my spirit did not seem to be comfortable with this one, and also it was more money than we had. Then he showed me an older bus, a 1959 GMC with an old six-cylinder flathead engine. You could tell it had been sitting there for a long time because it had sunk down in the mud all the way up to the skirt of the bus. This bus hadn't been driven for years so I asked the man how much he wanted for that one, and he said \$300. So, I asked if we could try to start it up and see if it would run; he went and got the keys for it and brought them back. But just before he went into the bus, I asked him if I could go in and start it. He said if it didn't start, he would need to go get another bus to start it and then pull it out of the mud. I told the man that I was a Christian and I believed, if God wanted us to have this bus, He was going to have to start it and get it out. You could see on the man's face that he believed there was no possible way that this bus was going to move unless it was pulled.

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So, I got into the bus, turned the key and, of course, the engine started! Then I put it in low gear and, to everyone's amazement (and especially the owner's), it was like a pair of hands reached under the bus and picked it up, and we were able to just drive it straight out onto the laneway. We were now sure that this was the one that God wanted us to have and, after a little bit of time, we exchanged some money and got a license plate for it so we could drive it back to St. Thomas.

Next thing we had to do was repair the bus and get it ready for a safety check. I wondered how this would go because of the bus being so old and having not been driven for a long time; repair expenses could be quite high. The first thing I did was go to a junkyard and get some old galvanized heating pipe and, by cutting it open, I could then pop rivet it onto the bus all the way around, giving it a new skirt. Then, after some body filler, we painted the bus red and white and then wrote the words "Christian Fountain Fellowship" on the front. Later that week I called the previous owner and asked him more details concerning the drivetrain and the braking system of the bus. What I heard next really astonished me, because he told me that the brakes, transmission and engine had all been rebuilt and that there should be nothing at all wrong with the drivetrain. So we took it for the safety check and it passed with flying colours. Within a few weeks, we would be ready to take our mobile church out on the road. We had one more problem to overcome – that was to get the bus insured and to put it on the road as a mobile church building. The agent told me that there was no such category and it would take a little bit of time to talk to the people in Toronto so that they could figure out how to properly insure the vehicle. They opened up new category just for us which became known as the "mobile church on wheels". We could surely see that God was going before us and that He had a plan in mind.

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To get everything complete and insured we had to take out a small loan with the bank. At first, we were nervous about this because neither Irene nor I made much money. But we had faith that God would work it out and if we had to fast for a few weeks that was OK too. An exciting thing then happened – the day we were to make the first payment on the loan a man named Roy Johnson called me on the phone and asked, “From where did you get the loan?” He told us he felt led to make a payment on the bus for us. But, later that week we got a call from the bank telling us that the loan had been paid in full.

Now it was Sunday and we drove the bus down to Port Stanley to a children’s park. We got everything set up, opened the doors, and the children began to come in; even with some of their parents. There were about 23 people and that morning many gave their lives to Jesus Christ. It was from that day on that we began to go there every Sunday, and it was not long before the bus began to fill up with people. We could see that by the time September rolled around we would need a building, and the Lord opened up the door whereby we could rent the old scout hall that was up on the side of a hill.

We had kind of a tradition on Saturday night where we drive up to the Esso station and fuel up the bus for the next day. The Esso station was the one that repaired our bus but also gave us free fuel each week for the ministry. It was during one of these Saturday nights that I was driving the bus that to get gasoline. Irene was following behind with her little black Volkswagen; at the time she was about seven months pregnant with Joshua. We had just come out of our house property and were heading down to the corner where we would turn left onto Woodward Avenue.

Our street came out between two ravines, one going north and the other going south. As I looked south, I noticed there was a car coming but knew I had lots of time to turn onto the

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road. But as I was beginning to turn, I realized that this car was coming a lot faster than I first perceived it to be. And, as it came over the top of the hill heading down into the ravine sparks flew out from under the car after it bottomed out on the road. The next thing that crossed my mind was that I needed to get out of their way because they were now losing control of their car and I didn't want to hit them head-on because I knew the damage our old bus (nicknamed "Sherman Tank") could do. It had very heavy steel bumper in front – so thick that it could take the top of the car right off. So, my last thought was that I should head this vehicle into the ravine and, hopefully, save their lives.

It seemed like within seconds they had hit me on the driver's side control panel just behind the front tire, then went along the full length of the bus and took out the back tandem tires of the bus. I was safe, and my wife was safe in the car because she had not yet turned the corner, but now we could hear people screaming from the car – especially one lady calling out for her baby. My neighbours soon came out to help and we discovered that there was no baby; because the woman was in shock she was crying out for her baby.

As we were waiting for the police to come, the driver of the car admitted to my neighbours that he was doing over 110 mph, he thought, at the time of impact. Once the police had come and began, seemingly, to interrogate me, it wasn't long before they began measuring the skid marks and checking out the driver that they realized there was nothing that I had done wrong. The police then thanked me for the effort that I made to get out of the way, as all these people could have been killed otherwise. The policeman said that their car would have gone underneath the bus taking all of their lives. I do not know what happened to them later and how they were charged concerning this accident, but know I had another problem.

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Here we had a smashed bus sitting on the road, and it was going to require a large amount of money to move it – the tow truck guy wanted it all in cash. I didn't have any money on me at the time and I didn't know where to turn so I called my boss, Mr. Van Pelt, and asked whether he would lend me the \$65 cash I needed to move the bus. He was very generous in helping us; within an hour the bus was now back on our property at 5 Daniel Street.

But the story of the old Sherman tank bus does not end there. It was sometime in January when it had snowed quite heavily the night before and I was now outside shoveling a 6-inch snowfall off our driveway. And, while I was shoveling, a voice came to me and said, "If the bus starts, I want you to repair it and use it again for the ministry." At first, I thought this was a strange thought that had come into my head because I knew the control panel of the bus had been smashed and it hadn't run from the night of the accident. But this voice kept on insisting, so I went into the house and got the keys for the bus. I already knew in my heart it wouldn't start, but I put the key in the ignition and turned the key and the only thing it did was go "click, click, click, click". As I was leaving the bus to go back to shoveling snow, I heard myself saying to the Lord, "See, 'ha ha Lord', I told you so." Then, as I was walking to the back of the bus, I again heard the voice come to me and say, "Will you let me show you that I am the Lord your God?" So, I went back into the bus, put the key back in the ignition and turned it, and the bus started right up. I could not believe it. I went out and lifted up the hood and saw that the engine was completely covered in snow which had drifted up into the engine compartment.

The next thing I did was to begin calling some of my friends, especially Bob Gal, and said, "You have got to come

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over to see this – there’s a miracle taking place here with the bus this morning – there should be no possible way that it should be running.” But, humming like a brand-new engine, my friends also saw the miracle of God’s hand.

So, I went and got some more stove piping as well as new top spring leaves to fix the damage on the bus. With a winch, I was able to winch the axle back and under the bus, connected the new spring leaves to the bus, and then hooked up the driveshaft. “The rest of the story” is that the bus was again back on the road, serving the Lord by picking up children for Sunday school.

There is one other funny event concerning the bus that I would like to mention. We thought it would be easier to park the bus closer to Port Stanley; we had some friends from the church who said we could park the bus at their place of business. They were the owners of Shaw’s Ice Cream, but there was a challenge – the snow in front of the laneway in which we parked the bus was not moved and the snow plows made a high pile of snow alongside the road. To solve the problem, Irene would park alongside the highway out of the way and when the road was clear of traffic, she would wave to me and I would begin driving the bus, going through the gears, getting up a enough speed to bash through the wall of snow and then swerve onto the highway, aiming it in the proper direction so I could continue to drive down the road to Port Stanley. I know now that today that this may seem ludicrous, but at that time, we were just simple people of faith trying to serve the Lord the best way we could.

I want also to say that a year later we got a call from the Salvation Army asking us if we would want to buy their Sunday school bus. At the time they wanted a thousand dollars for it. I told them that we didn’t have any money but thanked them for

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thinking of us. So, the captain responded, “Could you buy the bus for one dollar.” Of course, we could and within a day we had another really nice bus which we could use to expand the ministry. God had been so faithful in blessing us and now we had two buses and over one hundred and ten people coming out to church.

## **Ministry at Port Stanley, Ontario**

I was only 18 years old when I first started pastoring and I had no Bible school training, but I did have a lot of zeal and faith in Jesus Christ. I believed God would use me if I would just trust Him and His will for my life. There were so many things I had to learn but God surrounded me with great people who would help and guide me on this new pilgrimage to which God had called me to serve. Even in the midst of this big learning curve, and in spite of my lack of knowledge and understanding, God was with me each step even when I fell down or when I made a big mistake.

By the fall, we had turned this old church-on-wheels back into a regular bus which we would use to go around and pick up the children for Sunday School and church. We focused on about a six-block area and, on Saturdays, we went out in the morning dropping off flyers and meeting with people, inviting their children out to Sunday school. This was a very successful way of getting to know the adults as well as the children. And we soon discovered that when moms and dads trusted you with their children, that meant they were also open to coming to hear and to be part of what we were doing at the church.

Standing out in my mind were several things that I had to learn. One was that I had to learn how to preach and teach the Scriptures to the people. As already stated, I had no Bible school training at all, but I was not afraid to talk and to tell

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people about why they needed Jesus Christ in their hearts. I'm thankful to Irene that she helped me so much, training me in the basics of how to prepare and write sermons. Also, my good friend, Pastor Don Fitchett, was a great encourager along these lines, too. He always told me that I was a good communicator and that I could be a good tool for our Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. I do remember one time, following one of my sermons, that one of my leaders in the church, Bob Gal, approached me. He was from the Pentecostal church in St. Thomas and was committed to helping plant a new church in Port Stanley. His wife, Karen, played the organ and Bob basically emceed and led the song services, and then I would preach. But after this one service Bob came up to me and stated quite frankly that the sermon that I had preached that day was probably one of the worst sermons that he had ever heard. But what amazed him was that, at the altar call, at least 11 adults came forward for first-time salvation. Bob then shared with me that he could see it was not so much the spoken words that counted but rather what counted in touching people's lives was that which was coming out of the heart.

Another challenge that I had to learn quickly was how to serve communion and do water baptisms. Communion wasn't all that bad because it's laid out fairly straightforward in the Bible, and my friend, Pastor Don Fitchett, had given me a book that helps pastors who do communion services, baptisms and weddings. But, at my first baptism service which was held out in Lake Erie, we had three adult baptismal candidates. Now, if you know anything about Lake Erie, especially at Port Stanley, you have to walk out a long way to get into water deep enough to do a baptism service. So, once we got out into deep enough water, I and the people giving their testimonies had to shout back to the crowd of people, telling them what we were doing. I had to pray really loudly. But now it came to the time for the



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baptism itself. The first candidate's baptism proceeded well as he went down in the waters and came up okay. But the second candidate, a woman, seemed like she was a 6-foot four and when I put her down in the water, the next thing I knew her feet came up out of the water. Now I was in a panic! I believed in total immersion and I didn't know what to do because while her upper body was underwater, her feet were not, so I did the only thing I could think of – I just let go of her and I took both my hands and pushed her totally underwater; her whole body was now covered – I wanted to be faithful to doing total immersion. I think I almost drowned her, but we did fine and we all had a big laugh about it afterwards.

After the candidates had been baptized, I felt led to ask if there was anyone in the watching congregation on the shore who desired to be baptized. Within the next moment a man raised his hand and said yes, he desired to be baptized and then he began to undress himself down to his bathing suit. He then proceeded to walk out into the water and, as he stood with me, I asked him for his testimony. He told us that he was a Christian, but he never had an opportunity to be baptized by immersion. And when he saw the ad in the paper that we were doing a baptism service on the lake, he prayed that I would speak up and ask if anyone wanted to be baptized. He believed that God was opening up this opportunity to fulfill the Word of God in his life. So, with great joy, I was able to baptize this community leader for Christ's glory.

There were also several things that God laid on our hearts to do, concerning evangelism and missions. What I am about to list is just a quick overview of a number of things that God directed us to do.

- One was that we thought it was important to disciple children in the Word of God. We believed that God loves

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children and has a way of communicating into their hearts Who He is and how He loves.

- God also opened the door whereby we could put Scripture Verses on the front pages of our St. Thomas Times Journal. Right at the top of the lead page, on both sides of the paper's name, we were able to put Scriptures which cost about \$10 each to put in. So, I went around asking people if they would like to see their favourite Scripture in the newspaper, and I was blessed that so many did. For you need to understand that I believed in the power of the written Word of God itself, and that it could change lives just by people reading His Word.
- We had painted our VW car with the words "Jesus saves" on one side and "God loves you" on the other side. (*This paint job was done one weakened at the Van Pelt's Bookstore where Floyd and I wheeled the VW into the back doors of the store.*) Each year our city had an annual parade. We decided to sneak our car into the parade. We raised the hood and put a loudspeaker and a little amplifier inside the car – I would speak about Jesus Christ and play Christian music as we drove by the people. We also filled the hood with all kinds of Gospel tracts and, as we walked along the streets, people would reach out to get a free tract. We gave them away by the thousands. I don't know how many just ended up on the ground, but I do believe many were taken home and read, and I also believe that when we get to heaven, we may find some people whose hearts were touched by the evangelism outreach done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that day.
- We also did tent meetings during the summertime. We used my brother's old truck to haul the tent, pulpit, and 70 or more chairs. We would set up in the park and have tent meetings where we would proclaim the gospel of Jesus

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Christ to all those who would listen. Again, we saw people give their lives to Christ.

- We approached our local cable TV channel and asked them whether we could do a weekly children's program; they agreed and indicated that they would provide all the technical help and the camera people to do the program. So, we launched what became known as the Happiness Club. Here, each week, we could reach out to children and tell them the good news of Jesus Christ; they would send us their questions and pictures and we would send them discipleship material and Bibles if they requested them. Again, God gave us more fruit for His glory.
- We were also heavily involved in a coffeehouse located on the main street of St. Thomas. There, in the evenings, young people could come in and have coffee, donuts or other small baked goods to eat. While they were sitting around, we would play Christian music and talk to them about Jesus Christ.

*(Some of these evangelistic out reaches like the coffee house and tent meetings were birthed forth by our good friends Bob and Karen Gal)*

To sum up, many of the things we did may seem foolish to some, but what we saw was that God took the foolish things of men and drew people unto himself. We even had one night where people came knocking on our door. Irene and I lived on the main street of St. Thomas (above the cable company and next door to the coffeehouse that we were renting). It was sometime after the supper hour, and a man, woman, and two children were at our door. The astonishing thing was that the man wore a black name tag saying "Elder" on his lapel. He was an elder of the Mormon Church. The first thought in my heart was that I just didn't have time to argue with someone from the cult about how Jesus Christ is truly the way, truth and life. But

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soon he told me that the reason he was knocking on our door was because he had been told by people on the streets that if you wanted to know about Jesus Christ, you were to go to “that house” and they would tell you how to find Christ and invite Him into your heart. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing, but I invited him up into our apartment and shared the Gospel with the family and, within about three quarters of an hour, the man and his wife and their two children gave their hearts to Christ – He was now their personal Lord and Saviour. What a blessing of God’s redemptive power! What we saw that night was such an amazing experience. What touched my heart so deeply was that, not only would one of these Mormon people come to our house to get saved, but also that there were people on the streets telling others that, if they wanted to know more about Christ, they should go to “that place”. To me, we were fulfilling what it meant to be a true Christian – a person who is “Christlike”.

I hope you can see from this part of my testimony that I had a deep burden for seeing people come to know Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. I knew how this could change people’s lives if they would just come, by faith, and believe in Him, He would revolutionize them and change them forever. The reason why I believed this so strongly was because that’s what he had done in my own personal life.

I’d like to mention one more thing that took while I was still so young. I had started to go to the St. Thomas ministerial. It consisted of a bunch of pastors (from a variety of denominations) who met on a monthly basis to discuss, I guess, issues concerning the city and ways to reach out as churches. Interestingly, several times they had asked me to do the devotional before the main meeting. All these people were highly educated pastors and I, not even 20 years old, was speaking to them. Another amazing thing came out of these

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meetings; I needed some type of paperwork to show that I was a minister and I asked if there were some pastors who would be willing to recognize me as a minister. To my astonishment, there were six different pastors and denominations that signed my certificate, recognizing me as a pastor. To this day I still have that certificate and, in thinking back, again realize how amazing God was to give me the credibility among all these men that they would give me a certificate to show others that I was truly a pastor and preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **Ministry at Fingal Baptist Church, Ontario**

While I was pastoring in Port Stanley, I was approached by the leadership of the Fingal Baptist Church as to whether I would consider being their pastor. Now, again remember that, at this point, I'm only 19 years old and still had lots to learn, but the church was in need of a pastor to preach on Sundays. So, Irene and I felt that this was another door that had opened to us, both to help them and to help us to grow more in Jesus Christ.

So, in the morning I would go around Port Stanley picking up the young people there and then having a church service; when it was over, I dropped off the Sunday school children at their homes. Then I would drive the bus to Fingal and follow a bus route there where I would pick up people and take them to the church where I would then preach. After the morning service finished, I would again drop off the people and head back to Port Stanley.

There were some challenges with the Fingal church because, at the time, this church was run mainly by one dominant family. But, in spite of that, we did see people come to Christ and become members of the church in Fingal. Again, God was good to us and helped us through these times. I would spend as much time as possible doing visitation, praying with people and

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helping them where I could. I only pastored there for a little over one year, as I had to make a decision on where I could give my time. I stepped down from the Fingal church and focused mainly in Port Stanley.

## **Ministry at Ernfold Baptist Church, Saskatchewan**

About a year after I began my schooling at Briercrest we were approached by some of the leadership of the Ernfold Baptist Church. This church was part of the Baptist Union Convention.

I began to apply some of the things that I have learned in my Port Stanley ministry and added what I was learning in school. I began to work with the church part-time and mainly on the weekends. The church was about 45 minutes away from the school along the TransCanada Highway, heading west.

The people of the church had just bought an old school building and had renovated the old two-room school into a nice church. My focus was to do door-to-door ministry, driving around on the country roads and taking time to visit people, praying with them and encouraging them where I could. This began to produce a lot of fruit. I did not spend a lot of time at people's homes, but I would just drop off materials and ask if there was anything that I could do or pray about. I must tell you that there were many interesting stories that one could relate concerning this type of ministry.

It was also during this time that our children were still struggling with asthma and had to be hospitalized a number of times each year. That alone was very stressful. One summer, while we were living out in the Ernfold area, Irene came to me and said that she thought she felt a small lump under her arm on the side of her breast. At the time we did not think too much

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about this but in the back of both of our minds we remembered that her mother had two major breast cancer operations. But again, God put wonderful church people around us to help us and pray for us as we walked with them and attended school during this time.

Standing out in my mind was not only the growth of the church but also the many specific things that God was showing me concerning one's ministry and how God desires to make us more like him – to be Christlike. He showed me that it was not so much the location or type of ministry that really counted, but that He would use these different types of ministry wherever we may be – the purpose being to help us grow and mature in Him as His disciples.

## **Ministry at Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church, Manitoba**

After I graduated from Briercrest, we felt it was time to move on and that I should consider furthering my education while I was in the season of learning. A good place to do that would be to move close to Providence Theological Seminary where I could begin to work on a Master of Divinity.

It was during those last few weeks before graduation that I was approached by Dr. Johnny Barkman, asking me whether I would consider pastoring a church in Stuartburn, Manitoba. It was a small EMB country church and it would be possible to go to school and minister to the church at the same time. So we decided to make a trip down to southern Manitoba and we were picked up by a man by the name of DK Friesen; we stayed at their home where he and his wife treated us especially well. The following Sunday I preached in Stuartburn and, after some fellowship time following the service, we were told that the church had already selected a pastor and that there

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was no need for them to look any further. You could say that this was a little bit of a shock to us at the time. But God was not yet finished with His plan for our lives. The very next day DK Friesen asked me if I would consider being an interim pastor at the EMB Church in Steinbach. Their pastor had stepped down and moved on to Winnipeg, and they felt they needed an interim pastor to come and help them for a year as they continued to search for a senior pastor. We thought that this could work out in our plans; we consented and indicated our willingness to be their pastor for the next year.

We then headed back to Briercrest where we picked up all our worldly possessions, sold our mobile home, and headed off to Steinbach where the church had a parsonage (on Friesen Street) into which we could move. It was a very nice home, painted a bright yellow, and it was less than a block from the church and our children could go to a nearby school.

I remember calling my father and telling him that I got accepted as an interim pastor at the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church. His biggest concern was why I was joining the Mennonites and stepping back in time! You have to remember that he came from St. Thomas, close to Aylmer, Ontario, where the Amish Mennonites lived – they dressed in black and drove around in buggies. I assured him that these Manitoba Mennonites were quite progressive and that they drove cars with lots of chrome.

So, this would be my third church in eight years. It was a well-established church, anchored to the EMB denomination itself. The church itself was born out of evangelistic efforts and tent meetings in the area, but by now it had become established over the years as another mainline church. My focus, because I had the gift of evangelism, was not only to teach, but to do



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evangelistic services within the church, calling people forward to a personal salvation in Jesus Christ.

It was interesting that, when I was being interviewed to work at the Church, they never asked me about my views concerning the Holy Spirit. So, I not only taught from the Word of God, proclaiming to people the good news of salvation but also showing them that God wanted to empower them for service. But I began to get some backlash concerning what I was doing. I figured I needed to study a little bit more, so I started to read a series of books that were in their church library, dealing with the teaching and sermons of Menno Simons. And it wasn't long before I began to see, in Simon's messages, his zeal for the power of God concerning salvation and the importance of having the Holy Spirit guiding and directing you, and filling you for service in Christ Jesus. It was interesting that, after a number of weeks of sharing some quotes from these books, that suddenly these books disappeared from the library – never to be heard from or seen again!

One of the interesting discussion points during my time at the church was concerning things like whether it was right or wrong to have a Christmas tree in the sanctuary. Another issue that came up for consideration was whether it would be okay to move from using a German hymnbook to using an English hymnbook. What would the church community think about that progressive move? There was much concern about the doctrine of nonresistance. In fact, it was such an issue that, at the convention that year (held at the Steinbach Regional Secondary School), they brought in Dr. Hildebrand from Briercrest to teach on the subject. The reason why this was so important was because there was an EMB church down in Meade, Kansas, where the majority of the people that attended the church were from the US Air Force base. These were people who were ready

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to go to war and fight. I'm not sure how they handled this issue in the years to come because after I was finished my one-year internship, it seems like they moved on. Other than for a few friends in the church, no one over there has had any communication with me since. I believe what happened after I left the church and became part of Full Gospel Chapel in Steinbach, I got labeled as "one of those Pentecostal types" and it was interesting that after a few weeks, people who had wanted me to come and do revival meeting at various churches and Christian camps called me up and cancelled. I guess I had some type of spiritual disease! Another point – while at Briercreech as a student, everyone knew about my views concerning the Holy Spirit and His gifts, as well as the ministry of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in one's life – and that they were just as important today as they were during the founding of the church of Jesus Christ many centuries ago.

I should tell you though, just as an afterthought, that I went out to the Mennonite Museum and was able to purchase the complete works of Menno Simons and, even though it's in old English, I found his teaching very pointed and concise when it came to many of the things that I also believed – which we as Anabaptists need to teach and proclaim.

## **Ministry at Full Gospel Chapel, Steinbach, Manitoba**

I can say this was one of the most wonderful times of ministry in my life. Pastor Glen Forsberg was the senior pastor and there were three other pastors on staff at that time. Ron Kadyschuk, a great teacher at heart, was in charge of Christian education. Then there was Harry Bartel, the main counselor and teacher for new believers in Jesus Christ. I was involved in youth and evangelism. The church grew exceptionally large during this time. Many people were getting saved and I can say that I experienced, for the second time in my life, what true

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revival in Christ Jesus was all about. For me, as I look back many years later, I now count these years as the golden years; we were able to work so well in team ministry with the body of Christ in this local area.

When I first started at the church, I was given the task to work part-time with the youth, but I soon discovered (just after a month or so) that this was going to be a full-time job, so I postponed my training at Providence to give myself to full-time ministry with the youth. But after doing so, it wasn't long before I was informed of an uprising amongst the youth themselves. They had come to Pastor Glen asking him to fire me. They said that I wasn't a good youth pastor. I wasn't giving them enough games, outings, and other types of things that would amuse them (babysit them!) while their parents were in the services upstairs. Then Pastor Glen called me into his office and asked what I was going to do. Now you need to remember that I had already been a pastor for a number of years and I had even had people question me as to why I would step down from being a senior pastor, to now being a youth pastor. But I felt that youth needed the best of the best, and I felt that I was a good preacher, a good teacher, and that I was going to give them the best message that they could get anywhere at a youth meeting. My goal was not to entertain them but, rather, my goal was to teach them the Word of God. My purpose was to bring them into a deeper place of worship and to help equip and train them for the work of service in Christ Jesus. The end result of my sharing my vision with Pastor Glen was that I was told to continue on, doing what I was doing. He believed God would bring forth fruit that would glorify His name.

In fact, what happened next was really amazing! The congregation voted that we should build a youth center across the street from the church. It would cost over a hundred

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thousand dollars, but we believed God was calling us to minister to the youth, as our church was right beside the regional high school, and we had a great opportunity to minister to the students. So, it took about a year to complete the youth center, but after the grand opening we began to see the youth ministry grow. We had three youth groups going on in the building at the same time. We also began to have satellite youth groups in other communities, equipping and training leaders from our senior youth – these young leaders would go out and run those meetings.

It wasn't long before God began again to impress on my heart the importance of discipleship training, so I began to put together a program that whereby we would select 12 students out of our youth group to go through 12 weeks of training. When they were done, they would be given a certificate at a graduation service at the church. This turned out to be a key foundational stone for the youth ministry and, even now, years later I get those young people (who are now parents, businessmen, and church leaders) telling me how much deeply those courses affected them and changed their lives.

Also, during this time, I was involved in evangelistic outreaches to youth in the communities of Landmark, St. Anne and Beausejour. This was also a very rewarding time for me personally because it gave me the opportunity to preach in a variety of different areas and to meet so many wonderful people with whom I am still friends to this day.

Another thing that our church made possible was to permit me to continue working on my schooling at Briercrest for two months each year. Often my family would stay home in Steinbach and I would leave for school for eight weeks of classes. It was not easy but, again, it was the means which God

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provided so I could continue to further my education, the result of which was a master's degree in Christian Education.

I want to share one other thing that took place during this time. I had begun to let the young people know about my mother whom I had not seen for years and I wondered if God would be able to help us to find her. Many young people in our youth groups had a deep and simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; they believed that if we prayed and sought the Lord, that God could answer our prayers. I was able to book off some time to fly down to Southern Ontario and see if God would help us (specifically me) to find my mother.

So, when I got to the London airport, I rented a car from a business which was then called Rent-a-Wreck. I headed off to St. Thomas to talk to my brother and sister and see if they knew where my mother was. Like me, they also had not heard from her for years. That night I went to prayer and I asked the Lord, "Can you, by your Spirit, guide me - like you did when we purchased the school bus way back when we were first married?" The answer seemed to be, "Yes, I will."

The next morning, after rising and prayer, I sensed God was telling me to go back to London, Ontario. I got into the large city around midmorning and began to think about where I should drive. After going down a number of streets, I found myself in an older part of the city and decided to park the car. I got out, went into a hotel, and asked the bartender if he'd ever seen a short little lady with red hair and no teeth drinking at his bar. To my amazement he said, "There is a lady who comes in here almost every other day to order soup and drink a number of beers." But he didn't know where she lived. So, I prayed again that the Holy Spirit would lead me to the street I should walk down. As I walked, I sensed God speaking into my heart, leading me to one particular store. As I went in, I talk to the

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owner and I asked, “Have you ever seen this lady with red hair and no teeth?” He said, “Yes, she’s up on the third floor of this building.” He proceeded to give me the room number.

I then headed up to third floor and found the room number and knocked on the door. At that moment a voice came from the other side, asking who it was. I said, “This this is your son, James,” to which she then responded saying, “I have no son named James.” I said, “I know, Mom, you have not wanted to see me all these years, but I would like to see you; I still love you in spite of all that has happened.” Within a few moments she opened the door and let me in. The room was a terrible mess – you could almost say it was a pigsty. She slept on her couch and watched her TV and, every few days, ordered another case of 24. I spent time telling her that I still loved her and that God also loved her and that she needed to turn to Jesus Christ and that He would walk with her and be with her. As you already know, my mother was a Catholic; she asked, “How do I get to know Him?” I then shared how she could have Jesus Christ in her heart. So, I led her in a sinner’s prayer, but I must admit I did not see any changes over the next year, but only God knows our hearts.

My mother lived on welfare and had no friends; she was not well, and it seemed like she was just waiting for the time when she would die. After I left the place I went back to the bar and gave the man my church business card and asked him that if he didn’t see my mother come in for two or three days, would he please call me. So, he took my card and put it up on the glass mirror behind the bar. I did have an opportunity to go back with my children a number of months later so that they could meet their grandmother. I don’t know what kind of memory they have of her but at least my mom was proud and happy to see them.

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I think it's also important at this time to admit that things were not always easy. For some people I was too radical in my faith and, for others, it wasn't radical enough. But the blessing that I really received came from the youth – their loyalty to God and to me as a pastor. The day I stepped down from the youth ministry was not easy; they threw a farewell party for me and gave me a very special gift. It was a clock that chimed every hour and on it was a plaque that said, "Friends are friends forever".

## **Ministry at McMurray Gospel Assembly, Alberta**

Pastor Glen was stepping down as Senior Pastor at Full Gospel Chapel and it was recommended to us that all the other pastors should also resign so that a new senior minister could then build his own team around himself. So, Pastor Glen was heading to a church in Wetaskiwin, Alberta. Ron Kadyschuk was headed to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, to be a teacher at the Central Pentecostal school. Pastor Harry was going to stay on at the church as counselor, and I was going to step down and finish my summer term at Briercrest. It was also during this time that Pastor Dennis Siemens was stepping down from the Ste. Anne church, and they wondered whether I would let my name stand to become pastor of that church. At the time it seemed like it would be a good fit, and many of the people thought it was going to be a "shoo-in". This would mean we would not to move very far and could continue to work in the area. So, I began the process of being a candidate at the church – I met the board and then preached in the Sunday morning service; after the service there would be a vote. It was the next day I got a phone call from Pastor Siemens asking if he could come over and, as we sat around the table, it soon became evident that I did not get a high enough percentage of the vote to become the new pastor for the church. At the time it was hard

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to understand, but one thing I learned is that God is never caught unawares. He has all things lined up according to His will for our lives.

It was during my time at school that I received a call from McMurray Gospel Assembly, asking if I would consider pastoring that church. A date was set when we would visit the church. I said, “Yes, I would be interested in coming up, meeting the people and seeking God’s will concerning this call. It would be a three-year term, and at the end of each three-year period, they would have a vote to determine whether or not to go forward with the successful candidate as pastor.

So, a few weeks later our family headed up to Fort McMurray and soon discovered that the majority of the church people were from Newfoundland – people who had a strong faith in Jesus Christ. They were also hoping to construct a new building for which they had plans and had been saving a number of years. I had also heard that they had let their former pastor go and that he was now in the United States.

After our weekend there, preaching and meeting with the board, we soon got a call telling us that we had received a very high percentage of the vote and asking us if we would consider coming to their church. After a few days I called them back and said that we would be willing to come and be their senior pastor.

For those of you who don’t know, Fort McMurray at that time was at the end of the highway. It was a boom city. But that I mean it was an oil-rich community where people had high wages but also were heavily invested in the ways of sin in this old world.



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When August rolled around, we packed up our trailer with all our worldly possessions in Steinbach and headed off to Fort McMurray, Alberta. Again, there were lots of challenges. The trailer had two flat tires that had blowouts because of the burden of my books and things that were weighing it down. Then, as we approached the final couple hundred miles from Fort McMurray, there was road work and it had been raining for number of days. So, we had to have a road grader chain our van and trailer, and tow us for several miles through the mud until we got back onto the pavement again, from where we could head on up to the city. The people had found a nice house for us on Father Mercredi Street and that's where we as a family would settle in to the new ministry to which God was calling us.

The church began to grow with both our morning and evening services filling up. It wasn't long before discussions about constructing a new building came up. Following a congregational meeting the green light was given for the building of a new church sanctuary. This would take about a year because, not only were we looking at a new building with a sanctuary seating 600 people, but we also had to update and renovate the old building. I was so glad that, at the time, we had Pastor Brad and Sharon Montsion on our staff as Christian Education minister; Brad was a very detailed person and kept track of many of the things that needed to take place.

Again, there were all kinds of challenges in constructing this new building. Just as we got construction underway, world oil prices began a freefall. People were losing their jobs, and many could no longer make their mortgage payments. Home prices dropped dramatically, and many people began moving out of the city. Many just left the keys to their homes on the bank counter as they drove away. Someone even erected a sign on the highway asking the last person to leave to please turn off

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the lights! But the congregation continued to persevere, and we built the church, not only for the present, but we also had a forward vision of what the church needed to be in the future. Things became very tight financially because often the quoted prices did not match up with actual prices on the bills. We had to go back to the bank several times as the expected cost of \$350,000 ballooned to over \$600,000 to complete the project.

But in spite of all the challenges, the church continued to grow and, on the dedication weekend, Pastor Darrel and Loretta Nelson were flown up from the States and were our honored guests. It turned out to be a great time of healing and restoration between the two groups and, I believe that, because of this time of reconciliation, the church was able to move forward and grow in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I also want to say, that this church has a strong foundation concerning missions. They believe that missions were critical to all that they did as a church, and they were able to support many missionaries over the years. I have been blessed and, now that I'm a missionary and have been doing mission work for 23 years, the McMurray church has faithfully supported us for all those years and is, indeed, our biggest supporter when it comes to finances and prayer. I will always be grateful for what they have done together with Project LAMBS, Irene, Hkaw Win and I. This church and the servants that make up the staff have blessed and encouraged us so much.

One Christmas we as a family decided to take a mission trip down to Charla Pereau's orphanage in Mexico. We would drive our van all the way down and meet up with the founders and directors of the organization in California. We would stay at one of their homes for a few days and have the opportunity to be involved in the Rose Bowl Parade as a worker and viewer.

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It was also during this time that I received a call from one of my board members in Fort McMurray telling me that my mother had passed away. He said that she had been dead for three days, and finally it was noticed that she was not around. The police broke into her room and they found her dead. I thought about how sad it would be to die so alone. The church offered to pay for my flight back to Ontario, but I felt I needed some time to pray and to think about what I should do. And that evening I made a decision that I needed to stay amongst the living and the dead would take care of the dead. So, I called my sister and told her I would not be coming to the funeral. The sad part about all this is that my mother was on welfare and nobody wanted to pay for the funeral, so she was buried by the state and, because of that, on her grave site where she is buried there is only a number. When I look at the number it reminds me that here a whole lifetime of a person is summed up in a number on the ground, and that there is no recognition that she even existed here on earth.

But when it came to make the decision whether I should let my name stand for another three years in the church, I decided that at this time it would be better not to continue; we would move out of the city to spend some quality time with our children. I'd been busy at the church being a pastor, but I hadn't spent a lot of time as a father and things started to show up in our children's lives that I knew, if we didn't deal with them, we were going to have more problems in years to come.

## **Ministry to the Family / Home Missions: Grunthal / Steinbach Manitoba**

As stated above, I thought that I needed to spend more quality time with our children. So, we had a family meeting. In some ways, I wanted to stay out in Alberta and maybe live in Edmonton near Irene's family. But the children seemed like

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they wanted to move back to Steinbach where they had gone to school and still had some friends. So, we packed all our belongings and stored them in a few rooms and headed off with our small camping trailer to Steinbach. For a while we lived on different people's properties until the Lord opened up a door whereby, even without a job, we could buy a home in the Grunthal area, right beside a game farm which housed all kinds of exotic wild animals from all over the world.

But now that we had moved, and the kids were back in school, things continued to go from bad to worse. It seemed like a lot of businesses didn't want to hire a pastor because they thought he would only stay for a season, and then move on. They didn't want to spend all that time training me. Secondly, I was told by many ministers that I was being very foolish by not continuing in the ministry as a senior pastor. They asked me what it would look like on my resume when I'd taken a number of years off. People might begin to wonder about your faithfulness to God. But I reminded them that the first church to which we are called is our family, and that I needed to be a shepherd to my family once again. But Irene and I finally got part-time jobs working at the Freshwater Fish Plant in Winnipeg for three different seasons and, other times, Irene worked at Natural Resources in Hadashville.

I also want to reflect on another challenge that took place in my life. One night, when it was late in the evening, our daughter Rachel and her girlfriend were sleeping in the trailer outside in our yard. It was sometime between 11 o'clock to 12 o'clock at night that a car kept driving back and forth in front of our house, honking and creating a disturbance. I decided to go out and investigate. I was wearing just my housecoat and slippers; I walked to the laneway where their car was parked. There were three young men inside. I told them that they should

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move on, and that the young girls, especially my daughter, was not coming out. At that moment, the men got out of the car and, while I was talking to one of them, another one took a bottle of beer that he had in his hand and hit me on the side of the head. Once I fell down, they proceeded to kick me with such violence and anger. I didn't know what to do, so I yelled out the name of Jesus Christ and the next thing I knew, they stopped, picked me up, put my slippers back on my feet and walked me over to my laneway and sent me into the house. After that they drove away, but I was in so much pain that I needed to go to the hospital. Once there, I found out that my body was covered with bruises and that I had cracked ribs. My skull around an eye socket was also cracked. I was bloodied. At that time the police were called, and they came in and took pictures of me. Other police went out and found the three men and charged them with aggravated assault and battery.

It was months later that we all ended up in the courthouse in Steinbach. It was interesting that the only chairs available were the chairs right beside me when the men came in. Our court case hadn't started yet, so I took time to ask the man, "Why was it that you were so angry, and it seemed you wanted to kill me?" He told me that I reminded him of his father and that he hated him. He took out on me all the anger he felt for his father.

When our turn came for the court case, the judge asked me whether I wanted to see this man do jail time; I said, "No, I think he learned from his mistakes - all I would ask is that he would be ordered to buy me a new pair of glasses." This was agreed upon.

It was also during this time that we decided that we should buy a sign business (known as Uptown Signs) from my friend Kevin. These signs would be rented by people in the area

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to advertise various things. At first it seemed like a good, growing business; we also got into the manufacturing of signs ourselves, selling to various places across Canada. So often, however, we had little money and lots of bills; it put all kinds of pressure on Irene and me. We sold our home in Grunthal to try to pay off some debts. This began a pilgrimage where we seemed to move from one house to another house every six months. It was during this time that, under a retraining program, the door opened for Irene to go back to school to take classes while being paid for going to school. While she was doing this, I continued to try to get the sign business off the ground, but for a number of years we stumbled along, causing a lot of heartache for us as a family.

It was in the midst of all these challenges, around the third year of being of the ministry, that we started to see a lot of stress appearing within our marriage. Irene was tired of all the things that were going on and felt she needed a break to get away for a while. So, we reached a consensus. Irene would head off to Alberta and stay for a while with her Uncle Al and Aunt Karen. This was not going to be easy for either of us. It wasn't long before Irene called and told me that, in reality, she was finished with our marriage and that she wasn't coming back. Hearing this was a great shock to me, but I could understand, after all the things we had gone through, that it didn't seem like our lives were going in the right direction. We both still had a strong faith in Jesus Christ but had lost hope, both for our marriage and also for being good parents to our children.

At this point, the only thing I knew I could do was to go for counseling to see if I could work on fixing myself. I had learned a long time ago that the only person you can fix is yourself. We can always give a lot of advice to others, but it's still up to each individual person to make a choice as to whether

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or not they're going to change. Consequently, I decided, regardless of what would or would not happen to our marriage or family, the least I could do was go and get some help. I called a friend who was a teacher in the whole area of counseling and asked him if he knew and could recommend a person who could help me. He gave me the name of a couple at Providence gifted in the area of counseling; I had taken courses from them. So, within a few days I called them, and they were willing to see me for the purpose of beginning to help me.

After a few weeks I received a phone call from Irene and she said she was going to come home because she missed the children and wanted to spend some time with them. But she again reminded me that our marriage was over. So, after she came back to our house in Steinbach, I continued to go see the counselor and, once in a while, Irene would ask me how it was going. I would share with her a few little details. Before too long Irene asked the names of the counselors, and she herself called them and also began to see them. At the time I didn't know where things would go from here, but again I knew that if I would change my heart and line up more to God's will, maybe somehow through all of this, God would work a miracle.

It seemed that, after several months had gone by, I could see that Irene's love for me was beginning to return. We began to go on small dates and tried to keep our conversations upbeat and simple. But another crisis came into our home at this time; however, instead of pushing us apart, it seemed to bring us back together. She shared with me that she could see that things had dramatically changed in my life and that she loved what she saw and wanted to be my wife again. This was a real answer to prayer for us and I'm thankful that God did a work in both of our hearts, but especially that He, like a fine surgeon, removed

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some deep-down pain in my life that had been there for many years.

More could be recounted about things that occurred during these four years away from ministry, but I don't believe it's important to share these details. The valleys through which we walked were very, very deep and, it wasn't for our faith in Jesus Christ walking alongside us every step of the way, I don't think we would've made it.

## **Ministry at Full Gospel Chapel, Steinbach, Manitoba**

Following these approximately four years away from formal ministry, we received a call from the leadership of the church asking whether we could come to a meeting that they were having at the youth center. At first, I didn't understand what it was that they really wanted to talk about, but after the meeting started, they asked whether we would consider being the senior pastors of Full Gospel Chapel. I began to tell them all the things that happened over the last four years and how I felt that, in many ways, these things disqualified us for pastoring the church at this time. But what they then said changed our lives. They indicated that, because of what we had gone through and struggled with, they believed that we could help their church get through difficulties that they had been facing over the last number of years. So, that night we agreed to let our names stand to become the senior pastors of the church. Something else amazing happened. I told them that we needed to have a rest and we were hoping to take a trip to Florida and they agreed that this would be important. They would pay our salary during this time so that we could go down and get refreshed and come back and be ready to enter into full-time ministry. Who has ever heard of a ministry that gives you two weeks holidays with pay before you even start?! Again, this is the love of God being poured out to one another through His Body.



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There would be several tasks that I was going to have to look after immediately once I started serving at the church. One thing was that this church had racked up a large debt with the bank. The next thing that I believed that needed to be done was to seek reconciliation amongst the people as well as with various pastors in our community. There had been a number of people who had left the church over a variety of issues. The people of the church were a very proud group and now God was humbling them. God showed me that, if we would repent, He would again begin to pour out his blessing on us.

It was also during this time at the church that my father became ill, and I believed it was important for me to go down and see him. Over the years I had shared often with him about Jesus Christ and his love. But my father had told me not to speak of Christ because he thought that he deserved to go to hell, and that's where he was going. I must admit, in some ways, I was in agreement with him, but I also knew that we all deserve to go to hell for what we have done. That's why we need Jesus Christ to come into our lives, covering us with His blood and making it possible for us to stand righteous before Him.

So, I went to visit my father and we had the usual general conversations that a father and son should have with each other, I guess. But it was now time to leave and as I was saying goodbye to him at the hospital and walking out the door, my father spoke up and said, "Jim, I think it's time for you to lead me to the Lord." I need to tell you that over the years I did not preach Jesus to him; I just tried to live Jesus in front of him and now he wanted the Jesus that he seen in my life. So, I went back over to his bed, opened up my Bible, shared a few scriptures, and then led him in a sinner's prayer. That night my father became a new creation! He completely changed and,

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instead of using the name of Jesus as a swear word, now when he spoke the name of Jesus he just wept. God was washing him and cleaning him from the inside out.

It was after about three years of ministry at the church that I began to sense God sending a change “down the pipe”. I’d been thinking a lot about the need to have fruit that would last. I thought about spending quality time building disciples of Jesus Christ and not just entertaining people with good music and preaching. In many ways, I felt things were going well, but I had heard from several leaders in our church that they, too, were desirous of seeing some changes. I must admit that I also wanted to see some changes, but not in the way that they envisioned them.

As I continued to pray, God began to pour into my heart a new vision – which was one of going out to various places of the world to train and equip God’s people in the whole area of discipleship. At the time I didn’t know how it was all going to work itself out, but I sensed God had clearly spoken into my heart and I knew that this was His word, and I would just believe in what He spoke into me. I believed He was going to make all things possible.

## **Ministry with Project L.A.M.B.S. International**

### **Resignation from Full Gospel**

It was in my third year of ministry when I started to get some questions concerning my style of preaching from our board chairman and one of the elders of the church. The elder even thought I was more suited to being a youth pastor because of the way I preached. You need to know that I like to use lots of illustrations and sometimes would get very emotional and cry while I was preaching. But I think these two men wanted somebody like a Simpson or Moody who would deeply

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expound the word. They did not realize they had a James or a Paul in their midst.

But I was also beginning to realize that maybe my time of rebuilding at the church was finished and that they needed more of a father image to come in and deepen and strengthen the church. But, sad to say, they did not listen to my counsel and went through many years of upheaval amongst the people even after I left.

It was a Thursday night. I was locking up the church and walking between the old and new sanctuaries, checking all the doors. And, as I went between the two sanctuaries, it was like the Holy Spirit spoke very deeply into my heart and said to me, “I want you to resign tomorrow as pastor of this church. And you will need to prepare yourself for travel and doing discipleship ministry in various places.” I guess one could say I was tired of preaching deep emotional messages following which people would come up and shake my hand, saying how the message really touched them ... and then go about the next day and live just like they did the previous days and weeks. I wanted to train and equip people who would take that which was given to them, and actually do something with it. I had, ringing in my ears for a number of weeks, that the mandate of the church was to go and make disciples.

I went home that night and told Irene what had happened to me. She was very excited because she thought it was something, I should have done about six months sooner. Irene was a real prayer warrior and she never tried to convince me to do things; she would just talk to her heavenly Father to get Him to do the changing in lives. So, I told Irene that if we both had a good night’s sleep, the next morning I would get up, write out my resignation letter, then drive around to the different elders and deacons and give it to them.

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Of course, that night we had a good night's sleep; I got up and wrote out my resignation letter. It was now January and I was going to give the church leaders until the end of July to try to find somebody to replace me. Writing and delivering the letter took me most of the morning, but I finally got home around 12 noon. There was a car in our lane and, when I went into the house, Stephen and Jackie Downs were there. They had come with a bunch of suitcases and some cash money to give to me - because that morning the Holy Spirit had told them that we would begin travelling very soon and would need this. I thought, "Lord, you sure know what you're doing, and you know how to speak to people. Thank you for giving us this confirmation."

The next day (Saturday) I got a phone call from our board chairman, and he told me that the next day would be my last Sunday and that my service was at an end. They would continue to pay me for another three more months; it seemed like God had said to them that they had to release me right away because I was about to travel and go to other places very soon. Again, I couldn't understand what was going on because I had ministered with all my heart there at the church and given my all and now these guys were "cutting me off". But now, as I look back, this was part of God's program for my life.

Sometime during the next week, I got a phone call from Levi *Thiessen* telling me that I had all kinds of things planned ahead of time and I had not told the board what was going on. I told him I had no idea what he was talking about. He responded that he had just got off the phone with the Hamilton's from Jamaica and that I was going to be this year's guest speaker at their Easter convention. I told Levi, "That's what they may have said but no one has ever asked me." He said they were advertising it already and I told him I had not heard anything about it. So, he called them back and found out the truth that, in reality, they had not even asked me yet but that they were just

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praying that God would open the doors so that I could go and preach at their convention.

But that was not the only amazing thing because, within that same week, I got a phone call from John Howson (with Bridges for Peace) and he asked me what I was doing. I said, “As of right now I don’t know. I don’t have a job anymore.” He then asked if we would be interested and willing to go on a trip to Israel as he had a couple of extra seats available. So, within a few days we could see why God had brought suitcases and money to our house - because in the space of about a week and a half or two we were on an airplane heading for Israel.

## Israel

A relative lent us some money so we could pay the small fee it was going to cost us to go to Israel. A special inexpensive fare package was available for ministers. When they found out we were going to Israel, a couple of people came to me, saying that they believed God was going to give a new anointing upon Irene and I while we were there. At the time, I did not know exactly what that meant, but I knew I was going to experience so much of the Bible, in locations where Jesus walked and lived while here on earth.

We were finally going to get to go to the Promised Land and, when we got to the Toronto airport, we met with some other people we already knew. One was a professor and her son from Providence, and the other had been Irene’s doctor during her cancer time at Briercrest. After travelling all night, we ended up in Tel Aviv, Israel, first thing in the morning. You can imagine we were all tired, but the tour began as soon as we got off the plane. We went to a parklike site that had various types of trees and plants spoken of in the Bible. Also, it had a place

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which demonstrated an olive grove and how olives are picked and prepared for crushing.

Because I wanted to videotape the various things that we would see and do, one of the things that we brought along was my rather large VHS camera. Our tour guide took us up to where they made the oil. She took a large amount of oil, poured a little bit out onto her hand and said that this amount was used to anoint kings. She talked a little bit more about this and then she poured more oil onto her hand and she said this was the amount used to anoint priests. Then she walked through about 25 to 30 people to where I was at the back, videotaping. She walked up to me and, with her hand covered with oil, she placed it on my forehead and then she said, “I am anointing you as a priest of God.” At that moment, I just about went down under the anointing. Some people knew, and had heard, that I would receive a fresh anointing in Israel, but I never thought that it would come from a Jewish woman in an olive grove, walking through a crowd of people and then anointing me with oil that would run down my face. I can tell you that, from that day forward, things began to change in my life and ministry. I had truly received a new anointing.

The rest of our time in Israel was a very eye-opening experience and I often had the opportunity to share and teach the Word of God. The most exciting thing was conducting the communion service with our group in the Garden of Gethsemane. For Irene and me it was a time in which the Bible just became so alive – in the Promised Land itself. The experience made us feel like we had come home.

## **Jamaica**

We had just come back from Israel and now we were going to repack our suitcases and prepare ourselves for the trip to

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Jamaica. I was invited to be the convention speaker, but I also had something else in my heart that I wanted to share with the leadership. I knew and had heard of Full Gospel Chapel in Steinbach having been very heavily involved in helping the work in Jamaica, but after Pastor Glen had left, it seemed very few people were interested in this work and it was just dropped. There was basically no communication or understanding at this point.

Many years earlier, during one of our conventions, I had met Pastor Hamilton and Sr. Daisy at Full Gospel Chapel. But now we would meet their family in the churches that they were head of and it wasn't long that we fell in love with the people.

During the convention week in Jamaica they also had pastors' meetings where they would discuss very various things and vote on actions they would be doing in the coming years. I was honored by Pastor Hamilton asking me to speak at one of these meetings. The first thing I wanted to get off my chest was to ask for forgiveness from Full Gospel Chapel, including for what had happened in the past between the two groups. There was a lot of pain and hurt, but I wept with them as we talked about this whole area of reconciliation and moving forward.

The second thing I wanted to share with them was whether they had ever considered a discipleship training school in Jamaica where the pastors and leaders could be equipped with the Word of God. Then Pastor Hamilton began to weep and sob; I thought that maybe I had said something wrong and asked for forgiveness. But he told me that was not the problem. He said he'd had a vision that there would be a white man who would come down from Canada and train the people and disciple them in the Word of God. He pointed his finger at me and said, "You're the one I now believe I saw in the vision." We now had confirmation that God was going before us and preparing a way

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for us to begin to disciple people, not only in Jamaica, but as we soon discovered, many different people groups around the world.

The results of this meeting were that we began to go down twice a year, running three different schools in Euraton and one school in Linstead. The students would have to complete 12 one-week modules to be able to graduate. This included reading, writing papers, and doing various types of practical ministry. So, after a period of nine years, we saw many pastors, teachers and lay people graduate with a certificate jointly given by Providence Theological Seminary and Project L.A.M.B.S. International. For many, this was the first time that, as pastors, that they completed a Bible school course. They now had textbooks in their libraries which they could study as they continued serving the Lord.

We had a variety of different teachers and writers of material. Just to name a few: one was Pastor Winston Penner from Landmark who wrote three courses (Old and New Testament survey, church history as well as a leadership study on the book of Nehemiah). Then there was Brad Muncy who wrote a course on Christian education. Both these writers also were teachers in our schools down in Jamaica. We also had Pastor Ben Funk who helped in writing and compiling our theology course which God used him to teach in Steinbach, Mexico, and Dominican Republic. We have had many more teachers that God used to teach in Jamaica and we were thankful for them – for how they served the ministry of Project L.A.M.B.S. and caught the vision of equipping disciples.

## Discipleship Vision and Call

Now was the time to go back and begin to pray and ask God to bring this new vision together. We would have to write



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courses, get teachers to teach, and be able to raise enough funds to make the program workable in various places around the world. Now that I had a new anointing, a calling from God, and a vision of what it was we were to be doing, we needed to be able to “plow forward” and stick to the vision - no matter what the cost would be.

My life had now been deeply changed. It was as if God dropped a bag of seed from heaven into my heart and that the scales on my eyes had fallen off. He poured the vision into my heart, reminding me of things from my past and showing me what could be done in the future. It wasn't long before I began to find out that people wanted to be trained. Everywhere in the world there seemed to be people who wanted to be equipped - not necessarily by the thousands or even by the hundreds, but by gatherings of 10 here, 30 there and 50 or more in other places. I'm also very thankful for Dr. David Smith and Dr. Chuck Nichols who helped me solidify the vision and making themselves available to me to answer all my numerous questions.

## **Project L.A.M.B.S.**

When I first began to think about this whole vision, I thought maybe we should call the organization “Wilderness Trumpeters” since we lived out in the woods, but my wife thought that was kind of a strange name. So, she said to me, “I will go off and spend some time in prayer and ask the Lord to show me what we should call this organization.” At the time my office was in the back of our garage and she went back into the house and, about two hours later, she came back to the garage and shared with me that she now had the name. Excitedly, I asked her what it was, and she said the word “Lambs”. At first, I thought that name was stranger than mine, but I thought “Okay” and then she explained it to me. She said it was an

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acrostic and when the letters were spelled out, it became “Light Abroad Mobile Bible Schools”. To me, this said it all, and we ended up agreeing on calling it Project L.A.M.B.S. International.

To some extent, this new ministry was going to lead us down a road that we had never travelled before. I did, though, do discipleship training in my first church, giving lessons for the children and then, in later years, I also did it amongst our youth at Full Gospel Chapel – it was very successful in grounding young people in the Word of God and in their faith. But this new direction was also going to create a lot of financial struggles. People were not sure exactly what it is we would be doing and whether they should support us or not. But I’m very thankful that Pastor Peter Broesky and the La Broquerie church got on board so quickly, helping us start to build a strong base. Pastor Peter had been involved in various charities around the world and he met with me, sometimes two or three times a week, to help us through some difficult problems.

After a number of years, we were able to transition out from under Gospel Chapel and become incorporated ourselves. With our own and their board members, we attained our own charity number. Project L.A.M.B.S. International was becoming stronger. I must admit there are so many things that we needed to learn in the early years, both concerning other Christians and how we could work together to see this ministry grow in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In later years we began to develop a leadership/director training school where others could go out, start schools and use the materials to teach in other countries. We soon realized the need was so great that we couldn’t get to all the places ourselves, so we had to develop in such a way that others could catch the vision, and that they would then also go and equip

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people for the work of service. We had 15 students in our first session and we gave them an overview of what to do and how to set up the school and how to use the materials. Plus, we gave them a CD pack on the 12 courses including all the needed assignments and exams. They were also given application forms – we had taught them how to register students and keep a record of all their marks.

To God’s glory this ministry now has been going on for over 20 years and we have taught and trained thousands of people in various countries around the world. We can truly say here, “Look What the Lord Has Done”.

## Publications

As already stated above, it was now time to write courses. Because it was a three-year program we would teach four courses per year, using the same timeline for preparing the next series of courses. Each year we would write four courses. This was not an easy task but I’m thankful that, at the time, we had various volunteers who helped us in getting these materials ready. The following people were of great assistance to us: Wendy Fehr, Gloria Wall (Klassen) and Allison Pytel (McDonald). Later we had the help of Gilbert and Annette Demers as well as Norm and Loise Broesky and Ken and Debbie Penner. Also, there were a whole host of other volunteers worldwide.

Concerning printing, there were all kinds of things that we had to learn: How many copies to make? How would we get these materials shipped out to the places where they were needed? We also had to prepare a lot of pamphlets and exams, as well as figuring out methods of keeping proper student records. We even had to design special certificates for graduation.

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Our goal was to produce 12 one-week modules; these would be the basis for students to pass, and eventually graduate with a discipleship certificate. At the beginning, we planned to run these schools in various other countries, but soon the word got out and people asked us if we would consider doing a school in their area to help deepen, equip and train the people they were serving.

## Canada

Over the last number of years, we have had schools across Canada. We also did a number of individual courses in different churches and communities. But there were at least seven full 12-week schools over the last number of years that stand out in my mind – about which I would like to comment. A number of these schools ran during various times over the same years. Each of these schools were a great blessing to Irene and me. They again helped us to confirm that God was calling people to a deeper discipleship walk with Him. I just want to list the locations and the leaders who were so instrumental in seeing these schools go forward for God’s glory. God was the One Who moved on these people’s hearts to sacrifice their time in giving birth to these schools – laying the foundation for the formation of leaders in their local areas of ministries.

Steinbach, Manitoba – Dr. Chuck Nichols

Cornwall, Ontario – Rev. Brad Montsion

Ste. Anne, Manitoba – Rev. Norm Broesky

La Broquerie, Manitoba – Rev. Peter Broesky

Teen Challenge, Winnipeg Manitoba – Rev. Steve

Paulson

Sprague, Manitoba – Rev. Bob Toews

Fort McMurray, Alberta – Rev. Glen Forsberg

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One thing that stands out about all these people mentioned above is how God, through Jesus Christ, brings us His redemptive power. Also, within the body of Christ, He uses individual people to be channels of that redemptive power that is poured into their lives, networking them for Christ's glory. These people have had a powerful impact on my life and have helped me to fulfill the vision God had spoken into my heart. We need to remember that it takes people working together and, as they work together in unity and harmony, we see fruit that comes forth. And often that fruit is fruit that lasts because it was grounded in the Word of God. In each one of these locations there are testimonies of people, wherever they are today, whose lives were changed and a number of them continue in full-time ministry, doing evangelism, missions, and the equipping of disciples. The fire has not gone out but continues to spread.

The course model that we envisioned involved teaching four courses a year, but there were challenges with this model. We expected to teach two courses in spring and two in fall over the three-year period. However, it seems that, in Canada, people move around a lot, going to different communities and different churches. You could start off with 12 to 15 students, but only have 3 or 4 who graduated at the end of three years. The other constant challenge was the scheduling of the schools. This also made it difficult as to how to prepare materials as well as when to order books and supplies. We need to remember, however, that everything we do is on a two-way street, and that there are always two sides to a coin. There were things we were going to train others in, but there would also be a lot that the students and organizations would teach us when it came to discipleship equipping.

I'm also thankful for two other organizations that not only helped establish Project L.A.M.B.S., but also gave great

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encouragement to keep the bigger picture (discipleship training and equipping) moving forward all these years. The first is Providence Theological Seminary which walked with us right from the very beginning of this ministry. A lot of the key people who were originally involved have moved on or have gone home to be with the Lord, but they had a deep dedication to seeing this ministry grow worldwide for the Lord's use. I also thank the Lord for another school that many people may not know too much about – Living Faith Bible College (now Clearwater Bible College) in Caroline, Alberta. These two schools have always recognized our training and have even given transfer credits to our students over the years. Thank you again to them for all their love, grace and faithfulness that they've shown, both in the past and up to the present day. I am so glad that we been able to serve together in the body of Christ and in Christ's Kingdom worldwide.

## **Missionaries**

It was interesting to note that, during the first half of my ministry life, I was a pastor and church planter. Now God was changing me from being a pastor to being a missionary going to a variety of places around the world. But the uniqueness of this was even more amazing because I had mostly been a preacher, trained and equipped to preach. Now I was becoming a teacher, using syllabuses and student manuals to help equip pastors and leaders.

God was taking me to a point in life where He was now going to stretch me above and beyond anything for which I had been prepared. 95% of my education through the 10 years at school had very little to do with missions and teaching. I never wanted to be a missionary because I didn't think I could handle all the gory things that I heard about missions, the things that the people had to endure when they went out to foreign fields.

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Secondly, I did not want to be a teacher because my spelling was so bad; I didn't want to have to write because people would see it and say, "This guy is a doctor and doesn't know how to spell and his grammar is very poor."

This would be a big stretch for me, but I knew for sure that God had called me and that He was making a change in my life. To help clarify this, He directed my attention back to my name. He said to me, "What is your given name?" I responded, "James Paul." Then he spoke into my heart and said that, for the first half of my life, I was like James who remained in Jerusalem to pastor and guide the church there. Then he said, "Now you are going to become like Paul, traveling the world and equipping pastors and leaders for the work of service." All I could respond with was, "Yes, Lord, here am I, use me."

The redemptive power of God through these various times of ministry was not always easy to recognize, but in each opportunity that God gave to serve, we experienced God's presence. God was still taking the seeds of faith that I had in Him and was planting them around me, bringing in a harvest for His glory. Over the years, I have seen how God uses people and organizes them in order to pour His redemptive love and grace into one's own life. No one of us is an island. We are part of a world-wide body and kingdom. We may not understand why God places things in our hands but, when we give it time, and trust in Him, the evidence of His will and purposes will begin to blossom.

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## Chapter 5

### Redemptive Power During Education

After pastoring and growing the church in Port Stanley for about four years, God began to speak into my heart about outdoor evangelism, something that I had taken part in earlier in the year. This form of evangelism involved putting up a paint board on the sidewalk or in some park and then begin to paint a story and, as people gathered around, we would tell a gospel story while they watched us paint. Also, fellow workers would hand out Gospel tracts and speak to anyone who wanted to hear more about Jesus Christ. I had taken this group's training and it wasn't long afterwards that they had asked me if I would consider coming with them to do this kind of ministry. I knew one of my giftings was evangelism, and I felt this would be a good fit. It was now summer in Port Stanley and I had always gone to the church early to pray and to set up. That particular Sunday I was going to announce that I was resigning and going to join the Open Air Campaigner ministry. But it seemed that, while I was praying in the morning, God was speaking into my heart about a change of direction. It seemed like He was using the concept of evangelism to get me to resign from my comfort zone but, in reality, He wanted me to go off to Bible school – which I learned later Irene had been praying about.

Earlier that year Irene and I took a trip to Alberta to go to a graduation service of one of Irene's special friends, Brinda Hardy. It was there I got to know more about Open Air Campaigners and it was there that I also took a course on leadership flowcharts. I also spent some time with the president of Three Hill Bible College, Dr. Maxwell. He was an amazing person and knew the Scriptures in great depth. He encouraged me to follow the call of my heart and to get training that would help me become a better tool and vessel for our Lord Jesus Christ.



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After the graduation day we headed back home to Ontario, but I wanted to stop in to see Briercrest, a Bible school that was in Caronport, Saskatchewan. It was around lunch hour and we had driven up to the front doors of the school where a man was walking up to the entrance. Of course, he turned around and greeted us. I didn't know at the time who he was, but I soon found out that he was the president of the school, Dr. Hildebrand. After greeting us, he gave us some time to share our story and then told us a little bit more about the school.

So, after a few days, we were back in Port Stanley and it was later on, around the middle of July, that God began to speak to me about going to school. At the time I was only 22 years old and I was a high school dropout. I didn't think it was possible for me to go to a Bible school and graduate with having had so little schooling in my life. But after prayer I sensed that I should call Dr. Henry Hildebrand. Sure enough, he answered my phone call and I shared with him what God was doing in my life and that I felt I should go to Bible school. He told me I needed to fill out the application, get my references filled out, and send them in to the school. I said I did not have time to do all that because I needed to rent my house, do many other necessary things, and there were only five weeks left. I asked him if there was any possible way that I could be accepted into the school right now. To my astonishment, he said, "Yes, you are accepted, but you will still have to fill out the paperwork and you will have to find a home to live in because the school accommodations are full." He told me I'd have to come as a mature student, and be prepared to be on probation for the first year.

The door had opened for me to go to school, but we had to pray about a lot of things that needed to be put in place before we could go. I didn't know how we would be able to go and where the finances would come from to pay for the schooling, but I knew God was telling me to go to Briercrest.

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That week I met with my pastor, Rev. Don Fitchett, to tell him what I was thinking about - that I wanted to go to school and, at first, I thought maybe I should go to a Pentecostal school down in Toronto, but he shared with me that he thought Briercrest would be better. He also stated that I needed to go to a school where I would not learn so much about emotions, but go where I would be grounded in doctrine. He then went on to state that I could always add emotion to doctrine; he said that, by going to Briercrest, I would be much more grounded in what I would need to have for preaching the Word of God. (It is always easier to add emotion to doctrine than it is to add doctrine to fit one's emotions).

Later that week I was outside doing some work on my house and my neighbour was also out on his yard. We began to talk, and he asked me what I was up to; I told him, "I'm thinking about going to Bible school, but I have no finances and I don't know what to do but I am praying about it." Now you need to know that my neighbour was not a Christian, but he was a nice man and he tried to encourage me in the things that I was doing. He then asked me if I knew this certain businessman in St. Thomas. I said I didn't know him, but I said my wife knew him as they had gone to the same Baptist Church. So, my neighbour encouraged me to give this man a call. This conversation with my neighbour took place around 9:30 in the morning. Finally, around 10:30, I got up the nerve to give this man a call. He was the owner of Shaw's Ice Cream and many convenience stores throughout Ontario.

I told him who I was and shared my story with him; I told him how I felt God was calling me to Bible school. He was very gracious while listening to my story. But the next thing that came out of his mouth shocked me. He said, "Can you meet me at the bank this afternoon? Bring with you an accounting of how much you need to go to school for the next."

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That afternoon I met him at the Royal Bank at 2 o'clock. Now I need to let you know that this was the same Royal Bank that my mother had robbed a few years earlier! Now I was going to be in there, asking for help to go to school. Mr. Shaw went over to the manager's office and the manager of the Bank invited us in, and Mr. Shaw told him my story. Also, they looked at the piece of paper concerning my calculations as to how much it would cost to get a mobile home and go to school. Then Mr. Shaw looked at the bank manager and said, "Do you have any problems with that?" The bank manager had no objections and, within a few moments, I had \$9000.00 in my new bank account. We had agreed on how I would pay it back and I now had the money to go to school.

The next thing that took place is that we got a phone call from a Dr. Lillian Beattie who went to our church. She invited us to come over and meet her for supper, and to share what the Lord was doing in our hearts. She was a former missionary and now had been back for a number of years working as a pathologist in London, Ontario. After our evening of fellowship had almost come to an end, she told us she wanted to give us two things. The first was a beautiful blue quilted blanket for a bed. Secondly, she told me that she could never support me as a pastor because I hadn't had any education at a Bible school, but now that I was going, God had spoken to her that she should give us \$300 every month for the next three years until I graduated. This was another big miracle that God had done. We now had support to get a home, go to school, and money to survive on each month while we were there.

## **BIBLE SCHOOL ONE: BRE Program**

Now it was a week before school was to start. We had sold many things and we had a friend who was going to help rent out our place so that we did not have to worry about our

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home in Port Stanley. We took all we could and put it in our little Ford van and prepared ourselves to drive out to Briercrest. I should tell you that on both sides of this little Ford Econoline van we had painted the word “Evangelist”. We had been using it to do street ministry. So, everywhere we went, people knew who we were. Now, we were heading out to Saskatchewan with our two little children (Joshua and Rachel) and all our worldly possessions.

Our goal was to drive through the United States and then head up through Estevan and on to Briercrest. But as we crossed the border into the US, the man interviewing us thought that Briercrest and Saskatchewan were part of the United States. I had a letter (with the address to which we were going) saying that I was accepted as a student. But he insisted I was immigrating into the USA and sent me over to the head office; when I got there, the head officer asked me where we were going, and I showed him the paper. I told him I was going to Saskatchewan, and that I was not immigrating into the United States. The security guard said, “It’s okay – some people don’t know where Saskatchewan is. Go ahead; I know that it’s in Canada.”

We stayed one night in the USA and the next day we arrived at Moose Jaw. I knew that there were several places there that sold mobile homes. But, to our dismay we could not find anything that fitted our budget so then we drove on back to Regina. That night we got a little room just outside the city. We were all tired, but that night I needed to do one more thing before I could go to Briercrest – and that was to make sure my hair was short and that my goatee was shaved off. I had been told that, if I didn’t do that, I would not get a meal ticket to eat at the school and could not go to classes.

Irene, Joshua, and Rachel were watching while I was shaving off my goatee. Because it was summer in

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Saskatchewan, the sun didn't go down very early. To my amazement, when I looked out of the small bathroom window, I saw a small blue mobile home. I knew that had to be our new home because God wouldn't give us a blue quilt unless it would match the home that we would buy.

The next morning, our family got up and went next door and found out who owned that trailer. We were told it had been repossessed by a bank, so we headed off to the bank to meet the manager. We had to wait for a little bit before we could see him, but then we asked him about the mobile home and whether we could buy it. He said it was for sale and asked how much we could pay. I told him I would pay \$6000. He said I will let you know in about two weeks' time. I said that wasn't good enough – I needed to know right now. I pulled out the \$6000 cash and put it on his desk. Next thing I knew, he was making a phone call and, within a few moments, I had the keys to the mobile home and a receipt stating it was ours.

The next challenge was to find a truck that day that would haul the trailer out to the school and, sure enough, we were able to find one. But I think the truck driver was a little startled when he heard what I was going to ask him to do. I asked him if he would drive the truck down to where some secondhand furniture stores were. He would need to pull our trailer down to the older part of Regina, park out front of the store while we went inside and bought furniture and then put it in the trailer before he could take us out to Briercrest. So, he agreed to do that, and here we were, in the downtown core of Regina with a blue mobile home filling it with a few items of furniture. And, after about four hours, we had our home on our lot at Briercrest. I would spend the next two or three days setting it up and anchoring it into the ground; out in the prairies they have a lot of wind. But, by the weekend, I had all the skirting around it, hydro (electricity) and sewer connected. As a family, we were ready to live there for the next 3 to 4 years.

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During our time of setting up, I had a couple different appointments at the school. One appointment was with Dr. Adams who was the registrar of the school. He gave me an application form and a variety of reference forms that they needed to have filled out. He also told me that I would be on probation for next year and it was very important that by the end of the year I would have 2.0 grade point average. This meant I needed to get at least a C in all my courses.

So, for the first week of school I signed up for five courses which equaled 15 credit hours. One of my courses was on evangelism; there is a story that needs to be told here. My teacher did not like it that I had the word “evangelist” in big letters on the side of my vehicle. He wanted me to know that there was a right way to do evangelism and a wrong way; it seems I must’ve been doing it the wrong way because he failed me in my evangelism course. One of the main reasons probably is because I spoke too much and challenged some of his ideas in the classroom.

After the first month at school I was able to get a part-time job on the weekends as night watch. This would help supplement the money we needed to go to school, but it turned out that we did not have enough money to continue on, even for the first semester.

So, after about a month, I called Denny Shaw and told him that I had miscalculated the amount of money I needed for school. He asked how much more I needed, and I said, “I think around \$2000”. I told him I didn’t know how I was going to be able to pay it back, but I would try my best. Then he said this to me: “I either have a choice to give it to you or to give it to Trudeau – who do you think I want to give it to?” A miracle had just taken place – because Denny and his wife made a decision, from that point on, to pay for all my Bible school for the next

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three years and, when I went back to get my master's degree, they paid for all that schooling as well. All I can say is "Praise the Lord!"

It was also during the semester where, as part of my training for school, I conducted Child Evangelism clubs in Moose Jaw. God blessed us, and we saw many children give their lives to Jesus Christ. Things seemed to be going okay for us, but I was struggling in school. Because I had not taken proper high school classes, I had to take extra classes to get up to the level of the grade 12 standards. By the end of the first semester I had failed all my courses, including evangelism class. I wanted to give up because I was sure that I was too stupid to learn all this stuff. But Dr. Adams brought me into his office and assured me that, if I would work hard, by the end of the year I would get my C average. So he set up extra work that I could do over the Christmas break, making it possible to pass all my classes with the C average. But, even with the extra work in evangelism class, my teacher still failed me; when I asked him if I could see my assignments, he told me that he had burned them all. And, "That was that." So, I complained to the registrar and it was interesting that, at the end of that year, that teacher was fired. I should mention that he did finally give a C to me so that I could at least pass the evangelism class.

In my second semester, I was asked if I would consider pastoring a church in Ernfold, Saskatchewan. It was part of the North American Baptist denomination; I had met one of the head leaders of the organization in Regina. I thought this would be a good experience and it turned out to be a real blessing for me and my family. During the summertime, we lived in old farmhouse outside Ernfold. We raised chickens and turkeys with the hope that we would have some meat to put in the freezer when we went back to school. The church really began to grow, and we won an award for being one of the fastest

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growing churches (at least by percentage) in Saskatchewan. The population of our community was 79 people, but we had over 100 coming to the church - which people thought was very amazing in itself.

It was during this time on the farm that I discovered that I had a hernia which would require an operation. But things got a lot worse. One day Irene discovered a small lump on one of her breasts, the size of an eraser on the top of a pencil. This discovery would change our lives. This turned out to be a defining moment in my life because we were now facing sickness in all three members of my family. It seemed like Joshua and Rachel were in the hospital for a week at least once a month, having all kinds of difficulties with breathing. Plus, now I would be facing the challenges of cancer with my beloved wife Irene. My plate was filled and overflowing: I was a full-time student, part-time pastor, and a full-time caregiver to my family. But, in spite of all these deep valleys, God continued to demonstrate that He was with us and that He would walk with us step by step through all these challenges that we were facing. It turned out that the school was the best place to be because God surrounded us with many, many people (staff and students) who helped us day in and day out; He also gave a doctor to us, Dr. Lorne Penner, who became a personal friend and also walked along with us in this journey of our lives.

At the end of our time of schooling, graduation was upon us. The school asked whether Irene and I, during the graduation service, would give a 10-minute testimony of how God helped us through the many challenges that we had faced during our time at school. We stated that we would be honoured to share. It immediately came to my mind that Irene should do a “paint talk” and, while she was painting, it would correlate with the testimony I would read. So, during the graduation, as I read,



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Irene painted a beautiful picture of what God had been doing in our lives. It was so powerful, and we were able to give testimony of His goodness and grace to a crowd of over a thousand people at the graduation service. Yes, the valleys had been deep, but the grace of God, in all His love, had taken us deeply into His heart and we will be always grateful for the opportunity to walk hand in hand with our Saviour.

## **BIBLE SCHOOL TWO: Master of Arts Program**

A few years later I again felt the call to get further training. I started to attend Briercrest again for my master's degree. They had set up the courses whereby one could attend in May and June over a period of three years. I was grateful to be in that first class. My grade point average was sufficient to be at the master's level. However, to graduate, it would have to go up from up 2.0 to an average of 3.2. That meant I would have to get B or higher in all my courses if I hoped to graduate. I was thankful that my friend Uve Knack had also signed up for the school - we stayed in the same dorm. Uve was so generous; he proofread all my school papers. I believe it was mainly because of Irene and Uve that I did so well.

Denny Shaw, the man who had helped me with finances through our BA level program, also helped me with finances for the master's program. This was a real blessing because, without their help, I would not have been able to complete or graduate. I will always be indebted to him and his wife Lorna for what they did for us.

In order to complete my schooling, and because I was not pastoring a church anywhere, I decided to take five courses during the last summer of classes. Doing so would allow me to give a lot more focus to my studies and, hopefully, do well. To my amazement, I was able to get almost all A's in my courses

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and, because of that, I would be able to graduate in the first graduating class of the master's level program at Briercrest.

## **BIBLE SCHOOL THREE: Doctor of Ministry Program**

It was during my time as senior pastor at Full Gospel Chapel in Steinbach that I went to a Sunday school convention that was being held at the SRSS in Steinbach. It was there, on Wednesday, that I ran into Dr. Chuck Nichols who was a professor at Providence Theological Seminary. As we were visiting, he asked me if I ever considered working on my doctorate. I said, "Not really," because I felt I had enough education for what I was going to do for the rest of my life. Then the next day he again came up to me again and asked, "Would you consider getting your doctorate?" I said, "I'm not really interested and I don't think I have the proper grade point average and other things that one needs to get into the doctoral program." Then he asked me if I'd be willing to go out to Providence and see Dr. David Smith to hear what he would have to say.

Friday morning I called the school and Dr. Smith invited me to visit with him. He told me to bring my final grade point marks at the master's level and a resume of my work and ministry over the years. So I gathered up my papers and headed out to the school and went to Dr. Smith's office, figuring that there was no chance at all that I could get into the doctoral program. I was quite convinced of that. Now you need to realize that David had a fair-sized office and he himself is a fair-sized, imposing, man sitting behind his desk. He took a little time to glance through my papers and asked me a few questions. Finally, he asked, "What are you doing Monday morning?" I said, "I'm not sure. Why?" He said, "Be here at 8:30 in the morning because the Doctorate program will be starting. You have been accepted into the program." Now, remember, I had

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not filled out any application forms or completed any references. I was just going to be able to walk right into the first day of the program and become a doctoral candidate at the school.

Now, the way the doctoral program worked was that you would take a number of one-week in-class modules over a period of two years and then, in the third year, you would work on your doctoral dissertation. The school had just initiated a Doctor of Ministries program; I was going to be in the first class and, Lord willing, I would also be in the first graduating class.

So, over the next two years, I enjoyed taking the classes; I learned a lot about myself, as well as about the kind of ministry gifting that the Lord seemed to have given me. There was lots of time for learning and reading books and writing papers, but this time also caused me to do a lot of reflecting about my journey to this point, who I was right then, and what God might be doing in my life in the future.

Time progressed, and I was now in my third year. It was time to work on my doctoral dissertation. During the previous year I had resigned as Senior Pastor at Full Gospel Chapel and now I was just working on completing my doctorate. I had already begun to do some temporary planning concerning discipleship training in Jamaica. However, what I wanted to write on was the subject of prayer. Because of all the things that I had gone through in my life, I learned a lot about prayer, and so I outlined and submitted my dissertation topic to the committee for approval.

But then, one day, Dr. David Smith asked me, “Why don’t you write about these mobile Bible schools that you have started in Jamaica?” After consulting my faculty advisor, Dr. Nichols, we came to the conclusion that this was a good idea

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and that I would switch my topic to discipleship training around the world.

Things seem to be going pretty well up into the last month prior to graduation. We were working through the dissertation (which contained over 150 pages or more of materials); Dr. Chuck was helping to proofread it and to get it organized. I had already been told that I would be graduating and was given some graduation invitation cards to send out to key people. But about two weeks before the graduation I received a phone call from Dr. David Smith saying that my thesis was not good enough and that they would not allow me to graduate. I was heartbroken, as Dr. Chuck and I had worked on this a lot and I couldn't understand what had gone wrong.

So, I called Dr. Chuck's house to see what I should do, as I had already invited people from different parts of Canada to come to the graduation. Sue, Chuck's wife, said he wasn't home at the time, but he was down in the States. However, she had his phone number and said that I could call him. So, I called him, and it was a very emotional phone call. I was in tears, crying on the phone. He told me not to worry about it. He would give the school a call and deal with it personally.

It was interesting because I got another phone call from Dr. David Smith on Monday, saying that there had been a change of plans and, yes, I could graduate in the first graduating class, but I would have to do some repairs to my dissertation and then, after that, I would receive my doctoral degree.

I didn't know what had happened, but I did find out about a month later. I was told that when Chuck called the school, he told the leadership that if they did not graduate me, he would hand in his resignation at the school on Monday and not teach

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there anymore. You could say he pulled out the trump card on my behalf, and he used it so that I could graduate.

I found out later when the committee handed back my copy of the dissertation, that they thought it was not worthy of a doctorate and that it would be of no value and of little help to the world-wide church of Christ. All I can say is that the Holy Spirit has, and did, prove these people wrong. It has had a great impact on many nations around the world and, after 23 years, is still spreading around the world. “To God be all the glory”.

At this point I want to add one more thing. At the graduation service I met a young man named Sam Son who was graduating with a Master of Divinity degree; he had heard about my dissertation concerning the mobile discipleship training program. He came up to me immediately after the service and said, “You must come to Myanmar. You must come to Myanmar! That’s what we need amongst the Kachin people.” A week or two later we had a board meeting with our Gospel Chapel and it was decided there we would start another discipleship training school in the Kachin state of Myanmar. More will be said about this later.

I want to share a little bit more on this whole area of becoming a “doctor”. As you have already read, I had not desired this type of education or title, but my friend Dr. Chuck Nickels had told me, “For what you will be doing in the future the title of ‘the Dr.’ will protect you, and can open up many doors of ministry for you.” He told me this during the Christian Education conference and neither one of us realized what I would be doing in the future. I believe God was giving him a prophetic word over my life and that’s why he was so bold in encouraging me to sign up and work through the program.

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At this time, I want to say that it was a real joy for me to graduate from Providence and to have so many teachers encourage me and speak into my life. I also want to give special thanks to Irene who encouraged me to continue on with my education even though we did not have the finances and, at the time, I wasn't even a pastor anymore. She worked hard and proofread all my papers and helped me along every step of the way.

After my graduation service friends and family came back with us to Steinbach where, on the second floor of the Chicken Chef restaurant, we celebrated what the Lord had done. I did make one statement which I want to repeat here again in this book. I told everyone in the room that this doctoral degree wasn't something I did by myself; it was something we all did together. Each one had helped with encouragement and finances, so it wasn't just my doctorate, but in reality, it was our doctorate.

## **Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand**

I just want to share one more miracle concerning God's way of training and preparing me for the bigger picture of ministry in the body of Christ. Neither I, or even others, could have foreseen how this preparation would have the potential of helping so many. Because of my collecting of words in the Kachin language, God opened up another door. We had decided to go to Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand, to see our good friend Ton. It was during this time people told me a little bit about what was going on at Payap University. So, you know me – I thought we should investigate.

This is where I meet Art and Pam who introduced us to Paratext, Flex and WeSay programs that had been developed by Wycliffe and SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics). After

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hearing and seeing what I was working on, they encouraged me to come back and take some courses. They thought that the Flex Program (Language Explorer) could help bring all my notes together and would make it possible to complete an English / Kachin dictionary.

Following much time and help from the Wycliffe people and, after taking the course, I became one of the first who began to understand these programs as a unit; I was able to bring the Bible translation program together with the dictionary program. Also, I was able to include methods of developing a Bible concordance together with the translation and dictionary programs. I should tell you that, upon completion, I was awarded a certificate in “Software for Lexicography”. I do not know about you, but just repeating that title is a mouthful for me! My children and friends were very impressed.

Art and Pam Cooper, as well as Tim Armstrong and Mark Wanamaker, are people of vision and people who were of great encouragement to me. They worked out of different departments and places on the campus, giving so much grace, love, and time to me and Hkaw Win, helping to pull together something to assist the Kachin and Burmese people. This resource was also going to become a template for many other languages. I should also tell you that another department of Wycliffe, called “Webonary”, headed up by Verna Stutzman, is now taking this dictionary and putting it on the World Wide Web. Plus, in time, they will make an app whereby this tool can be downloaded on people’s tablets and phone. Not bad “eh” for a person who was a failure in grammar and spelling!

Again, I hope you can see the redemptive power and the hand of God through my times of training. God stepped in and made all this possible. In spite of my weakness, He gave me strength, courage and wisdom to go far beyond my abilities. In

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addition, He surrounded me with people from His body who served with generous hearts in so many areas so that all this training could happen in my life.



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## Chapter 6

### Redemptive Power through Transition

As mentioned previously, ministry transition began that night at Full Gospel Chapel – between the old and new sanctuaries. It was going to be a time of dramatic change, moving from the previous call of pastoring churches in Canada to being a teacher discipler, equipping people worldwide. But the journey would not be easy. Having God, though, confirming His intention in a garden in Israel and by a Jewish woman tour guide (!) at that, helped to make the “transition step of faith” move forward. This change would require both Irene and me to deepen our faith in Christ Jesus so as to hang on tightly to this new call of making disciples. The cry of my heart was to see fruit that would last, fruit that would grow, mature and then, in turn, produce more fruit for His Glory.

At first, the transition was both exciting and challenging. As a missionary, to both raise funds and to get people to see the vision of what Christ was laying on our hearts was not easy. There were a lot of “doubting Thomas’s” within the church as well as out in the community. This new calling would mean travelling and writing school courses; writing courses was one area in which I was not very comfortable because of my poor spelling and grammar, but then God began to deal with this challenge by surrounding us with so many servants of the Lord who volunteered their time to see the vision move forward.

In the beginning finances were very tight and we knew we would have to strengthen and get more deeply into prayer because the voices out there always wanted to sow seeds of doubt. We saw tremendous results with the schools in Jamaica, Ukraine and across Canada, but there were also some deep valleys on the road ahead that we would have to navigate.

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During our time of transition Irene and I walked through some difficult years related to her cancer and eventually her home-going. Things had been really progressing. Irene had finished her Masters in Christian Education at Providence and was excited about graduating. Also, she was now beginning to teach in Jamaica; her specialty was the book of Romans. God did powerful things in Jamaica through Irene's life; many lives were changed by the ministry in which God used her. At our first graduation service in Jamaica, Irene was also blessed with her ordination by Pastor Hamilton and the Jamaican churches. Things seemed to be really going well, but we didn't know that soon we would be faced with one of our greatest challenges ever. However, even during this time God's redemptive power, grace and love was evident to both Irene and I. I would like to share a few details concerning this part of the walk - the journey that Christ Jesus laid out before us.

## **THE VALLEY OR THE MOUNTAIN / Cancer 2002**

A day marked in history, November 18, would deeply affect Irene, our family and me. Irene had not been feeling well and, even while we were in Ukraine, she was having trouble with her bowel movements. She was beginning to suffer a lot of pain and she tried giving herself enemas to help relieve the pain. We came to the place where we didn't know what to do, so we started making trips to the emergency rooms at the Steinbach hospital. At first, they just tried giving her enemas and some painkillers and would then send her home. The next day I brought her in again and they said there wasn't much they could do for her. Finally, I called them and said, "Does my wife have to be dead on the floor before you will do anything at the hospital?" Then the nurse said to bring her in again, so I did.

At first, they just tried to comfort Irene, but it wasn't long before they brought in Dr. Gerber, the surgeon who

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happened to be a friend of mine. He said he was going to make a small incision and look inside and see what was going on in Irene's gut. It was about 10:30 at night and he said that this procedure would not take long, but now it was after midnight and I knew that there was something drastically wrong. I called a few friends (Dennis and Hilda Martin) to come be with me so that we could pray for Irene.

After a long period of time the doctor showed up in the waiting room and said that he had really bad news. He told us that Irene's abdomen was full of cancer and that he had tried taking out all that he could, but that the cancer was wrapped around the large intestine. He had removed some of the intestine, her ovaries and some other things. He also told me that he thought she would not have long to live. This was a great shock to all of us. Here Irene had just finished her master's degree at Providence about a year before and it now looked like she would soon die.

They put her in a recovery room and I had to explain to her that things were not good. Her bowel was still not working but Irene knew of something that would work if the hospital would allow it. At first, they said no, but I said, "What difference would it make if Irene was dying anyway." They told me that, if her bowel didn't start moving, they were going to go back in and remove everything and just put her on a bag.

The next thing I knew, I was going home to pick up a hot water bottle, a coffee maker, and Tim Horton's coffee grounds; I made a coffee enema for Irene. After a few hours it began to work in her bowel, flushing out, which relieved a lot of pressure from her insides. The doctors and nurses were amazed, and they told me they were going to have to remember this trick for people in future.

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As you can imagine, this was not an easy time, but there were at least two key people who walked with Irene during these weeks. One was Hilda Martin and the other was Matilda Fehr. Irene had asked Matilda to stay with her and help her walk this final journey, regardless of what would happen. Today I can say how grateful I am for Matilda. She sacrificed so much time and did many things for Irene during that time, as well as down the road years later. On Irene's home-going day, Matilda was there with Irene and me. It is always amazing how God raises up certain people at the right time to use their gifting to help others.

## THE CALL TO SUFFERING

After a week or so Irene was able to go home, but her case was transferred over to the cancer care unit at St. Boniface Hospital where a specialist began to work on her case. It was determined that she should go through various stages of chemotherapy and that they would give her morphine to help kill the pain that she was still experiencing. Plus, they had set a date where they would put a stainless-steel port in the upper part of her chest; this port would be directly connected into the main artery close to the heart, so that any drugs she received intravenously would be very quickly pumped throughout her body.

Of course, these treatments meant that our ministry would have to change and that our first goal would be the betterment of Irene's health. We were assigned a very special caregiver, nurse Ann Penner, who would come to our home and help us with any kinds of needs that we would have. We also were given home care three times a week to help me to care of Irene and to keep some of the basic things around the house in order.

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I could see each day that Irene was suffering tremendously, and I decided that I would spend at least several days each week praying and fasting, asking the Lord to strengthen her and give us both wisdom on what we should do. Again, we were grateful for all the people, especially John and Matilda, who came to visit and to help Irene.

We also had to go each week to St. Boniface where Irene would be checked out repeatedly by various doctors and interns; these repeated examinations would often bring her to tears and cause more pain in her body. This was also the time that I believe that God brought us into contact with Dr. Krahn in Steinbach. He would serve and work with Irene and made himself available at all times, not only to help her physically, but emotionally as well, because he too was a strong believer in Jesus Christ.

It wasn't too long before Irene lost all her hair. She could still get around and so, one day, we travelled into the city to Portage Place Mall where we knew that Irene could buy a wig. Her choice was to buy a nice dark red wig with hair that went just about down to her shoulders. She was so happy to have that, and it made her feel that, even though she was going through terrible times, she could look okay outwardly when she visited people.

## **PASSOVER DAY 2003**

The head cancer specialist at St. Barnabas Hospital decided it was important to perform more surgery on Irene. They had seen another large tumor in your abdomen on the x-ray. Also, because it had been emergency surgery in Steinbach, he felt it was important to go in again and see if he could do anything more for Irene which could give her more time.

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The day they had picked to do the surgery was Good Friday or, on the Jewish calendar, the Day of Passover. The night before, the doctor came to prepare Irene for surgery and to see how she was doing. The next morning Norman and Louise Broesky came to the hospital and to pray for both Irene and me. What a blessing it was to have them there, not only for prayer, but to be witnesses and later testify of that which was going to take place that very day.

The specialist came into the surgical waiting room and explained to the three of us what he was about to do. He told us that, if it was a long surgery, it would mean he was able to do a variety of things that would help Irene, but he went on to say if it was a short surgery, that meant that he had opened her up and that there was too much cancer. He would just close her up. It would then be clear that there wasn't much that could be done.

It seemed like within an hour the surgeon was back in our room and he said, "You are not going to believe what just happened. I had all of Irene's lower organs in my hands. I looked, and I looked, and I could find cancer nowhere." He did state he had taken a little bit of time to clean up a few things from the previous surgery, but all the cancer was gone. He didn't know where it had gone but he finally confessed that this could possibly have been a miracle that had taken place. And, within moments, I began to remember that this was the Day of Passover when the death passed over the Jews, giving them life. It was interesting to note that the chief surgeon who worked on Irene was Jewish. Now, Irene had also passed over from death to life. Churches everywhere had been praying for her and when the news got out many people wanted her to come to speak in their churches. We had just witnessed and seen God do a complete miracle in Irene's life. We had x-rays to back up the reality that the cancer was now completely gone. To God be the glory and may He receive all the praise!

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## HEALING JOURNEY

Now some may not agree with me, but after her healing, I felt I needed to share with Irene that that I believed God had extended her time and that she should use her time wisely. I shared with her, how in the Old Testament, God was gracious to give a man some more time, so he could finish some of the special tasks that were dear to his heart.

It was during this time that the specialist took Irene's blood sample and found that the PSI markers which had once been so high (when her body was full of cancer) was now down to normal just like yours and mine. This was another verification of the exciting miracle God had done, and was still doing. Even the hospital specialist recommended that we should take the port out of her chest because she would not need it anymore. Irene's hair began to go back in and now it was black and curly. She had always wanted curly hair and now she had it.

In some ways Irene became a celebrity, a walking miracle, and she even was asked to appear on It's A New Day television program, sharing her testimony about how God had healed her. We were all so excited but, as her pastor, I knew I needed to keep her in prayer that she would be guided in what she should do and where she should go to speak.

Irene took my exhortation seriously and began to do things that were important to her. She again began to teach the book of Romans as a course in several different locations. One could see that, as she taught, she was teaching with a deep anointing that was flowing out through her heart. God had not only touched her physically, emotionally, and spiritually, but He had truly become a very special Father to her.

## MYANMAR 2004

Very important to Irene was that she had felt, while in Bible school, a call on her heart for the Kachin people in

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Myanmar. She learned about this people group both at school as well as from hearing a speaker describing the contents of a book entitled “Eternity in Their Hearts”.

We had already started schools and I had taught several courses and we were now getting to the place where we were going to have our first graduation – Irene wanted to be there for that. We were scheduled to go; I would teach a course and she would teach the book of Romans. Then, at the end of our time there, we would have our first graduation service.

We were both excited about going and looked forward to fulfilling one of the visions that she had on her heart for this people group. Irene had been clean of cancer now for over 2 ½ years; we would go for blood work only every six months so that they could check to see how she was doing. But it seemed that, after we arrived in Myanmar, her back began to hurt. We thought her sore back may have resulted from the long trip as well as from her standing for a day or so on concrete while teaching the book of Romans.

During this time Irene and I taught in two different areas. She had a woman translator whose name was Hkaw Win; my translator was Sam Son. But after a few days of teaching, Irene was in too much pain, so Samson took Hkaw Win to the YMCA so that she could stay with Irene. Then Samson and I would go teach. For the next several days Hkaw Win spent the days with Irene, talking with her and massaging her body and just pouring out love to Irene. After about the third day we took Irene to a doctor who gave her some painkillers to try to help relieve the pain. It seemed to help give Irene the strength and the joy to be able to be take part in our first graduation service in Myanmar.

That Sunday the church was packed with people, both inside and outside. We were about to graduate over 90 students, most of whom were pastors and deacons from a variety of



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communities. During the service they also gave beautiful gifts to Irene and me. That's when I received a jade gold cross as a gift for our service to the Kachin people. As the names were called out, the graduates would shake hands with several people and then receive a gift from Irene. Then I would give them their diploma of ministry from Providence Theological Seminary and Project LAMBS International. It was a great day of celebration.

But God was about to do something even more unique. Irene had written a school paper on a particular group of people living just inside China – which turned out to be one of the six different Kachin tribes. One could say that what happened next was almost unbelievable. After the graduation service two men came up to Irene and introduced themselves, telling us from where they had come. We hadn't known at the time, but God had arranged for Irene and I to train these two men who were from the exact village area about which Irene had written the school paper. God had fulfilled her dream by bringing her halfway around the world to train a certain people group, and now two of them were standing right in front of her. This was such an emotional time for both of us because, again, God had been fulfilling many different goals Irene had wanted to complete over the last number of years. God was making all these dreams come to reality for her.

## CANCER RETURN

When we returned from Myanmar to our home in Marchand, there was a phone message from Dr. Krahn, asking to please call him back because there was something wrong with Irene's blood count. Within a few days we met with him and then he sent us back to the specialist to the St. Boniface Hospital in Winnipeg. They told us that it looked like the cancer had come back and that it was beginning to grow and spread throughout her body. We now needed to make a choice of whether or not we should put Irene through another round of

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stronger chemotherapy. While we were at the hospital we said yes, we would go through the chemo again, but as we were driving home, it seemed like the Lord spoke to both of our hearts, saying that we should not do this and that Irene's time to go home "to be with her Lord" would be coming soon.

The doctors had told us that, if we did not do the chemo, Irene might have only about three months, but if she did do the chemo, she might have six months to live. So, after we had prayed, we decided to call the specialist and tell him that we would not do the chemo and that Irene would rather have three months of feeling good than to have six months of being very sick. We did not know at the time what the result of that decision would look like in the future.

As Irene was beginning to get sicker by the day, we were asked whether we wanted to put Irene in palliative care; this meant that she was dying and that they would try to do all they could because, through such care, she could get a lot more help for her final journey. Irene would be supplied with things like a hospital bed in our home, oxygen tanks and the needed painkillers. All we had to do was to sign some papers and the end-of-life process would begin. This was difficult for me, because I was not sure if I was saying that I could not believe God could heal her the second time; or if God was fulfilling what he told me three years earlier – that he was going to extend her time so that she could finish those things that were on her heart before he would take her home with Him.

## **JAMAICA 2004 Dec.**

Yet there was one other thing that Irene wanted to do – and that was to go back to Jamaica. An opportunity came when it was announced that Karen and Phyllis, the daughters of Pastor Hamilton, would have a joint wedding in Jamaica. Irene had a real burden for the Hamilton's, and when the oldest daughter

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Katie had died of the same cancer that Irene had, she now wanted to go down one more time to visit.

We went in to see Dr. Krahn and asked him what he thought. He said, "I can give you enough drugs to help you with pain, but it is very likely that Irene may die there." He then asked us, "What would you do then?" Without a break in the conversation, Irene looked at us and said, "I want to be buried in Jamaica beside Katie, my dear friend and fellow servant of the Lord." You could say that we were both stunned, but she said it without hesitation and Dr. Krahn gave her his blessing to go. He gave us different letters so that, if needed, they would make it possible for us to get through security as we would be carrying a lot of morphine with us.

It was December and it was time to go to Jamaica. I had arranged to rent a car so that we could take a day to drive up to the mission station; most of the time, however, we spent at a hotel on the ocean that we loved to call the Sand Castle. We could see the cruise ships come in and out each day. Irene's pain was getting worse by the day and I was in running low on painkillers. I was concerned that I would run out and not have enough for her.

We had driven to Minneapolis and left our car at the hotel there because it was so much cheaper to fly from there to Jamaica than from Winnipeg to Jamaica. So, after getting into Montego Bay, we picked up our car and headed to our hotel. They gave us a beautiful room that helped ease the pain somewhat for Irene and for me. For I knew we were now down to days and it wouldn't be long before the Lord took my friend, teacher, and confidant home.

On Saturday we went to the wedding which was held in a beautiful setting. It was very hot, and the guests were able to sit in a tent. It seemed that that day was also exceptionally

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difficult for Pastor Hamilton as he himself was not very well. His role was to escort his daughters down the aisle to the front, but he only made it halfway before he collapsed on the ground; people rushed over to lift him up and take him to his chair. We were told later that he was just overwhelmed concerning the memory of Katie's death and now he could, before his very eyes, see another beloved daughter, Irene, also dying.

We knew that Phyllis and Karen were excited that we came, but our being there did have a sobering effect on the wedding. Irene was able to go through the wedding day as well as the reception that evening. When we got back to the hotel, they had a live Jamaican band playing in the courtyard by the pool. At first Irene did not want to go out because she was in a lot of pain, but I talked her into it. I said, "Let's go and enjoy a little bit of music for a while."

When we got there, we sat watching other people dance and I turned to Irene and asked if she would be willing to have a dance with me. As we danced, both of us wept, because we knew that this would be our last dance together.

The next day it was time for us to leave; we had run out of painkillers and I knew we still needed to stay overnight in Minneapolis before we could go home. Once we got to Minneapolis Irene was beginning to experience more and more discomfort, so I said, "Let's drive." Somewhere between 12 and 1 in the morning we arrived home where I knew we had enough medicines to help her to get through the night. Later we could talk to our nurse and doctor.

## Christmas

This would be our second Christmas which we would celebrate with Irene sitting in a chair, very sick. The first time had been several years earlier when we were told she would die,

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but God raised her up and healed her; now we were facing death once again. Everybody was at the house and we were all trying to put on happy faces, but in all of our eyes could be seen what would probably happen in the very near future – and that we weren't ready for it. But we went through the usual Christmas Eve traditions of passing out gifts and taking pictures of one another. Then, celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ on Christmas day, we had a big turkey dinner.

At this time Tyah was still just a little baby but she brought so much joy and comfort to Irene, sitting on her lap in a rocking chair. Our living room had become Irene's hospital room. Earlier that year Pastor Norm Broesky and I had built an extension on our living room so that Irene didn't have to walk up and down stairs to go to bed; she was right beside the washroom and everything that she needed was all on one floor.

Earlier that year, while we were out, there was an accident with the upstairs toilet, resulting in the flooding of the downstairs kitchen. With the insurance money that we received we were not only able to fix the kitchen but were also to pay for a good part of the addition. Thanks to Norm's help, plus the assistance of several others who came to do the drywalling and the painting, it became a reality.

I want to say here that, during this journey of Irene's sickness (both times), we had so many friends that helped us with finances as well as with good healthy food. They served us and helped us with what they had. God had put together a team of people to help make this difficult journey more bearable.

## **St, Boniface Hospital**

Towards the end of February, it was getting a lot harder for the home care people, the nurses, and Dr. Krahn to control Irene's pain. She was now receiving tremendous amount of

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morphine intravenously and I was also giving her fentanyl every three hours. Fentanyl is one of the most powerful and fast acting painkillers available. I was told that the drugs being administered to Irene were costing approximately a thousand dollars every day. Irene wanted to die at home, but a decision was going to have to be made – and it was one that I didn't want to make. She needed to be moved to the palliative care unit at St. Boniface Hospital.

Ann Penner said it was now time, and she came to the house. I made the call and it seemed that the ambulance arrived just a few moments later. I knew this would be Irene's last journey and her last time here at our home. While they were preparing her for the trip into the city, I went outside and wept uncontrollably. I didn't know if I could take any more, and whether I could survive this emotional roller coaster that I had been on for such a long while.

After they loaded her into the ambulance, I asked if I could go with her. The attendant said I could. Irene and I just held hands as we made the final journey into the city. When we got there, they had a room ready, and the cancer specialist was there, waiting for us. Not long after, I met with him and he told me he was going to completely change the drug therapy. He said they had better methods that they could use than those being used at the Steinbach cancer care ward. In my heart I thought and hoped that this would be true, but I felt that this was only going to prolong things for a few more days.

At first there was a change – it seemed like Irene was responding to the new drug therapy and things began to improve to the point where, within those first two days, the doctor talked to me about how Irene might be able to go back home. He said, "Let's just give it another day and see what happens." They had already set up a bed beside Irene so that I could stay with her 24 hours a day. And again, Matilda came

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and stayed for hours upon hours at the hospital with Irene and me. This was a real comfort for both of us.

It was also during her early days at the hospital that Irene asked me whether I had heard anything about Hkaw Win. She wondered how she was doing in school at Providence. She had hoped to see her one more time and thank her for looking after her when she was in Myanmar, and to tell her how special she was to her. I said I would try to find out what was happening, but I had no phone numbers or any idea how to get in contact her, so I left it at that.

But it wasn't long before things began to change. The doctor told me that Irene was one in 1 million people whose body did not respond to painkillers. Later that week they put a tap in her spinal cord to try to freeze her from the waist down. Also, in addition to giving her morphine by IV, they had attached another machine that would automatically inject fentanyl every five minutes. The specialist told me that they were giving her more painkillers and drugs in one day than that they had used in the heart surgical ward for a whole week.

During that week Irene's sister, Dorothy, flew out to the hospital to be with her. Dorothy came to stay with me at the house where people would pick her up and take her to the hospital for visits. The night before her death Josh called me and told me that Donna had gone into labour and she was now at the Health Science Centre getting ready to give birth. Can you imagine?! One leaving this earthly realm and another beautiful creation coming into this world! I went over for a few minutes around midnight to see the new baby and to take some video so that I could show Irene. They were going to name the baby Prairie Irene Humphries. I went back and showed Irene. She was "some pleased". Then I said everything was ok with the new grandchild. "We will look after her – you can now

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make your final journey home.” She closed her eyes. I would not see them open again.

## **March 9, 2005 Irene Home going**

The next morning did not seem too much different than several of the other mornings, but it seemed that Irene was more at peace and sleeping more. I always had her CD player playing Christian hymns for her and sometimes I would read her the Scriptures – her most favorite book. Many times, I would pray for her that God would take her in His hand and guide her as she walked these last final days here on earth.

I must admit I had never thought that things would turn out this way; Irene had always taken care of her health, watched what she ate, and even exercised. Sometimes I would tease her, calling her a real health food fanatic – while I was a real junk food junkie, eating my chocolate bars, devouring lots of greasy food and drinking about 5 to 6 bottles of Coke every day. We always kind of thought that I would just burn out on junk and die before her.

Again, Matilda showed up; she always liked to help Irene get cleaned up and made sure everything was in order for her day. Again, I was so grateful that Matilda would often come out and spend long hours with Irene and that many, many, many times her husband John came to the house, as well as to the hospital, to spend time with us. Oftentimes there was not a lot said. It was just being together that somehow made it easier both for Irene and me. I owe a great debt of gratitude for how they walked with us, not only during this time, but over the previous three years as we walked this journey with the Lord.

It was getting close to noon hour and I had noticed that Irene’s breathing had changed and, because of my experience of being with so many other people who had died, I knew that we



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were now within about 24 hours or less before Irene's life here on earth would be over. I put my hand on her one more time and said to her, "Irene, it's okay now – you just go home to be with your Lord," and, within moments, almost right at 12 o'clock with me holding her hand, she passed on to glory.

In some ways, her passing caught everybody off guard because the nurses and doctors thought that it would be a few more days and, I guess my two children also thought the same thing. I gave Irene a kiss on the lips and said, "One day soon I will see you." The nurses asked me to leave the room, so they could remove all the machines and clean her up a little bit. They said that there would be no hurry and that I should call people to let them know what had happened.

It wasn't too long before Joshua showed up. He wasn't that far away as he was over at the other hospital with Donna and his new-born baby. When he came to the hospital room, he was very upset. He had some cards; one was a birthday card for mom, and another one was an Easter card that he had hoped to have given to mom. But I believe what he wanted, more than anything, was to bring his new-born baby over and put it in Irene's arms. I knew that, just like me, he was torn so deeply inside – to have a new birth less than 24 hours earlier at one hospital and then have to come over to another hospital where he had learned that his mom had just passed away.

About a half hour later Rachel showed up. When she got to the room I met her at the door and she refused to go in. She, too, was hurting very deeply inside and couldn't face the reality, at that point, that her mom had passed on.

It is never easy to say goodbye. There is always more that you want to say, but we were thankful to the Lord that at least we had several extra years to continue to speak into one another's hearts. I must admit I also was glad in some ways that

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the pain and suffering were now over and that she could be at total peace with her Creator, Jesus Christ.

It was interesting that, later that day when I got into the car and as I drove out of the parking lot, the words of the song coming out of the radio's speaker at that moment were, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord". It was like the Lord was saying to me, "Even though I have now taken Irene home, I am still here for you and will walk with you and bless you, and I will never leave you nor forsake you, for you are also my child."

## Funeral

In our day and age, it almost seems that one does not even have the time to mourn. Within a few hours you have to begin to make a whole lot of decisions concerning funeral arrangements. I was very thankful for Pastor Peter and Jerry Broesky and Dr. Chuck and Sue Nickel who were there to help me.

The next day I had to go to the funeral home and take the clothing in which I wanted Irene to be dressed. Also, I had to pick out the kind of coffin and how I wanted the burial service to be organized. I also had to figure out at which church to have the service, and to estimate how many people I thought would come, so I could order food for the reception after the burial.

I saw something that I'd never seen before: a coffin that was specially made where, at the grave site, people could write notes and leave their last words to Irene. I thought this was so unusual, but I thought it was the right thing to do. I was so glad to see people at the grave site, taking markers and writing messages. The one that stands out the most to me was the one

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that my son Joshua wrote. It said, “I will see you one day in heaven”.

We had 600 or 700 people come to the funeral, and we had a number of special songs that were done by Melinda Funk and Gary Dick. Dr. Chuck Nickels gave such an excellent message of encouragement. And I was also glad that I was able to put together a PowerPoint of Irene’s life which I believe was a powerful testimony to those who were at the funeral. I must admit that those couple days were like a blur to me, with so many things happening.

There are two other things that also stood out in my mind: one was taking her Irene’s new granddaughter over to see Irene’s coffin and showing her grandma. I prayed that somehow Irene’s mantle would fall upon Prairie and that she would become a real woman of God just like her grandma was. The second thing that stands out in my mind was afterwards, when everyone left the room, only Pastor Peter and I remained. We stood at the coffin and I leaned over, knowing that Irene’s body was just an empty shell, but I gave her a kiss anyway and said, “I will see you soon someday in heaven. Thank you for all the things that you’ve done for me, how you mentored me in Jesus Christ and how you helped me to become the man of God that I am to this day.

## **New Beginnings**

A day or so after the funeral I had a friend of Irene’s and mine, a doctor (Lillian Beattie) who supported us while I was going to Bible school at Briercrest. She was not able to come to the funeral, but she told me she was praying for me and asking the Lord to help me and guide me. She also said something strange (at least to me at the time) that I now would be on my own and Irene would not be there to help me to stand anymore. At first her statement made it sound like everything that had

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happened was all because of Irene, and that I had not accomplished anything on my own. But after a few days I began to realize that what she said was true. Now I was going to be facing some new beginnings because, with the help of God, I alone would have to make many difficult choices for my life.

The first number of months were very difficult. It seemed like everyone just disappeared. For many months no one, including my children, came to the house. I asked people later why they didn't come. Some told me that I had always been the one who fixed them and now they were not sure how to help me. So, I spent many days and nights alone in my home, meditating and reflecting on what had just transpired.

I was also struggling financially because now I had to pay for the funeral. When I called the insurance company to which our FCA (Fellowship of Christian Assemblies) had paid premiums, I was informed that there were no longer any death benefits for FCA pastors. Then I called the minister who oversaw the pastor's policies, and to their shock, they found out that the death benefit clause had not been put into the overall policy when they had changed insurance companies. So, the \$10,000 that I should've received from the insurance company (and even after writing "Sun Life" a letter) it was determined that they would not help me and that they were going to stick to their policies. At first, I didn't know what to do; I was grateful that there were several churches that sent checks to help defray the funeral costs, but this still left me owing about \$6000.

It wasn't long after that I went to an FCA meeting at the Niverville church. There were a number of pastors, including Leon Fontaine and his mother, who were attending the meeting. They asked me how things were going and how I was doing. I told them that I was still struggling financially because I had no way to raise the funds for Irene's funeral. After our meeting was over, sister Fontaine (Leon's mom) came up to me and handed

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me a personal check for \$6000. God had blessed her, so she felt led of God to help me. Because of that I could go home and pay off the costs of Irene's funeral. What a real blessing she became to me! I believe, because of what she had gone through a number of months before with the sudden death of her husband, that she clearly understood what I was walking through and what I had been facing.

I guess one could say that there were some other good things that resulted from Irene's death. Her car was in both of our names and was life insured so, when Irene died, the car loan was paid off. Also, the mortgage on our house, in both of our names, was insured and, within a month, I was now mortgage free. Because of Irene's death, I have now been mortgage free for over 13 years now – this has made it possible to do a lot more things in the ministry for Jesus Christ worldwide.

Definitely, one door had closed, and a new door had opened. I did not know at that time how things were going to change in my life. Nor did I know how I would move more from being a pastor – to being a teacher – to being a missionary who would travel around the world. I would become an author of leadership books and resources for pastors; these would be translated into a variety of different languages.

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## Chapter 7

### Redemptive Power during Engagement & Marriage (Hkaw Win)

After Irene's homegoing, things looked a little black and confusing. I spent a lot of time alone and was not sure where I was to go from here. The vision of Project LAMBS had not changed and my desire to equip and train people was still strong. In fact, in the last year of Irene's illness, I locally prepared and taught another 12 courses called "Project Shepherds".

I think many people did not know what to do with me. Most used to have me around to help them, but now did not know what to do for me. So, I worked hard cleaning up all of Irene's things and, by September, had written and published a tribute book about Irene called "Treasures in Earthen Vessels".

I also did not want to have anything to do with another partner because I feared that if I got married again I would have to go through the experience of someone else getting sick and dying, and I did not want ever to become vulnerable like that again. (I know this sounds very selfish but that is how I felt at the time). Helping Irene and always trying to be strong and to be there for her took a lot out of me. I do not regret it, though, because God took me to a whole new level of experience with Him.

But, as time passed by, people would tease or forthrightly speak to me, giving me names of people and advising me as to whom they thought would make me a good wife. But, if I was willing to get married again, I thought I needed someone like-minded, with a servant heart geared toward discipleship ministry. I needed a partner, a team worker and teacher, one

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who would accept without reservation who I was, with all my strengths and weaknesses.

## **Rev. Samson and Zung Nyaw**

In the fall of 2005 we planned to have a team meeting for Project LAMBS at my house in Marchand. Samson and Zung Nyaw were visiting Canada, and Steve and Bev from Rangoon were also in Canada. This meeting would last for about three days. Another person who was in the country, going to school at Providence, was Hkaw Win who was occasionally traveling with Steve and Bev. They all came to my house and stayed with me; we would pray and plan what our next steps would be in Myanmar.

Later one night I went for a walk with Hkaw Win. I should tell you when she first came to my house, she did not seem to know who I was – she thought I was just a cook, brought in to prepare the evening meal! You could say she was a little embarrassed. But we decided to go for a walk in the dark and watch the lightning off in the distance. The thing she wanted to know was how Irene died and how was I doing through all of this. We ended up talking late into the night about a lot of things. But the next day they moved on.

On the second night I stayed up late to visit with Zung Nyaw and Samson; and the conversation drifted to whether I would ever consider getting married again. I said yes, but it would most likely not be someone from Canada. I felt that, as God led, it could be someone from Myanmar because I liked the people's servant hearts, their dedication to the Lord, and their beliefs about not getting divorced.

They asked me if I had ever thought of Hkaw Win and I said no, and then I made up a lot of excuses why it would not

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work and the challenges we both would face. But they encouraged me to pray about it. Then a number of days later, before they left the country, we had traveled into Winnipeg to buy some clothes and supplies for them before they went back to Myanmar. At that time I asked them for permission to at least talk with Hkaw Win because he was her pastor and boss in Myanmar and Samson had played a big part in getting her to come to Providence. They both said yes, and you could say “the rest is history”.

The next number of months I began to call and email Hkaw Win. Once in a while I would take her to church services where I was speaking. She was always polite but a little cold and did not share very much. I did learn different things about her family and the Kachin people, but she was very careful with her heart. She had a good sense of humour and liked to try different things. In the fall I introduced her to Rachel, my daughter, and some of my grandchildren. Rachel also helped me to get Hkaw Win a winter coat, boots and some sweats and things for the upcoming school year. *(Just a little side note to this day of shopping, Hkaw Win noticed that Rachel had two rings on her left hand. She asked what the reason was for that? Rachel shared that one ring was for the engagement of a couple and the second was the marriage ring. You need to remember this detail for later).* One night while we were waiting to go into a service at which I’d been invited to speak, the conversation got around to where she asked me if I would ever get married again. She thought that there were lots of gifted and beautiful women at Providence. I said yes, I might but, no, I was not interested. I told her I was more interested in people that came from her culture and country. I had been there twice and met a lot of beautiful and special people.



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## McMurray, FCA Meetings

It was now October and time for our FCA national convention. This year it was held in Fort McMurray, Alberta, a place where our family had spent three years. We spent most of our time building a new sanctuary that would seat about 450 people on the main floor. McMurray is a mining city of over 70 thousand people and most of them have moved from Newfoundland, the easternmost province of Canada. They are great people with a great heritage, very hard workers and many of them have a deep faith in Jesus Christ. So, for me it was like going home. The convention was titled, “Many Tribes, Transformation, One Nation” and two of my good friends, Pastor Glen Forsberg and Pastor Robert Parmenter, were giving leadership. People had come in from all across Canada and there were people from many nations, cultures and traditions represented. I had set up a booth promoting Project LAMBS and our new focus on the Asian rim countries. It was a great time and I enjoyed myself immensely. But halfway through the convention I received a phone call that my close cousin, Kathy White (Ford), had passed away and they wondered if I could come to Ontario to do the funeral.

## Funeral

What happened next was like a whirlwind – getting tickets, getting people to take my display back to Manitoba and then getting on a plane for Ontario. The next day I flew into Toronto, rented a car and headed off to my sister’s house in St. Thomas. The next morning, I went to my cousin’s husband’s (Larry) place, where I stayed for 4 to 5 days. The funeral had gone well, and I was able to share some things about Kathy and her faith in Christ. It was a challenging time for me because she was young and had died of the same cancer as Irene. I had a

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good time with Larry and we did a lot of sharing while working together around their farm.

## **Ontario Tour**

After that I headed up to see Pastor Wilfred & Lorraine Lawrenson. They lived in a cottage on the lake up in the Northern part of Southern Ontario. This couple had also spent a lot of time in Jamaica where we had been running our Project LAMBS school with the Hamilton's. They were also retired now and had a wealth of experience and insight into things that brought much encouragement into my heart. They had a guest room that was quiet and peaceful, and I could write and reflect on what God was saying and doing in my life. But it wasn't long before the conversation got around to whether I would marry again, and I said yes, and that I was thinking about it. They said, "Do you have anyone in mind?" I then shared with them about Hkaw Win. They immediately gave their blessing and thought it was God-directed. Over the next few days the three of us brought it to the Lord in prayer.

The next stop was with Pastor Brad Montsion. Pastor Brad had asked me to speak at an FCA pastor breakfast back in Toronto. So, the Lawrenson and I headed off, back down to Toronto. It was a beautiful trip, because in the fall, Ontario is full of many beautiful colorful trees. I spoke with the pastor on how the church was a place for equipping and discipleship training and that the word "teaching" was more prominent in the book of Acts than was the word "preaching". I wanted them to see that if we are going to see a harvest that will last, our churches must have a good clear training and equipping ministry for people of every age and background.

I should let you know that during this time I was e-mailing Hkaw Win and we were sharing more and more with each

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other. Emails were exchanged almost every other day now. We were becoming good friends. My heart for Hkaw Win was becoming bigger. Now it was time to head back to Manitoba. It was Sunday and I had to fly early to get back to Winnipeg, so I could speak in Pastor Joseph Seidu's church for an 11 o'clock service.

## **Hkaw Win's Birthday**

Soon there came a time when one could say there was a defining moment; it was on Hkaw Win's birthday, November 23. We at Project LAMBS had put together a care package for Hkaw Win. It included gifts, cake and flowers, and it was delivered on her way home from work by Betty Giesbrecht, my office administrator. That was all fine and after work I went home but, around 8:30 in the evening, my heart was burdened with the thought that I should go see Hkaw Win. So, I stopped in town and picked up some flowers on a very cold wintery night and headed off to Providence 45 minutes away. When I got there, I parked in the school parking lot and waited to call Hkaw Win on my cell phone because I knew she would be going from the school to the dorm around ten o'clock at night after her janitorial job was finished. So, I called, and we talked, and she shared with me that she had been praying that she could see me, and I said that was possible because I was parked right outside in the parking lot.

Next thing I knew she was with me in the van and we began to talk. We talked late into the night and that is when she opened up her heart and told me of some of the pain and challenges that she had been facing and that she felt very lonely. This also was the time she began to share some of her feelings of love and fear toward me.

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It was also in the month of November that I had a vision of a man who had large ears and was dark skinned and Asian-looking. In the vision he took Hkaw Win's hand and put it into my hand. I had no idea at the time who that was, and it was not until December, while I was looking through a Kachin book, I saw this picture of the man and showed it to Hkaw Win. She told me that man was her father!

## **Doctor Krahn**

One thing I should mention is that usually, before I go on a long trip, I go see my family doctor for a check-up and then, after coming back, go for another check-up, just to make sure everything is fine. Dr. Krahn had become a very good friend during Irene's sickness. Not only was he our family doctor, but he was also Irene's cancer care doctor. He is a very godly man and believes in the power of prayer. Also, he believes in the importance of relationship. He always had time for us and wanted to know what we were doing and how things were going. So, as I was about to head off to Israel, I was in his office for a check-up when I decided to ask him some personal questions.

I wanted to know if he thought it was too early after Irene's death to start seeing someone again. Would I be showing disrespect to her? Was I still going through the grieving period? I also told him that I was deeply afraid to open up that part of my life again because of what Irene and I had gone through. It had taken a lot out of me. You need to understand that I had been a full-time counselor for many years and I liked to psychoanalyze everything from all angles.

I decided to show Dr. Krahn a picture of Hkaw Win and told him a little about her and what I was feeling for her. I must admit I was not prepared for his response – in fact, it shocked

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me. He said, “This is of God and he took my hands and said, ‘let us pray’.” After that he gave me some great advice. He told me that a three-cord rope cannot easily be broken; he told me I should choose three people to walk with me on this journey – people who could bear witness to what was taking place. He agreed to be one and then I began to pray for two more. In time I choose Karen Friesen, one of the Project LAMBS board members, and Betty Giesbrecht, my office administrator. Earlier, Betty had been appointed by the board to keep an eye on me as I walked with Irene through her sickness, as well as afterwards following her death.

## Israel Trip

Next up was the Israel trip. The finances had all come together, and the tickets were purchased. I would be gone most of December and would get home just before Christmas. I was going to see Pastor Munir & Sharon Kakish. Pastor Munir runs an orphanage and church, Lamb’s Chapel, on the West Bank in the city of Ramallah. So, with suitcases full of children’s gifts and blankets and some clothes in addition to my kippah and prayer shawl. But this time, instead of me doing all the packing, I invited Hkaw Win to do it because she had shared that she was almost a professional in that area, as she did it all the time for her father and mother.

This would be my second trip to Israel, but the difference this time was that I was not going on a tour with people, but I would be going alone. When I arrived in Tel Aviv, the pastor was there to pick me up. We then proceeded to his house and, after passing through various checkpoints and driving around other ways, we arrived at his house where I met his American wife. Later that day we went to the orphanage and met all the children. Their ages were from around 7 to about 17 years of age.

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During the week I visited many churches as well as the Bethlehem Bible School. We also went to Cana of Galilee where I bought wine from the supposed location where Jesus turned the water into wine. I also had an opportunity to preach and share the Gospel and to see people make decisions for Christ. I also met many important Palestinian dignitaries and heard their stories. I went to the homes of various students and had Turkish coffee with them. I must admit I was getting somewhat confused because I was introduced to many of the Palestinian Christians and wondered why the church in North America never talked about or hardly helped them or even prayed for them. But each night I would contact Hkaw Win by computer phone and tell her my stories. Soon she was finished at school and would go on a Christmas break. She would go to spend Christmas in Thunder Bay, Ontario. This did sadden my heart because I had hoped that we could spend some time together.

## Vision in Israel

When I came back to my room for the nights, I would spend a lot of time in prayer. I also wanted to know and feel what it would be like to pray using a keeper and prayer shawl. First of all, I experienced what it meant to enter into one's prayer closet, when you pull the prayer shawl up over your head. I experienced a tremendous anointing during these times of prayer. God's presence was so real and personal. But twice during these times of prayer I had a vision of Hkaw Win and I getting married and what it would all look like, and all those who were going to be involved with the service. I will try to explain the details as briefly as possible.

What I saw was a church that was large and had two aisles up the side. There was not a center aisle in it. It had a balcony with a large platform. Across the back were flags that

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represented the counties to which I had traveled and where Project LAMBS had ministered with the discipleship schools. Then, in front of them were three more flags forming a cover over the communion table; one was the flag of Canada, another the Christian flag, and then the Myanmar flag. In front of that was another small table off to the side and in front of the platform was another communion table.

The people in our wedding party would all be in their traditional dress from their home countries. Hkaw Win and I would be dressed in Kachin clothing. There would be three pastors; one would represent and minister to Hkaw Win, another would serve me, and the third would be an MC who would be sharing with the people all that would be going on in the service.

The first time I had the vision I wrote down all that I'd seen. But when the vision came the second time, I asked the Lord, "Why again?" He said that I had not yet seen all the details. This second vision depicted a beautiful sword on the small table, as well as two Bibles with olivewood covers from Israel.

Through my time with the Kakish family in Israel, the question of marriage came up and again I shared with them what I was thinking, and I showed them a picture of Hkaw Win. I also asked about marriages with significant age differences and different countries of origin. They said that there had been challenges but God proved Himself to them in every step of their relationship. They felt it was of God for Hkaw Win and me to get married. They prayed for me, asking that all the details would come together and that I would experience a genuine peace in my heart.

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I want to share at this point that I was not so concerned for myself, but that my biggest concern was for Hkaw Win. I did not want to get in the way of what God was going to be doing in her life. I needed to see that our two different roads would be coming together, and that we would travel the rest of our lives serving Him together as a team.

While visiting Israel I also wanted to spend some time in Jerusalem. So, I arranged to stay at a very quiet Anglican Church hostel. This again was not an accident because the Lord opened the door for me to meet the Archbishop for that whole region Faik Haddad. What a great and special man of God! We talked about his book and some of the things that he had gone through over the years as a Palestinian. Again, my heart was touched and deeply moved. For the next few days I went and helped out at Bridges for Peace. What a great organization. My dear friend, John Howson, was the Canadian director for this ministry. I must admit that I saw so many needs concerning the Jewish people who had migrated back to Israel and how they were being helped by this ministry. I also went to a large Christian church in the city. There were many converted Jews who had come to Christ as their Messiah and Lord, but some things that the senior pastor said to me concerning the Palestinian Christians were a little troubling.

After a couple of days, I took some time to be by myself in the city of Jerusalem, the city of my God. I felt the presence of God everywhere and I found myself constantly singing and praising Him. But there were still two more things I felt I needed to do. One was to go to the garden tomb and the second was to the Wailing Wall to pray.

First, the Garden of Gethsemane: Irene and I had been here, and I felt that this place of death and victory would be the place that I should lay her down before the Lord and move on to



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what lay ahead. I had preached a communion service in this very spot and now I was here alone. But, very shortly, I also realized I needed to answer the question as to whether I was ready to “lay it all down”. I asked the attendants if I could have communion prepared for me and I then went to a secluded place, knelt down at a bench and, with tears and groaning, I poured my heart out to God. I knew God was asking me some very pointed questions and He took me to a place in the Kachin State called “Prayer Mountain”. I knew that, at the foot of the mountain, there was a large graveyard. In my mind's eye He took me there and then asked me this question, “Are you willing to be buried there?” After some more weeping and soul searching, I said, “Yes, Lord, if this is what it takes let it be so. I would be honoured to be buried amongst the remains of my Kachin brothers and sisters.” Then there was one other thing that He showed me. “When you get back and meet privately with Hkaw Win, I want you to first put on your doctorate gown and come before her with a basin of water and a cloth. Then you are to strip off your doctorate gown, humble yourself, and kneel down and wash her feet. Then you are to tell her that you will humbly serve your King Jesus, and her, with all your heart and with all your ability as God gives you strength. Then anoint her feet with oil and tell her how beautiful are the feet of them who bring the good news.” As you may realize, these things touched deeply within my heart. The door was opening, and God would go before us. I then partook of communion; I will never forget the experience and the presence of my King Jesus with me. He once again poured refreshing oil back into my heart. When I got up, I felt I was getting up to a new freshness of life in Christ – the restraining cords and ropes had been broken and stripped away.

Upon leaving, I passed through a little store and saw some things that caught my eye. One was bottle of olive oil that

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people used for prayer. I bought a number of bottles of various sizes, not realizing that God would have a purpose for the largest one in the future. I also purchased two olivewood-covered Bibles.

My next stop was the Walling Wall, a place for prayer. As I got there, I was thinking, “Have I really let go of the past and connected to that which God would do through me and Hkaw Win in the future?” I needed to know His will and I found myself saying over and over again, as the Lord prayed in Gethsemane, “Not my will but thy will be done.” “Oh Lord, as it already is in heaven, let it be done here in my life on earth.” (Humphries paraphrase). Soon I found myself standing at the wall praying and shoving my written prayer request between the stones. Again, I was overwhelmed with tears but, mixed with these tears were the beginnings of some joy of excitement and anticipation for what lay ahead.

After these few days Pastor Kakish picked me up and took me back to his home. My time in Israel was coming to an end. One night the pastor and his wife encouraged me concerning Hkaw Win and prayed that God would give me the strength to go forward, not in fear, but in faith.

The day before I was to return home to Canada, Pastor Kakish took me souvenir shopping. I went to this one big store which had lots of carvings and jewelry. I picked out many things for people back home and I wanted an olivewood carving of the Lord’s Supper for myself. When I first arrive at a store, I always like to make a quick survey of everything. While I was in the jewelry section of the store, I saw an unusual ring. It was designed as a three-cord rope. One piece was brass, another was gold and the third copper. I kept thinking what Dr. Krahn had said to me. I then began to reason that maybe I could just buy it as a friendship ring for Hkaw Win. Many things were racing

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through my mind. Then I asked the price and, boy! I was not sure if I wanted to spend that much on a ring, so I left it behind.

But as I was paying for different things Pastor Kakish came over to me and said that he felt the Holy Spirit telling him to ask me, “Isn’t there one more thing that you are supposed to buy?” I said, “Yes, there is.” I went back and got the ring. But now I began to wonder what Hkaw Win would think?

The trip back to the airport started very early in the morning; the night before, while I was packing, the Holy Spirit laid on my heart to put my kippah and my prayer shawl on the top of the suitcase so that, if it was opened, they would be seen first. I had two large suitcases and two carry-ons. We didn’t know that the next morning at about 4:30 we would be stopped on the highway by a number of Israeli soldiers. There, right on the road, they took all my suitcases and laid them out and the officer picked one. Of course, you know which one he picked! It was the one with the kippah and prayer shawl. When he saw it, he said, “Oh, you are one of us!” I said “Yes, I am a disciple of Christ, but I have great respect for my Jewish brothers.” He turned to the others and said, “Let them go.” They never opened any other bags. God had again shown Himself as my strong tower again.

*\* I could share so much more about this trip, but it would take another book!*

### Canada

While I was traveling home and stopping in different airports, I kept emailing Hkaw Win, but didn’t realize she was trying to email me about her flying back to Winnipeg and being with me for Christmas. I did not realize that I had not checked the next page of emails until it was too late. All the flights were

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full but, as soon as I figured it out, I booked a flight for her on Boxing Day. She was very alone, and she and I wanted to see each other and be together.

I got home a few days before Christmas and did some more Christmas shopping for the family and for Hkaw Win. The time had come to get Hkaw Win at the airport. I had decorated the house and put up the tree – something that I had not done or even had much interest in doing – but now Hkaw Win was in my life. I was very nervous because she was not giving me many clues as to where our relationship was going. Was it going to move deeper and what was God saying in her heart? I knew that Hkaw Win was very committed to her mother and to her Kachin people, so this would have to be something she could see through clearly in her life.

The time had come to bring Hkaw Win to my house in Marchand to celebrate Christmas together. I made her supper and then, after that, we relaxed around the fireplace, talking and listening to nice Christian music. She wanted to know more about Israel and about me personally. Then came the time of giving gifts; this would be a little awkward for Hkaw Win because I had some ten things to give her and she only had something small to give in return.

Of course, we went through all the gifts, saving the best for last. One gift was the two olivewood covered Bibles; then came the giving of the smallest box, the ring. What would she think and say? It was time! She opened the box and saw that it was a ring. I quickly told her it was a friendship ring. Then I explained to her what it meant and why it looked the way it did. It was a three-cord rope and the Bible says that such a cord cannot be easily broken.

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If I wasn't nervous and fearful before, I was going to be now because it was time for the foot washing. I did not let Hkaw Win know what I was about to do but I said I needed her to wait while I prepared something. So, I got my doctor gown, face cloth, towel, pan of warm water and soap, and the small bottle of oil from Israel. When she saw me approaching, I think she knew what it meant, but then I began to explain what happened to me in the Garden of Gethsemane and that I needed to be obedient to what God told me to do. She began to cry, and she said over and over to me, "I need to be doing this to you." I then took off of my doctoral gown and, while wearing sweat pants and a "Tee" shirt, I washed her feet, mixing the water in the basin with my tears. I told that God had asked me to humble myself, both before Him and her, and that this was to show that I was to serve her and her people. I had never done this for anyone in my life or ministry. This took me to a whole new level of servanthood in Christ.

Over the next number of days, she spent time with my family, getting to know them as well as more about the traditions and things we do over the Christmas season. We had also a lot of time to talk because she was on school break and did not have that pressure.

*\* I should also tell you that all these events, dreams and conversations that I've shared here, I had not yet shared with Hkaw Win because I wanted her to love me for who I am, not because I convinced her with all these spiritual events. I also needed to be convinced, without a shadow of a doubt, because if I continued to go forward in this direction, my whole way of life and living would drastically change.*

It was now New Year's and I had just finished speaking at an African church in Winnipeg. The climax was a New

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Year's Eve service. The church was full and there was a great time of ministry around the altar. What a way to bring in 2006! Each night Hkaw Win came to the service with me and sat with some ladies of the church. She knew Pastor Deborah, because she had met her through her husband, Sunday, who worked at Providence with the international students.

Later, on New Year's Day, Hkaw Win and I got together to have a New Year Day's meal. I didn't realize that this first day of the New Year was about to dramatically change my life. We had been talking, and Hkaw Win went upstairs to use the washroom. When she came down, she was wearing the ring on her engagement finger and she was gently waving her hand at me, so I would notice! I asked her, "Does this mean you want to be engaged?" And she smiled and nodded her head, "Yes." (Do you remember her asking Rachel questions about the rings and what the engagement ring was all about? I guess she hadn't forgotten). I was so happy but then reality quickly set in. I said that we'd better sit down and talk about this and, there at the dining room table, we discussed family, her mother, my children, the Myitkyina Baptist Association (MBA), the Kachin people, our future ministries, Project LAMBS and how all this could work and – was God truly joining our pathways together?

I also felt that it was time to share with her the vision about "the man", as well as my vision about the wedding and what some other people had shared with me concerning our relationship. I also shared with her concerning Dr. Krahn and the three-cord rope and the three people to bear testimony. But the biggest concern and fear Hkaw Win had was for her mother. It was interesting to note that, later that day, as we were looking through a book called "Three Year, Three Hundred Testimony", an account of people who committed themselves to do mission throughout the country. As we were looking through the

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pictures, I saw a picture of the man that I had seen in the vision, the man with the big ears. I pointed him out to Hkaw Win and she said, “That is my father.” That day I quickly learned a lot about her dad. His name was Isaac and he had passed away 20 years earlier; and the Lord used him as a great leader amongst the Kachin people.

Over the next number of visits, I learned a lot about her family. So, as of New Year’s Day, we agreed and prayed that, if this was of the Lord, we would be engaged and begin to move forward, but there would be one small condition that Hkaw Win had – we could not tell anyone. A very important thing to me was how deeply Hkaw Win loved me and how honored she said she was to be able to follow after Irene, and that I would even consider her as a wife and friend. The thing that has always touched my heart was Hkaw Win’s deep servant heart commitment for the Lord. All this excitement had to be kept secret until Hkaw Win first, and I second, talked with her mother and family. She wanted to stick to the traditional Kachin ways of engagement. That would not be until March that year.

### Three Cord Rope

The next thing that I needed to do was talk with my other two “three cord rope” members. In a few days the holidays were over, and it was time to head back to the office. I was very nervous that day because this was the day that I would speak to Betty Giesbrecht about Hkaw Win. I am not sure why I was so nervous, but it showed. I invited her into my office and asked her to be seated because I had something, I wanted to share with her. First, I thanked her for walking with me over these months and told her what a great support and blessing she was to me and how much I valued her friendship. The next thing I told her was that I got engaged and, before I could say anything else, she said, “I know who it is.” I said, “You do?” She said, “Yes, it is

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Hkaw Win.” I said, “How do you know?” She had not seen us together, but she replied that she had had a vision several months before – telling her that Hkaw Win and I would marry and begin to minister together. This was the first time I heard about that. So, for the next hour we shared back and forth and then she prayed for us that God would lead us. She told me that we had her blessing and, yes, she would be one of the three cord rope members. She promised to keep it quiet and would help wherever she could.

Next on the list was the third member. It was about a week later when I met with Karen Friesen at a restaurant. As we began to eat, I shared with her that I had some exciting news and that I needed her to keep it confidential. I said, “I am engaged to get married to Hkaw Win.” She was so excited, and then she told me of a dream she had that I was moving to Myanmar and ministering there in the very near future. She was excited because she saw that her dream was now becoming reality and she was very excited for us. I also shared what had been happening to me over the last few months and what God seemed to be saying and doing. I told her that I was nervous, and I was concerned what people would think – why I was marrying somebody a lot younger, from another country and how it might affect both our ministries.

So next came the process of dating – something that they do not do in Myanmar and something that, if we did it, was going to have to be very secretive out of respect to her mother. So, everything had to be done discreetly. About the only things we could do were go to church services and, once and a while, do some shopping and have supper in the city. It not easy driving on campus, picking up someone with a van that has “Project LAMBS International” written all over it. But somehow no one really noticed. The only thing that some close



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friends seemed to think was that I seemed a lot happier now. So, we carried on with our email (or should I say love letters) and phone calls. I also got to meet more of her friends at school, especially Ton from Thailand.

## **Jamaica Trip**

January went well but then came February. Project LAMBS was taking a team of teachers down to Jamaica to do a two-week school. The team members were Kevin Clace, Betty and Martin Giesbrecht, Darcy and Dallas Brown, Bert McDonald and me. We were having a good time and I was doing a lot of praying and fasting; yet, in some ways, I was acting a lot like doubting Thomas. I could see the hand of God, but I still needed more proof and yes, we were engaged, but Hkaw Win did not want to talk about any kind of a date and she was struggling with telling her mom, having a lot of fear about what she was going to say. But we both had agreed together that if her mother and family opposed our marriage, we would remain friends and go on with our lives and respective ministries. There was great pressure on her because the MBA gave her permission to go to school and also required that she would serve a four-year term of ministry with them. She would become head of the Christian Education department. The question was how would she do that and be married to me at the same time? I knew that if God was in it, it would come together. But I must admit I really was not sure either. We deeply loved each other but her commitment to her mother, the MBA and the Kachin people was very, very strong. Plus, the people expected her to be a leader like her mother and father.

One good thing was that Betty, my office administrator, was also on this trip and on occasion I could share with her what was going on, but for Hkaw Win it was more difficult because she was alone and had nobody with whom to talk.

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Knowing this, I would usually call her with my cell phone after 10 o'clock at night from the hill in back of the mission compound.

Concerning Hkaw Win, there are four things that took place while I was in Jamaica. They will be shared in the order they happened.

The first thing – a major one – took place one night in the classroom when one of our oldest students put me on the spot and asked a very pointed question: “If you get married again, will you bring your wife here to Jamaica?” She wanted to know right now and also wanted to know if I was seeing someone. I did my best to get around the question, so I asked her if I did bring someone here who was from another country, would she be accepted? The class broke out into applause and said, “Yes, Yes.”

The next thing happened just a day or so after we arrived. Sister Whitaker and some of our friends had come to Jamaica and were also staying at the mission house. Her husband had passed away a number of years ago, but she hadn't remarried. (Her husband was Jamaican, and they had lived in Alberta, Canada, and were part of the FCA to which I also belonged). One late evening when just the two of us were sitting on the porch she asked me the big question: “Have you ever thought about getting married again?” I replied in the affirmative. Then I said that I was seeing someone, and she told me that she knew who it was! I responded, “You do?” She said, “When your newsletter came out with a picture of a lady from Myanmar who was going to Providence, at that moment the Holy Spirit told me that you would marry that woman. I told her, “Yes, she is the one.” That newsletter had come out in September of the previous year; the picture was of me giving out the first of

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Irene's memorial awards (\$500) for a woman student studying full time for the ministry.

A day or so later I went down to Ewarton to see Pastor Soffi Azan. (Pastor Azan is Lebanese; she and her husband used to own a furniture business, but he passed on in 1996. She is now the pastor of a church where we did one of our Project LAMBS schools). We had a nice visit and talked a little about the loss of a partner and how that affects one's life. She then invited me over for supper on a Thursday night. At that point she offered me a ride home, but I told her it should not be too hard to get a taxi, so off I headed. But 15 minutes later there was still no taxi and here came Soffi. So she and Roy took me back to the mission station and I thought that was the end of it. Each night, we were busy teaching at the school and later in the evenings I would try to call Hkaw Win. Well, Thursday came, and it was time to go back to Soffi's house for supper. I was looking forward to it because she always put on a tremendous meal for guests. When I got there, I was introduced to another pastor friend of hers from Kingston. After a cool refreshing juice drink, Soffi asked me a strange question. She said, "I thought we were friends and that we share things with each other. When I dropped you off the other night, the Holy Spirit told me that you weren't telling me everything that was going on in your life." She also said that the Spirit told her that I was engaged to be married. "Why didn't you tell me?" she asked. I said that yes, it was true, and I apologized, saying that I was trying to honor Hkaw Win's culture and tradition by first going to her mother and family – which I intended to do when going there in March

I then asked her why the Holy Spirit was telling so many people about my personal life. It seemed very strange to me that God would so personally speak to people about whom I should

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marry. I then told her my story of the vision, trips, and the individual people who had been speaking into my life. I told her that I was not sure what was going on. She then began to march around the room. It was quite a sight to see the 65-year-old lady marching around the room like a soldier in front of us. She then explained. “Don’t you see what the Lord is doing? He has been ordering your steps before you. You have asked him to help you with your doubts and fears and he is using other people and events to build your faith and trust in Him.” For the remainder of the evening we recounted the many events that had been happening. She was surprised at the customs and traditions of Myanmar were so similar to those of Lebanon. I showed her a picture of Hkaw Win and all she then said was, “She is the one!”

There was one more event which occurred during the last night of the school session. I wasn’t teaching that night, so I was outside where it was a little cooler. Sister Hamilton came up to me and began poking me in the ribs, saying “You are to marry the one who has come from your ribs. The woman to whom you are engaged will be your helpmate and she will walk beside you all the way. Do not be afraid of what God is doing.” My first question to her was, “What are you talking about?” The next question was, “How did you know?” She told me that the Holy Spirit had shown her that I was going out with a woman and that His hand was in it. I just needed to trust Him. I then showed her Hkaw Win’s picture and she said, “Yes, this is the woman I saw.”

The next day I met with Pastor Hamilton and shared with him all that had been happening to me. I knew it could possibly be a challenge for him because Irene was like one of his own daughters. In fact, his oldest daughter, Katie, and Irene died of the same cancer and Pastor Hamilton was having a difficult

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time recovering from these two events. But after we talked, he shared with me that this was of God. He then laid his hands on me and prayed God's blessing on Hkaw Win and me, and asked the Lord to use us greatly to teach and equip others for Christ.

As you can see, God was trying to speak into this doubting Thomas's heart. He would be giving me a beautiful young wife who loved me with all her heart, and she would be from the country that I realized I knew so little about.

## Myanmar Trip

March had now arrived and there was beginning to be some pressure in our relationship with each other. The main reason was that I was about to go to Myanmar, but Hkaw Win had not yet talked with her mother or brothers about her desire to get married to me. Hkaw Win's challenge was whether to get married this summer in Canada and finish school, or finish school and then get married in Myanmar. My feeling was that we should get married after school was out in Canada. This set the stage for a very nerve-racking trip to Myanmar for me and a very stressful time for Hkaw Win back at Providence where she had no one with whom to talk about this.

I should tell you upfront that neither one of us knew or understood what I was going to be walking into when I got to Myanmar. We knew I would be teaching Project LAMBS students and that we would have a very large graduation class of 127. Also, we knew that I would be going through a naming ceremony according to the ways of the Kachin tradition. As time passed, all these experiences would be comparatively easy in contrast to what was ahead of me with Hkaw Win's Mom and her family. You need to know that Hkaw Win's mother is the matriarch of the family and is accorded tremendous respect in her clan and, indeed, in the city of Myitkyina. Once she

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would find out that I wanted to marry her daughter, all the traditions and culture of the Jinghpaw people would be carried out to the letter.

The awaited day arrived and, after a long trip and an overnight in Rangoon, I arrived in Myitkyina. I was so glad to be met by Zung Nyaw and Samson at the airport. They took me to the hotel and, after checking in, I said, “I hope you are not in a hurry because I have some things to talk to you about which cannot wait.” I started off by telling them that I was engaged to be married to Hkaw Win, and that I hoped they would give me their blessing. Oh, they were both so excited and Samson said, “Yes, yes!” Zung Nyaw was almost in tears with joy. Then Samson said, “Let us pray that God will pour out his blessing on us,” so we knelt down in the hotel and Samson prayed a very special anointed prayer. After prayer, I shared my testimony concerning what the Lord had been doing in both of our lives. Once I was finished sharing, they both said that there was a lot of work to be done over the next 10 days and they needed to get started. Samson would first go to Hkaw Win’s mother to see how things were going and what she would be expecting to happen.

On Monday I began to teach at the Project LAMBS school. I felt God’s presence, but I was very nervous because I was afraid that Hkaw Win’s mother and brothers would say “no” to us getting married. Within the next day I was told by Samson that I should go see Hkaw Win’s mother. They would accompany me. Samson shared with me that he had told her about what I wanted to ask; Zung Nyaw said, “It’s alright. It’s a go, no problem.”

I soon found out that there would also be a problem with the naming ceremony because the name they had chosen was the same surname as that of Hkaw Win’s mother’s clan. I

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couldn't marry someone from my own clan, so the committee had to meet to change my clan name to "Lahtaw".

During that week the teaching went very well, and I was sensing God's anointing each day. It was hard to keep secret what was going on in the other part of the city. Most of the rumors didn't begin until the graduation banquet during which time they would also perform the naming ceremony.

The "naming ceremony" was performed by three men who would then become my brothers". Later I found out it is very important to have brothers because they are the ones who would speak on my behalf. They called me forward to a table on which there was a stone vase-shaped container with pounding stick in the center (very like a mortar and pestle). Also, on the table were various small dishes containing dried meat and ginger, etc.

What took place next is that these ingredients were put into the container and pounded; as the pounding began, the leader speaks your name and, if some of the spices fly out, this means you will have many blessings in the future. So, they spoke forth my Kachin name as Lahtaw, Zau Sam. Then came the graduation banquet – the whole evening was a great blessing to me. I had just experienced my first day of becoming part of the Kachin family. Soon I would learn how many relatives I had all over the country.

Then came something that neither Hkaw Win or I expected. Hkaw Win's Mom decided that if I wanted to marry Hkaw Win, I would have to go through the old traditions and customs of the Jinghpaw engagement and marriage process. This would be a three-day traditional ceremony with dowry attached to it – something that Hkaw Win later told me neither of her brothers had to do. I also was soon to learn that I was not marrying just anyone – I was marrying one who had a long

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family history of Christian heritage. It was expected that Hkaw Win would carry on this line and be a strong leader just like her father, mother, grandparents, and great-grandparents were. Her Mom took me downstairs into a private room and, face-to-face, she made it very clear to me that her daughter was a leader amongst the Kachin and, if I was to marry her, I needed to help her fulfill that leadership call in her life. These words were not lightly said to me, and I could tell by the tone of her voice that it was a strong exhortation to me which she wanted me to thoroughly understand.

This would be a three-day process starting Friday night, continuing Saturday night and, if everything went well, the engagement would take place on Monday morning. Samson and Zung Nyaw would guide me in what to do. My three brothers (Rev. Ja Naw, Rev. Zung Kyang and Rev. Lum Hkawng) would speak on behalf of my family, but I would not speak unless spoken to. Then Hkaw Win's Mom picked three others – two of Hkaw Win's uncles and a cousin's brother. One other detail that came to light was that, in going through a formal traditional engagement, there would be many things bought and a lot of money spent. So now there would be three days of running everywhere to purchase and prepare food and gifts that would be given out at each meeting.

## **Friday: Day One**

The first thing I needed to do was to meet my three brothers at a church to ensure that everything that we needed to take to Hkaw Win's Mom's house was ready. The first afternoon and evening provided occasion for a number of meetings in which my three brothers would meet with Hkaw Win's mother's three people. The evening was a time of statements and questions. From what I was told later, there were questions concerning the dowry that would be given by my



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family to Hkaw Win's family. There were also comments made about how Hkaw Win's brothers felt concerning us getting married I was blessed to know that her older brother was in favor, but that her younger brother was not, at first, in favor of her getting married. Over and over again they would go off and have private meetings and I would be left sitting alone in a room with just several other people. Because I could not speak their language, I would just sit there wondering what was going on. Then there would be times when they would ask me questions. For example, they would ask questions about our relationship. Who was pushing for marriage? Did my family know about the relationship? What was our vision for the future?

It seemed that the conversation was all about Hkaw Win and had nothing to do about who I was. I felt that if I was not a doctor and a teacher, I would not stand a chance at all. There was no communication and no translation. The pressure was great and the pain inside of me was intense throughout both Friday and Saturday evenings. I just quietly wept. I was all alone and most people were not interested in me, but only maybe in what I could pay, give, or do. I know this wasn't true, but that's what it felt like. In it all, however, I could see that what they really wanted to know was if I loved Hkaw Win.

Early the next morning I called Hkaw Win and, of course, I was very emotional because I didn't know what was going on. Also, I could tell that she wasn't sure what was going on either, why her mother was doing this to us.

## **Saturday: Day Two**

Saturday started off pretty early. Again, we met over at a church and prepared the baskets of food containing sticky rice, eggs, and chicken. According to my brothers and

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pastor friends, things were moving along okay. After we arrived at Hkaw Win's mom's house, we were again back to having a number of small group meetings. I could tell that Hkaw Win's mom was not very happy with me and that she seemed even a little upset. With strong words in our group meeting, she told Samson that she had not yet received any kind of formal information from Hkaw Win. But then Samson produced an email from Hkaw Win and read it out loud to the people; in the email Hkaw Win stated her intentions, and that she had called her mother early in the morning, saying she wanted to marry me. Also, later in the morning, we also received word from Hkaw Win's younger brother saying that he had also spoken with Hkaw Win and was now in favor of her marrying me. So that meant that both brothers (who were actually representing Hkaw Win's father) were now in favor of our marriage.

I must say that it had not been very easy for me on Friday night and Saturday morning because much of the conversation was held in the Kachin language and there had been no one there who was translating for me. I also felt very sorry for Hkaw Win because she was all alone on the other side of the world with no one to talk to. All I could do was to wait, pray, and trust that the Lord was working everything out. But there was a time where I thought that they would not give me permission to marry Hkaw Win and I had to be ready to accept that verdict.

Lunch time had arrived, and we all met together to eat some of the food that had been brought in the morning. After a small period of time we were back into having meetings again.

Following lunch, people were just sitting around visiting; it appeared to be a positive time. Hkaw Win's mother had gone up into her bedroom to get some things. It was now later in the afternoon and a lot more discussions had taken

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place. Hkaw Win's mom appeared at the top of the stairs with a long spear and a machete tied to it. When she finally got to the living room I was told to stand with my brothers. At that moment Hkaw Win's mother came forward and presented me with the spear and the machete which, I learned afterwards, meant that she, on behalf of her family and clan, was officially giving her daughter as a gift to me, my family and my clan.

This now meant that all the negotiations had taken place and permission had been given to move forward with plans for the engagement celebration to take place on Monday afternoon. There followed a time of prayer and the sharing of a few more words. Various people began to plan for what was needed over the next 24 hours so that the engagement could take place. An engagement invitation card intended for family members needed to be prepared. (For my readers, it might be interesting to note that it is not important for the couple getting engaged to be physically present at the party. Yes, I was there, but Hkaw Win was still back in Canada).

After the meetings were over that afternoon, there were a lot of things that needed to be done – things like preparing our engagement clothing and wedding dress. Also, I needed to buy a gong and a gold necklace for Hkaw Win's mother. I was still somewhat in shock from having thought that they were going to say “no”. Now we were at the point where they had said “yes”, and we had to pull everything together within about 36 hours in order to have the traditional Kachin engagement party. I also needed to communicate with Hkaw Win and tell her what had happened and what was going to take place on Monday. She knew that, once the spear and the machete were given, that she was now my bride-to-be.

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## Monday: Day Three

Early Monday morning we had to get together with a number of people and run around to different places to pick things up. For example, my wedding clothing was high on the list. Other people would be gathering up the needed food which would be put into baskets and carried in by my family members who would present it to Hkaw Win's family members. All these gifts would represent the partial dowry which I would pay for Hkaw Win.

Early afternoon I was picked up and driven over to my brother's church. There we took several trucks to "stage" everything together in order to appropriately take it over to Hkaw Win's mother's house. Upon arrival, there was a certain procedure as to how everything would be carried in; also, there was a certain procedure for how people would enter the house. There would be a number of pastors there – we would be having a prayer service which would be the foundation for the engagement service.

A number of songs were sung, Scriptures read, and there were times of prayer. Then came the more traditional things that needed to take place. There would be the presentation of rings which would be prayed over and blessed. Hkaw Win's Mom would also present my brothers and me with gifts, both for Hkaw Win as well as for the wedding. I didn't know what these things would be because I'd never before really been part of an engagement service or a Kachin wedding. But the thing that really stood out to me is what happened when Hkaw Win's Mom came down the stairs with a silver platter and, on the platter was a traditional Kachin bag and – most startling – lying across the Kachin bag was a beautiful Kachin sword. It was identical in appearance to what I had seen in the vision that God had given me in Israel. It seemed that all I could do throughout

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the service was weep, not (this time) because of stress and anxiety, but because of great joy. God was making it possible for me now to become part of the Kachin people group, and to be allowed to marry one of their special daughters.

Then came the moment when Hkaw Win's mother gave a speech to the people, both in Kachin and parts of it in English for my benefit. It was a very moving tribute to her daughter and I could tell how much she deeply loved and cherished her. Now she was giving her daughter to me, one of the most treasured gifts that she had. I was so deeply stirred in my heart with all kinds of emotions.

After she had finished speaking, I asked the chairperson if it would be possible for me to share something with everyone, and especially with Hkaw Win's Mom. I believe what I did next shocked everyone, probably even including myself. I walked over to Hkaw Win's Mom, knelt down before her with my full wedding garment, and I spoke the following words to her: "I want to thank you for giving birth to such a beautiful daughter. I want to thank you for training and teaching her how to be such a godly woman and, finally, I want you to know how honored I am that you are willing to entrust me with your daughter whom I will cherish all the rest of my life." During this time, I was weeping and, after I was finished, I went back and sat in my chair.

Then the senior pastor, Dr. La Ja (Hkaw Win's Dad's personal friend and fellow student) got up to speak. He looked at me and the first thing he said was, "In the history of the Kachin, we've never seen the groom humble himself before the mother of the bride." He went on to state, "Because you have done this, humbling yourself before her, all the doors to all of our Kachin people have now been opened to you. You will now be able to go anywhere where our people are, and you will be

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welcomed as family and as a minister of the Word of God.” I believe his words came forth as a prophetic word of blessing for Hkaw Win and me. At this time there was much weeping in the room, and the words that he spoke from the Scripture were powerfully anointed by the Holy Spirit; God’s presence was truly felt by all. God had stepped in and opened the door that no man could shut.

After the service many of the leaders went home, leaving a number of ladies who stayed behind to help me understand how to prepare Hkaw Win for the wedding service. They laid out the entire wedding dress on a floormat. I needed to know how Hkaw Win should wear these items because, on the day of the marriage, she would be representing her family and her people. But there was more than just a dress. There was a wedding hat, a certain type of blouse that had jingles on it, a certain type of skirt that had to be wrapped around her in a certain way, as well as Kachin woven leggings. There were also various types of gold and silver jewelry that would be worn around her neck and arms and there were a number of decorations she would also wear around her waist.

From my point of view, I want to state here that Hkaw Win, so pure and innocent, was such a great treasure from God – that reality is what kept me wanting to move forward during some of the challenging times. This was the woman I wanted as a friend and lover for the rest of my life.

### Graduation

Just in case you forgot, Sunday was the day of the Project LAMBS graduation service. We had ended our class time with me praying personally for 127 students, one at a time, in the presence of Steve Solomon and Sam Son. There was no translation. Then we concluded with a quiet time during which I

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knelt down in front of the church and wept aloud about 15 minutes. This was all new to the students and they were deeply moved. Later, Samson asked me how I knew how to pray for them. After all, they were students whom I did not know personally, but he said that I had prayed personally for each one exactly according to their needs and challenges. I said that this is how the Holy Spirit works when you ask Him to fill you and guide you and to even put the right words in your mouth that you will need at the time. He was so amazed and just praised God.

Now that I was officially engaged and blessed by Hkaw Win's family, it was time for me to tell my family. At the prayer service, they had blessed the rings and said that I should put them on Hkaw Win's finger as soon as I got home. So, I asked my two children, Joshua and Rachel, as well as Hkaw Win, to meet me at the airport in Winnipeg because I had something to share with them. I was concerned that gossip would get around before I could tell them.

Both of my children knew that something was up. Rachel said that I seemed a lot happier lately. Joshua, however, was not sure yet, and he needed to adjust to things because the hurt of his mom's death was still very fresh. It had been only a year and now I was getting ready to marry again. They liked Hkaw Win but it would take some time to adjust and to get to know her. I know Hkaw Win was also concerned, and she thought I could have picked a better way to share the news with them, but for me, being such a public figure, I was concerned that others would know before they did. Now, in hindsight, I would do it differently, but sometimes I get so focused that I lose sight of some important details that are going on around me.

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## Canadian Wedding Announcement

The next step along in this journey would be meeting with Dr. Chuck and Sue Nichols. There were two main reasons for this one was that Dr. Chuck was Project LAMBS chairman and the other was because Dr. Chuck was Hkaw Win's teacher and we hoped that he would do the marriage counseling and the wedding. They had an opening for me to see them on Monday night, but I didn't tell them the purpose of the meeting.

So, when Monday came, I picked up Hkaw Win and we headed over to their place. After greetings and entering the house, Sue told me that after our phone conversation, she sensed that I would not be coming over alone. She was not surprised that Hkaw Win was with me.

Well, we then quickly broke the news to them. They were both really excited for us and Chuck said that yes, he would be willing to officiate at our wedding. I told him that I did not want to wait long and that we were looking to get married in May. Over the next hour I also shared with them our testimony of everything that had happened. I also apologized for not telling him earlier, but explained the Kachin traditions. I did share with them about Dr. Krahn and three-cord rope. Because we wanted him to officiate, and Hkaw Win was still in school, we thought it was better to wait until I got back from Myanmar.

I then shared the vision of the wedding, what kind of church it would be in, and who would be involved in the service. They were both amazed how much detail God had provided as to what would take place. The next challenge would be to see if the Emanuel church was available for the desired date. Chuck said that he knew their schedule was full, and we were only six weeks away from the proposed wedding day.



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The next day, after calling, I went over to the church. Yes, the church was quite booked, and the lady to whom I spoke did not think it was available. But, after checking around, she came back and said that, amazingly, it was available for that Friday night of May 5 and Saturday, the sixth. Another answer to prayer! Also, I should say that the church layout was identical to what I had drawn and shown to Hkaw Win.

Over the next few days I went to see Pastor Peter Broesky and shared with him what the Lord had been doing. Pastor Broesky would be my pastor representative for the wedding. He said he would be available for May 6 – the answer to all my questions was “Yes”!

Next, I was off to see Pastor David Reimer. In my vision, he was the MC during the wedding. I told him the vision and explain what he would be doing and that there were two other pastors officiating in the service. I asked him if he would be available for May 6. Again, the answer was “Yes”.

There were a few more key people I felt it was important to see – Dennis and Hilda Martin as well as Dr. Gus Konkell, President of Providence Theological Seminary. I met with Dennis and Hilda at their place of business, Martin Diesel. Irene and I had known them for over 30 years. They were the first people we met when we moved to Steinbach. They lived right across the road from us on Friesen Street, next to Dr. Driedger, a retired Bible school teacher and a member of the church where I had, in 1980, served as interim pastor. When, at the time, we first met the Martins, they were going through some marriage problems and Dennis had moved out. However, within a few weeks, Dennis had found Christ as his Lord and Savior and dramatic changes were beginning to happen in his life and family. Over the years, we had walked together through a lot of valleys and hilltops. Our children were burdens to both of our

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families at various times. So, while sharing with them, Hilda mentioned that Irene had hoped that I would wait at least one year before getting married again – which I was doing. They were both amazed at the testimony of what God had shown me and had been doing in my life and how he had brought Hkaw Win and me together. They both gave us their blessing and prayed that God would continue to guide us as we moved forward.

Hkaw Win and I met with Dr. Gus in his office at Providence and, over the next hour, we shared with him our testimony of what we saw God doing in our lives. He was so blessed, and he believed that God's hand was upon us. He also spent time praying that God's will would be done in our lives as we served Him.

Then came the time to inform Hkaw Win's school friends. At first, all I can say, is that some were really shocked. They also wondered how she could keep this information so quiet over the months but, in the end, they all gave their blessing and they have truly been special friends to Hkaw Win over all these years.

In the vision of the wedding, I saw the faces of the people who were to take part in the wedding – the preachers, maid of honor, bride's maids, best man, and groom's men. Each one was to represent their country and would dress in their country's clothing.

## **Pastors:**

Dr. Chuck Nichols

(Hkaw Win's pastor)

Rev. Peter Broesky

(James' pastor)

Rev. David Reimer

(Master of Ceremonies)

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## Hkaw Win's Wedding Party:

Betty Giesbrecht	Maid of Honour	Mennonite German
Rev. Deborah Olukoju	Bride's Maid	Nigeria
Rachel Amoah Gyampoh	Bride's Maid	Canada
Allison McDonald	Bride's Maid	Canada

## James' Wedding Party:

Rev. Gerry Broesky	Best Man	Mennonite German
Rev. Joseph Seidu	Groom's Man	Ghana
Neville McDonald	Groom's Man	Jamaica

## Flower Girls:

Tyah Amoah Gyampoh	(Granddaughter)	Canada
Sadie Humphries	(Granddaughter)	Canada

## Ring Bearer:

Jeremy Maran	Kachin, Myanmar
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## Sword and Bag Bearer:

Andi Hiebert	(Granddaughter)	Canada
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## Shofar Player:

Jeremy Hiebert	(Grandson)	Canada
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## Give Bride Away:

Rev. Maran Gam Shawng	Kachin, Myanmar
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## Special Number in Song:

Gary Dueck	Canada
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## Photographer:

Ben and Nettie Toews	Canada
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## **Wedding Coordinator:**

Gloria Klassen

Canada

## **Decorating Team:**

Carrie Wiebe / Myra Angermann / Gloria Klassen /  
Karen Friesen / Betty Giesbrecht

## **Ushers:**

Dennis Martin  
Steven Downs  
Joshua Humphries

## **Flower coordinator and arranger:**

Lindsay Flowers

These people had to be contacted and be available for those two days which, again, were only six weeks away. To God's glory, all were available.

## **Hkaw Win Sickness**

About two weeks before the wedding Hkaw Win was out at the house and we were working on various things for the wedding when she got sick. She began having a lot of abdominal pain. She cried out in pain to the point where she was almost screaming. I gave her some medicine, but nothing changed; the pain was getting worse and by 8:30 PM I was not sure what to do. Hkaw Win had just graduated and, because the school medical coverage plan for students from abroad cut off the day they graduate, she was without coverage.

I phoned Betty Giesbrecht and told her what was going on, but I also shared more. I told her that I thought this might be a spiritual attack because I had said that I did not want to get remarried and again go through the experience of my wife being

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sick. I was in tears. Hkaw Win was in great pain – the pain was in the same place as Irene had experienced and died from. Everything was flooding back into my heart again and my face showed it. A wave of fear and anxiety was trying to take hold of me. Then I told Betty that no matter what happened to Hkaw Win, even if she was to be sick, God would again give me the strength to walk with her as well. I loved Hkaw Win and I was marrying her – “through sickness and in health”. It seemed that, after I mentioned that to Betty, a big burden lifted off my heart. I knew that I was here to be a servant to Hkaw Win and her people; I could now go back to the room and look after Hkaw Win. I told Betty that Hkaw Win would stay for the night and I would keep her (Betty) informed. I went back in and anointed Hkaw Win with oil and prayed for healing and deliverance of this sickness. By about 1:30 AM the pain began lifting and Hkaw Win fell into a deep sleep. Most of the night I stayed by the bed keeping a prayer vigil, something I had done quite often with Irene. By morning, every trace of sickness had gone and even now, to this day, has not returned. Hkaw Win had passed through the pain, but most people would not know that I had passed through the shadow of death. That which I feared the most was put to death that night. I had gone through the battle and, with the help of my Lord and King Jesus Christ, we had won.

## Wedding Weekend

We were pleased to have some of Hkaw Win’s relatives drive all the way from Florida, USA, to our wedding. It was the first time I ever met the Rev. Maran Gam Shawng family, and they were a real blessing to us. We put them up in the garage for the week, but this also meant taking care of them before and after the wedding. So, we were married on a Saturday and then, on Sunday morning, I was cooking breakfast and getting

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everyone ready for church. Pastor Broesky invited Hkaw Win's uncle to give a testimony in Gospel Chapel in the La Broquerie church. It is the Kachin custom to look after visitors, no matter what might be going on in your life. So, on the night of our marriage, until about 1:30 AM, we were cleaning the house and getting everything ready for the next day.

We had a good time that week, but many people asked why I had not taken Hkaw Win on a honeymoon. Hkaw Win was so excited to be able to come out to Marchand. This was her new home and she loved it there; again, the Kachin tradition is that you leave your mother and father and move to your new home. For Hkaw Win, this was the best honeymoon that she could have – living in her new home and looking after her husband. She thought, “What more would a person want, and why spend all that money on something that lasts only for a few days?”

The day of the wedding rehearsal was very busy, but we had a lot of great people helping us to get things set up. The whole family was going to come out to stay. At his workplace, Joshua had acquired a great vehicle with which to take Hkaw Win to the church on Saturday. That night, after a long day followed by the rehearsal, I stayed next door with my good friend, Margret. She was Hkaw Win's and my adopted mother. Although 80 years old, she still lived by herself and each year planted a large garden. She was also the one whom I would visit late at night just to watch the news and have a late-night snack. Her husband, Fritz, was a great man; Irene and I loved them both very much, but after Irene took sick, so did Fritz. Irene passed away in March and Fritz, while at home, went to be with the Lord July 1. Now, Margret and Hkaw Win had become like a mother and daughter. It was always fun to visit and listen to both of them speaking to each other in broken English. Sometimes I would have to translate between the two of them.

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In the year to come, Margret taught Hkaw Win how to bake and cook different meals. So, for me, it was a real joy to stay at her home the night before the wedding and to have her as our mother. She sat in the front row of the church for both of us.

Now, back to the decorating of the church and the rehearsal: I had shared the vision I had in Israel with many people, and now it was time to set it all up – getting the flags, spear, machete, communion tables, and all the flowers in place. We were able to do it all because there were so many people that blessed and helped us. I want to say that we will always be indebted to each one of them. Then I tried to explain how it was all going to work with three pastors involved with the wedding party; by the end of the evening everything was in place and Dr. Chuck got us already for the big day without too many challenges.

On the day of the wedding, Hkaw Win and I had to go to the church and get the last-minute details set up before going home and trying to figure out how to wear Kachin wedding gowns. I had my daughter help both Hkaw Win and me. Neither one of us had ever worn these kinds of clothes before, so I had to rely on the instructions that Hkaw Win's Mom and aunts had given me. There were so many different pieces and they were all important to the wedding service. Hkaw Win had not worn makeup or ear rings and things like that before, so this was where Rachel helped out a lot. It was very busy at our house with all the guests and the grandchildren running around all over the place.

Now when it comes to the wedding itself, I must tell you that it was special and beautiful and very different, not because it was Hkaw Win and I being married, but because it was a complete fulfillment of the vision that the Lord had twice given me in Israel. All the details had come together plus some extra

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blessings from pastors and friends. We started off by leaving the house on time and getting ready in what I would call the assembly room. Everyone was present and after a pastoral prayer, the time had now come.

From the point at which the wedding party entered the church, it seemed that time went by so fast; all the things that we had prayed about and envisioned had all happened and now, within an hour, it was all over. In some sense, the wedding began in traditional fashion – the men’s group and the ladies’ group both came in at the same time, one up one aisle and the other up the other aisle. Then Hkaw Win and I entered, ending up at the front at the same time. Once we were both at the front, the question was asked as to “who gives this bride?” And, at that point, on behalf of Hkaw Win’s family, her uncle and clan said, “We do.” The wedding party was already on the platform, but Hkaw Win and I were still on the main floor in front of the steps. Here was set up our first communion table including wafers and communion wine that I had brought back from Cana of Galilee. At that point the two pastors, Dr. Chuck for Hkaw Win, and Pastor Peter for me, for the last time, gave communion to us individually. This was where we prayed, confessing our shortcomings to our pastors and to our God. We readied ourselves for communion and then for marriage. This was a very quiet time. Pastor David, throughout the service, provided commentary as to what was taking place, but I knew that our wedding was to be an intimate experience between Hkaw Win and me, our two pastors, and God. The 300 or more people were there to bear witness to what the Lord was doing. This communion was special for me because I sensed God’s presence lifting off the weights of fear, doubt, and breaking me away from the things of the past and focusing me on serving Him together as a couple, whatever lay ahead. Within a few



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moments Hkaw Win and I would become one with each other and for Christ.

After this step we then moved to the platform where we took our places with the rest of the wedding party. Next came the introduction and then the sermonette by Dr. Chuck. Then we had the wedding vows and the giving of the rings and, of course, I then got to kiss the bride. Then came a very special part of the ceremony because the sword that I had seen in the vision – which Hkaw Win’s mother had given to me at the engagement – was now being placed on me along with the traditional Kachin bag. This was a very stirring moment for me. I couldn’t help but think how my God is a God of all details, as everything that He had shown me was taking place before everyone’s eyes. Pastor David provided a great ministry by telling the meaning of everything that was happening and the symbolism of everything on stage.

Then we moved over to a table for the signing of the register and marriage license. At that location was the spear and the machete that Hkaw Win’s Mom had given me on the Saturday night. This symbolized that Hkaw Win’s clan and tribe had officially giving her to me and my people. I was now totally responsible for Hkaw Win and I must care for and look after her in all circumstances. For the Kachin culture, they had given me a great gift. A good friend of mine, Gary Dueck, did a special number in song during the signing of the register. From Hkaw Win’s Mom and Samson came greetings – these were read by one of our Myanmar teachers, Lorn Bergstresser.

Finally, Hkaw Win and I, together with our two pastors, moved over to another communion table that had been placed behind the platform. This table was below poles from which hung three flags, each of which draped over the table. The center flag was the Christian flag. Then, to one side, was the

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Canadian flag, and on the other side was the Myanmar flag. At this spot we again partook of Communion, but this time we were holding hands as a couple. Again, it was a very moving experience as we knelt down in front of the table, quietly becoming, in Christ, the three-cord rope.

When our second communion service was over, we lined up to head out of the sanctuary in order to form the receiving line. The reception was held in the church hall where guests had a sit-down meal. As people passed along the line, they spoke so many words of encouragement and blessing to both of us.

During the reception time people were given the opportunity to come up to the microphone and share a gift of some kind; if they did that, Hkaw Win and I would have to get up and kiss in front of the people. Hkaw Win thought this was a very strange custom, but she didn't mind because she discovered that she really like kissing me. Then, to our surprise, the people from Pastor Joseph's church (who were mainly from Ghana) came and sang an African song as a choir. Towards the end, we did some different toasts, and then I followed a Kachin tradition by cutting the wedding cake with the sword.

After saying goodbye to our wedding guests, it was now time to pack up all the gifts and head back to Marchand. Again, we had so many people who helped us and blessed us. It was a real team effort. I do need to mention people who did so much planning and working: Karen, Betty, Myra and Carrie. I also want to thank our children and grandchildren for making the day so special and so lovingly welcoming Hkaw Win into our family.

There are many more details I could give concerning the wedding, but I would have to write another book for that! I should also tell you that a lot of the things we do in Canada are

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not done in Myanmar; so many things done throughout the service was strange to Hkaw Win.

I have already mentioned that our honeymoon consisted of staying home, serving family and friends. I must admit that it was very different from our North American way, but we had a great time. I did a lot of cooking, cleaning, and driving people around. It is still not much different, even today. I still drive Hkaw Win around, do the laundry for everyone, and sometimes cook a traditional North American meal in Myanmar. I should also tell you that we did have a honeymoon – as a matter of fact, two! One was a trip to Ontario where Pastor Barbra Lindsay (FCA) ministered at a church in Toronto, they put us up in a wonderful hotel with all expenses paid. This was such a blessing to us. The other was a trip to the West, through Saskatchewan and Alberta to Jasper and Banff. Oh, did I also tell you that when we went west, we took our neighbor and good friend, Margret, with us for part of the way? So, you need not feel sorry for us – we did very many things and had a great time. I have the pictures to prove it.

Finally, we need to understand that God is a God of relationships. His redemptive grace and love can flow through our lives to others, and we can receive the same grace and love from others. The Body of Christ is made up of unique and special people and, if we take the time to link together with others, God then, through the power of His Holy Spirit, connects us together for service. God is not interested in building individualistic idealism, but He is redeeming us so that we can come together as a testimony of His love to a lost world. We are to be people of peace, unity, and harmony. His heart is for His body to be in relationship with others, exemplifying a peace that only God Himself can give – a peace that the world cannot understand.

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## Chapter 8

### Redemptive Power during Missions

Through a divine miracle of God at my doctorate graduation (this was before Irene passed away), I met a man who was also graduating (with a Master of Divinity) from Providence. His name was Sam Son and he was from the Kachin State in Myanmar. Immediately after the service he approached me and said, “You must bring this Project LAMBS to my country.” Not even knowing at the time where Myanmar was, this brief meeting would set in motion events that would change my life and ministry forever.

Right up front I must tell you that all my education and training at various schools did not prepare me for what was going to now take place in my life. I had been a pastor/preacher and was now moving to become a full-time teacher who would need to communicate cross culturally, working with translators and interpreters specializing in a number of different languages. The first major thing I discovered was that the English language had a huge vocabulary, but the Kachin language had a very small vocabulary and much of their language uses the tonal method to differentiate the meaning of words.

It wasn't until years later that I would begin to learn the importance of understanding people's languages and the individual words that make up their languages. As you read earlier, following Irene's home-going, I met and married Hkaw Win. After our engagement and marriage, we spent one more year in Canada so that Hkaw Win could finish her Master of Christian Education at Providence Theological Seminary. Two major things occurred during this time. One was that we needed to raise funds to go over to Myanmar as full-time missionaries.

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Hkaw Win had made a promise to fulfill a four-year term as Christian Education Leader with the Myitkyina Kachin Baptist Association. The second thing I soon began to realize was that I needed to learn a lot about communicating cross culturally, both in words and in one's gestures. There were many English words that Hkaw Win did not understand and there were many things from Hkaw Win's culture and tradition that I didn't understand. So, for the first number of years we were teaching one another and learning from each other but, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we were able to overcome many areas of misunderstanding.

What I want to share with you next is a quick overview of some of the things that I experienced, both personally and with Irene. I will also share a little bit of a testimony of what it is like to be a husband, teacher/preacher, and student – specifically in the country of Myanmar.

## **New Country, Myanmar**

It all started off with the board of Project LAMBS giving consent for beginning to open up discipleship training schools in Kachin State. We were blessed with the number of teachers who are willing to help spearhead this new endeavor of discipling the Kachin people. For the first trip I went on my own to teach a one-week module and to learn more about how the schools and materials, that we had prepared, were working in a cross-cultural situation.

I was glad that Irene could come along with me on my second trip to the country. For a number of years, she had been going through deep waters concerning the cancer in her body. But God had restored her and now she was over there to teach the book of Romans to the Kachin leaders. At the end of our

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teaching time in which Irene taught one class and I taught another module; our trip was completed with our very first graduation.

While we were there teaching, Sam Son was assigned to be my translator and Hkaw Win was Irene's translator. For the first few days after arrival in the country, Irene was sick and Hkaw Win spent a number of days being at her bedside, having fellowship, massaging her body, and just helping Irene in any way she could. After about three or four days, Irene's strength came back, and she was able to teach and to be involved in the graduation service.

Now, there's a little side testimony that I need to share here. When Irene was working on her Master of Christian Education at Providence, she wrote a missionary paper concerning a particular people group that lived in China, just across from the Myanmar border. She had a real concern for this people group, not realizing how they were connected to the Kachin people whom we were now discipling. She thought about how nice it would have been to be able to teach and minister to these people of whom she had written. This is where the miracle comes in, because on the day of graduation in Myitkyina two graduates came up to Irene and, in broken English, thanked her for coming to teach them. Soon she asked them where they were from and they told her that they were from the exact location about which Irene had written her mission paper. It was easy enough for us to tell that God was fulfilling one of her prayer requests to be able to teach this people group! Now these two graduates would go back into China and take with them what they had been taught, teaching it to their people and in their churches. But, like many things in life, everything is subject to change, and it would be this way for Irene. When she got home, there was a telephone message

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from our doctor, saying that Irene needed to come back to the hospital – because of the blood work that she had been given before she left. The results seem to show that the cancer in her body was not only back, but that it had spread to many other parts of her body.

## **New Name**

For a number of months following Irene’s home-going, I still sensed that it was important for me to continue Project LAMBS and to work with Sam Son on the vision of discipling and equipping as many leaders as possible. By now, a number of years had passed by and we were ready for another graduation amongst the Kachin people. Again, I would travel back to Myanmar, this time by myself, both to teach a module and to lead a graduation service. It was only a few months prior to that when I began to spend some time communicating with Hkaw Win on the Internet.

It was during this trip that the Myanmar leadership wanted to honor me by having a special naming service and banquet of appreciation. It was during this service that I was informed that I would be given a new name under the Kachin tradition and culture. My new name would be Lahtaw Zau Sam. Lahtaw would be my family or, as we might say in the West, my last name. Lahtaw would also be the tribe of which I would be a part, as an official Kachin. The name Zau signified that I was the chief amongst the people – a leader of people. Thirdly, the name Sam meant that I was knowledgeable and fast-moving. I believe they were trying to name me according to what they saw and how I lived. At the time, I didn’t realize how important this naming ceremony would be, but in years to come God used my Kachin name to open up many doors. Truly, I have been blessed to be a leader amongst their leaders.

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There was another event that occurred the following day as I met with our students. I felt it was important to pray for each student individually, and to lay hands on them, asking that God would fill them with his Holy Spirit and empower them for service as His disciples. I told my translators that I did not want them to translate because I believed the Holy Spirit would guide me and give me the words as to how to pray for over 80 students that day. But it wasn't until afterwards that I realized how powerful this time of prayer was; Sam Son, my translator, came to me with an astonished look, asking me how I knew how to pray for each of the students. He told me that my prayers lined up exactly to the specific needs of each individual student. That day he saw the miracle of how the Holy Spirit can lead and guide us and how we ought to pray for one another, if we will just listen to Him.

## New Family

Well, the time had come for Hkaw Win and me to move to Myanmar. This was going to be a challenge, not only for Hkaw Win, but also for family – because we would be moving into her Mom's house and living there. I would be going to this new country under a social visa, but I was also there by permission because my mother-in-law co-signed for me, becoming responsible for me in this new country.

All of us were going to experience culture shock. I would be living in a new home, eating different food, and dressing in different types of clothing. I would be constantly watched by the military police and would be followed to many places where I went. I had to learn to drive a motorcycle in all types of weather and conditions. But one thing I set out to do in the very beginning was to place myself under the authority and direction of Hkaw Win's Mom. She was a matriarch in the community and highly respected by her people. Even though I



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was a Rev. and a Dr., giving me a unique status amongst the people, I soon found out there were a lot of things that I needed to learn. My many years of education had not prepared me for living cross culturally – that appeared to take me back at least 50 to 75 years in time.

I had moved from a country that was becoming more and more individualistic in lifestyle, and was now living in a country that was community-orientated in everything they did each day. Because of that, often the agenda that you may have set out for yourself in the morning could be completely changed and not even fulfilled by the end of the day. Their relationships and their fellowship within the community were the most important realities for these believers in Jesus Christ.

Not only did I have to learn how to live with my mother-in-law, but also with the cook, other relatives, and several students who were lodging at the house. These students had come into the city from rural villages so that they could get a better education. I soon learned that there were very few spots where one could find some personal time for studying and reflecting. In some ways the house was like Grand Central Station with people arriving as early as 5 AM and sometimes as late as 11 o'clock at night.

## **New Language**

The next challenge I faced was trying to learn the Kachin language. As you may recall, I already had trouble understanding the English language concerning nouns, verbs, and adjectives, and how they all interacted with each other. I had always been blessed by God who put people around me who knew the finer art of speaking and writing English. This was one of my weakest points and you could say, like Paul, it was my “thorn in the flesh”.

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In her home, Hkaw Win's Mom and Hkaw Win herself wanted to continue learning English. But many people had encouraged me and trained my thinking that it would be important for me to learn the Kachin language for the purpose of someday, not only writing it and reading it, but also teaching and preaching to the people in their own language. But I soon discovered that this was not going to be an easy task. My mind did not seem to want to comprehend the structure of the language and, further, I was not very good at memorizing words. Also, I soon found out that some words, spelled exactly alike, could have up to a dozen different meanings. Following is just one small example – depending on the pitch and tone and on how the words are set up in a sentence – only then could one know or define the meaning of the word.

<b>Kachin</b>	<b>English Meaning</b>
Wa	Father
Wa	pig
Wa	teeth
Wa	come
Wa	to stay
Wa	to weave

This simple two letter word has at least 13 different meanings!

I think, after a period of years of trying, I can understand only about 20% of the conversation. In addition to that challenge there is another challenge. When it is more convenient, the Kachin also use Burmese. In fact, as you leave the house or the church, the language of communication is often

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Burmese. The market, the newspaper, radio, and TV are all in Burmese. I think you get the point!

Maybe the reality of multiple languages is what led me to begin writing a Bible dictionary in English/Kachin/Burmese. For years now, I have been gathering words; the struggle that I had with these languages has helped me prepare a tool which can help thousands of students, pastors, and leaders. God again surrounded me with great people to help in taking this large vision and bringing it forth to reality. As disciples, we are part of an awesome body of believers connected together by the Holy Spirit – He brings us together to fulfill His redemptive will, both in our lives and in the lives of others.

## **New Office**

Once we had arrived in Myanmar and were connected to a place to stay, the next challenge was to set up an office where we could begin to produce curriculum and tools to help pastors and leaders who we were training and equipping. We were able to connect with several young people, bringing them on as fellow laborers with Project LAMBS. It wasn't easy at first, because we had to find people who knew enough English in order to be able to communicate with me through the day while Hkaw Win was at work.

The members of the team that God helped us to put together have become lifelong friends. For many years now we have served together as fellow laborers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Again, it wasn't easy working cross culturally, but through prayer and a lot of sign language, many things got done.

Availability of electricity presented challenges. In the country of Myanmar, electricity is available only a few hours of the day, and the rest of the time one has to depend on gas or

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diesel generators. Generators are very hard on electronic equipment, especially computers. The other challenge was the heat and humidity which caused some of our computers to just simply burn out. We had to be constantly backing up our material on external hard drives. I needed to be careful with the Internet every day, because there seemed to be a host of viruses that attacked our computers and files.

## **New Schools**

As time went on, we were so blessed to be able to have five graduating classes; to this point there were over 400 students who had graduated. Each student completed over 12 modules which were made up of class time, papers, presentations, and exams.

It has been so exciting to see our graduates ministering in a variety of churches and schools throughout the country; some have even gone on to serve in other countries. In the last five years we have seen so many students become key leaders in a variety of positions throughout the Kachin Baptist Association. To God be the glory!

We've also been blessed to see that a new Bible College was established in the area five years ago. This school now offers a four-year program in Bible school training and a four-month program in discipleship equipping. But it hasn't stopped there – because, in other associations throughout the country, they also have followed the pattern that the school has laid out, and are now having various schools throughout the country.

The seeds that were planted 15 years ago are still bringing forth a harvest in a variety of places around the world. It has been amazing to me to watch what God has been doing worldwide with Project LAMBS International. The vision that

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was given birth in a garage in the little village of Marchand, Manitoba, continues to bear fruit for God's glory.

## **New War**

One day I was out in the country teaching an English class, helping college and career age youth better prepare themselves for further education; some of these young people might have the possibility of living in another country where the first language would be English. That day was going to be my last day of teaching because, Hkaw Win and I would be flying back to Canada within the next day or so. On my way home from the morning session at school, about 2 miles outside the city, I came across a convoy of about 7 to 10 trucks with heavily armed soldiers driving north into the heart of the Kachin lands. At the time I thought this was strange because I hadn't seen so many soldiers and equipment like this before. The Kachin Army and the Burmese army had a truce for a number of years but, when I arrived home, I mentioned it to Hkaw Win and her Mom, saying to them that there seemed to be something up. What I saw didn't look right. After a few days we were down in the capital city of Rangoon and it was announced that the peace treaty between the Burmese army and the Kachin had been broken and that the Burmese army thought it would take 5 to 7 days to destroy the Kachin Army and take over this part of the country. But God definitely had other plans for the Kachin (mainly Baptist Christians) who believe in the power of God and in the power of prayer. At the time of writing this book, this war has now been going on for over seven years and many hundreds of people have been killed, villages and churches destroyed, and over 160,000 Kachin people forced to flee their lands and live up in the mountains in IDP (Internally Displaced People) camps. Over the years my heart has been broken by what the Kachin people have had to face. The Burmese army

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has raped and murdered innocent people, destroyed their lands, and committed crimes against humanity, not only against the Kachin but also against other people groups like the Shan, Karen and the Chin peoples. It always amazes me how the world powers are not able to do anything to stop this horrendous purge of mostly Christian people of faith.

## New Challenges

About six years ago we received a phone call from Russell Hubert asking us whether we would come to Parliament Hill and speak to a hearing before a joint committee of the government regarding what was going on in the country of Myanmar and especially with the Kachin people. They would fly us to the House of Commons for a few days where we would give, not only a verbal statement to the committee members, but also would provide a written statement concerning the atrocities that were taking place. *(There is a written report that can be researched and downloaded for all, if one wishes to read it).*

Following Russell's call, we began to struggle with many deep emotions, trying to determine whether we should stand and speak up for the Kachin people or to remain quiet. The ramifications were many. Speaking up could result in us not being able to enter the country ever again. Not only that, it could cause all kinds of backlash on Hkaw Win and her family. It could also mean that the next time I entered the country, I could be sent to prison, being accused of bringing disunity and disharmony to the people of Myanmar. At first, they told us that we could give our testimony anonymously, but that using our names would have much more power and effect. Also, the things about which we would testify could be used to help bring charges of crimes against humanity against a military regime.

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That afternoon and night I spent a lot of time in tears, battling with many thoughts deep inside myself and wondering what I should do. I had been summoned by the Government of Canada to take a stand and relate the reality of what was truly happening to the Kachin Christians of Myanmar. I called Russell back the next day and, with the strength of the Holy Spirit, told him that we would come. We did not have a lot of time for preparation but, again with the help of some friends, we were able to produce a very thorough and documented paper which became the foundation of a report that was tabled in the House of Commons. Our personal names and the name of Project LAMBS was mentioned over 30 times in the report. We were also told that this report would be given to the Myanmar Secretariat in Ottawa. We knew that, if we were to give a testimony, there would be no place to hide everything would be out in the open for all to see and hear.

Not long after we arrived in Ottawa, we were sitting in the committee room being briefed by several people on what we should be doing and how to speak. (I also want to thank Wes and Kay McLeod who opened up their home for us and gave us counsel and encouragement over these days). We were now about to make history. The tables were U-shaped for the committee and we found ourselves seated at another table with microphones strategically placed in front of us. Around the other three tables were members of the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the NDP Party, all made up of people who had a deep desire to help the country of Myanmar and especially the Kachin people group. A report in both English and French had been printed out and handed to the committee members. I was given about 10 minutes to speak and then the rest of the time was made up of questions from the various leaders. God had truly prepared my heart. I had done a lot of

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research and studying of the Myanmar Constitution and was prepared to speak with authority concerning what was happening with the Kachin people. God truly fulfilled His Scripture where he said not to worry about what one would speak – for when the time comes, he would put the words in our mouths, and I believe this is what truly happened. I couldn't help but think how this rejected boy from the streets of St. Thomas was now speaking to the highest government people of our land.

After the session was over we got to meet with the key people from the various political parties. Later that afternoon, amongst themselves, they decided that this was an emergency and that they needed to go public with the media, both in Canada and around the world. So it was decided we would have a news conference the next day in which all three major parties plus myself would speak to the media concerning what was happening to the Kachin people of Myanmar and how the military regime was carrying out crimes against humanity.

Now things had moved, not only from writing a report and speaking in front of the committee, to the point where all of us were standing in front of the television cameras and proclaiming that something drastic needed to change in the country of Myanmar. (This news broadcast can be found on YouTube).

The events of this week shook my heart and soul deeply. I was so honored that I could speak on behalf of the Kachin and Christian people. The results/fruit of this event were that so many more doors were opened to us in a variety of nations – where we could teach and train people who had been oppressed and sometimes tortured by their governments because of their faith in Jesus Christ. We now decided that, no matter



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what the cost may be, the most powerful weapon in our hands is our testimony of Jesus Christ.

I must admit that the next time we entered the country of Myanmar, I did wonder what might or might not happen to me, but I had determined in my heart that, even if I went to jail, the enemy was not going to be able to destroy the testimony of what Jesus Christ had been doing and was still doing within my heart each day.

## **New Journey**

About a year after our testimony before the Government of Canada, Hkaw Win and I felt it was time to head back to that part of the world. But, as we were trying to decide where to go, we were advised by many Kachin leaders that it would not be safe for me to go back into the country because someone from the Burmese army could try to assassinate me, so we decided that we go to the northern part of Thailand to a place called Chiang Mai and make that our home base. There was a Kachin church in that city and, just outside the city, there was also a Kachin village which would give us opportunity to continue to minister amongst this people group.

It was during this time that I felt a burden on my heart and, after talking again to some of the leadership, the door opened up whereby we could fly into China and be smuggled through the border into the country of Myanmar where we could go and see firsthand what was taking place along the battle lines. After getting our Chinese visas, we flew into the city of Kunming and then took another brief flight over to another city where we were met by a taxi driver who knew all the procedures and, within about four hours after driving through a sugarcane field, we found ourselves in the Kachin state. At first it seemed that this would be as far as I could go. It looked like they were going

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to keep us hidden in the back part of a hospital where we would not be noticed but could still learn firsthand about some of the challenges regarding this Kachin war.

At first, I was disappointed that we couldn't get up to the city of Liza to meet with the church and the leadership of the Kachin people. But, later that day, another miracle took place. A truck arrived and picked us up with our luggage and took us over to army headquarters where many of the leaders, including one of Hkaw Win's relatives, were meeting. We had to wait in our room until the meeting was over, and then were called down to meet with the leadership. All around us, up on the roofs of the buildings, soldiers with machine guns were positioned. Many different people were coming and going throughout the afternoon. Finally, in the evening, we were summoned down to a common area to meet with the leadership and share with them the burden of our heart. After about 15 minutes, one of the head generals asked us what we wanted; he asked, "Do you want to go to Liza?" For me this was a real answer to prayer because I believed we were called to minister to the people, taking the encouragement of Jesus Christ to them. Then the general told us that, the next morning, we would head out by convoy through the mountain jungles, passing along the front lines of war. He had just one main request: Would I be willing to stop at various points along the way – rallying points of the troops – and give them a devotional and spend some time praying for them. I said I would be honored to do so.

Early the next morning we were summoned to go down with our luggage to where two trucks and two motorcycles were waiting, along with about a dozen heavily armed soldiers. After a word of prayer, we began to head up into the mountains along the muddy dirt road. As we were driving along, I noticed that the two motorcycles ahead of us were having trouble driving

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along the road. I asked the captain who was driving our 4 x 4 truck why we couldn't put them and their motorcycles into the back of our trucks with the other soldiers. He replied, "You don't understand what their purpose is. Their job is to be the first to hit the landmines. You need to understand that you and Hkaw Win, because you are God's servants, are so important to us that everyone in this convoy would, if necessary, lay down their lives for you so that you two could live." In my mind I couldn't help but think that these people didn't even know who I was, but they were willing to sacrifice their lives so that the Good News of Jesus Christ could continue to go forth in spite of war. Then I thought of the Scripture verse that said that there was no greater gift one could give than to lay down one's life for another. When I became aware of the significance of what they were doing, all I could do was weep quietly before my Lord.

Throughout the day we stopped at a variety of IDP camps as well as several military outposts along the way. At the camps, we were able to donate finances to help buy rice for the starving people and, at the various command posts, give a devotional and then pray for the soldiers. I must admit that, again, my heart was deeply moved, knowing that some of these men and women – within the next hours or days – might give their lives for the defense of their people.

By nightfall we had arrived at the city of Liza; on the way I sat low on the seat of the truck so that people couldn't see that I was there. As a white person I obviously stood out amongst all the Asians. Liza was a border city right on the edge of the country of Myanmar and China, divided only by a little checkpoint on the river.

The first thing they did was put us up in a nice room in a hotel owned by the Kachin army. After cleaning up, we went

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out to have supper and then began meeting with various community leaders.

Over the next number of days we traveled to various IDP camps and saw firsthand the destructiveness of what war does to people. It seemed that, in these camps, there were only women, children, and the elderly; the rest had gone off to war to fight for what they believed was the freedom that Christ Jesus had given them as His disciples. On one occasion, security guards gave me the opportunity to go up into the main war room on the second floor. On the rear wall of this room there were all kinds of maps, showing locations of the Kachin Army and the Burmese army. But the thing that amazed me the most was a sign written in large letters across the top of all the maps saying, “Jesus Christ our Victor”. These leaders knew Jesus Christ their Lord was the only hope they had in fighting an army well-trained and equipped by the Russian and Chinese governments.

A great challenge was mine another day – a challenge for which, I must admit, all my school training did not prepare me. That day I was asked whether we would go to several hospitals and bring encouragement to people there. Now that in itself was not a challenge, but after arriving at the first hospital (an Army hospital), I must admit I was not prepared for what I was about to see. In one large room there were about 30 men, each with an individual bed and often, beside them, was a family member helping to look after them and feed them.

But I will tell you the thing I was most unprepared for was moving from bed to bed and seeing many of these people who had lost legs from stepping on landmines or with arms blown off because of bombs and artillery. There were several people whose faces were completely bandaged – their facial features having been destroyed because of explosions. The

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doctors asked me if I could do a little devotional and then pray for the people. I agreed to do so. I would do the devotional, but I felt the Holy Spirit saying to me that, when it came to the time of prayer, that I was to go to each bed, lay hands on these wounded and sick people, and pray for them. Remember, I believe this is something for which no one ever could be trained, so I quietly called out to the Lord and asked Him to give me the words of wisdom on how to pray. Lord, how do I pray for a man who was waiting for surgery to remove a number of bullets from his body? Lord, how do I pray for those whose arms, legs and faces had been blown off? Each time the Lord gave me the words as I knelt down beside each bed and laid hands on the people. Jesus showed me that these people were willing to lay down their lives boldly for the Kachin people and for His church that he had birthed among them. So, I prayed that God would strengthen their minds and bodies and that they would continue to be His vessels for the glory of God in all that they were called upon to do in the future.

There are so many more things that I could share about this time that we spent in Liza; we went to various places where we met so many Kachin people and their leaders. We also went to various military training camps, sharing the Word of God and praying for the soldiers and their leadership. It was also during this period that we spent some time with the head general of the school where we measured the size of the soldier's pockets. You may well ask why! The general felt that, because these men and women were often in trenches for months at a time, they needed the Scriptures to read and teaching books that would encourage them. Thus, came the opportunity to get many of our leadership books translated into the Kachin language and downsized so that they would fit in the soldier's pockets. Not only that, but God also opened up the opportunity whereby we could do the same with a portion of Scripture with study helps

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so that the soldiers would have some of the Word of God to read while alone in the trenches. After a number of months, we printed 10,000 copies of the book of Matthew and had them smuggled back into Liza for the soldiers, IDP camps, and for the churches in that area.

This journey reminded me that God had called me and given me a heart burden to serve these people for the sake of Jesus Christ. He has called us to be His ambassadors of reconciliation for His people here on earth. This experience very deeply touched me and moved my heart into areas I never dreamt would be possible. But Jesus tells us that, when we are weak, He is strong. When we need wisdom, we can ask Him; He will give it generously to us but the key to all that we do, as His servants, needs to be rooted in a willingness to die to ourselves and our own wills, and to live as servants of Jesus Christ according to His will – He is our Lord, Savior, and King.

## **New Outreach**

Our journey with the Kachin people of Myanmar began to expand into other areas and even other countries around Myanmar. God was taking that which we had learned and was using it as “faith seed” to reach out to others in the Asian rim. Following are a number of amazing redemptive stories of God’s grace and love in which he used us to serve other struggling people. These accounts resulted from God stirring our hearts, providing for us financially, and giving us a boldness to step out (almost blindly) and go to places where most people would probably not have traveled.

## **China**

As already mentioned, to get to the backside of the country of Myanmar, we needed to go to China. As it happened, we were a day late getting out from where we were, and

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because of that, we missed our flight. We needed to fly from Kunming to Beijing, so I mentioned to Hkaw Win that, because we had such an unusual time with the Kachin, we should maybe just fly back into Thailand. But, Hkaw Win felt that we should go and talk to the person at the ticket counter and find out if we could continue up to Beijing. She asked me, “Haven’t you always wanted to go see the Great Wall of China and the Forbidden City?” I told her it wasn’t that important and that, maybe sometime in the future we could try it again, but Hkaw Win felt that God wanted to perform another miracle and show how much He truly loved me and how He wanted to give me the desires of my heart.

So, I went up to the ticket counter and told the agent that we had missed our flight the day before. He asked me if I’d ever done that before and I said no. Because of that, he said he would reschedule our tickets for later on that afternoon at no extra cost to us. To me this was an amazing miracle. The next thing we did was try to book ourselves into a hotel in the older part of the capital city, Beijing, but we soon learned that there were no rooms available because that week was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the communist revolution. The only hotel available would be outside the main part of the city. I was a little disappointed, but I trusted that God had something in mind for us. Later that evening we got to the hotel and were given a room where our bed was right next to the elevator shaft on the other side of the wall, and you can imagine what that was like all night long! But, in spite of all this, Hkaw Win believed that God was going to do something unique if we would just trust in His love for us.

The next morning when we got up, we began thinking about food. We had been told the night before that there was only one free meal that would come with our room and that one of us would have to pay for our breakfast. Hkaw Win decided

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that she would not go for breakfast, so I ended up going down by myself. But I soon discovered that this was part of God's plan because I met an Australian man who was having a hard time figuring out the details of the small buffet that the hotel put out for its guests, I did my best to help him and we ended up sitting down together at the same breakfast table.

After a short while I found out that this Man was a Christian of the Anglican faith, and he asked me what we were doing that day because he was going to church and asked if we would like to come along with them. I said no because I thought we already had made plans to go down to the forbidden city and I thought God was allowing us to skip church that Sunday, so we could fulfill some of these old dreams that I had when I was a child.

After finishing breakfast, I went back upstairs and told Hkaw Win what had happened and she asked me whether I had told him that we would or wouldn't go to church. I told her I had said no because we would be busy doing other things. He had told me that he would be leaving around 9:30 AM and if we wanted to go to church with them, we were to meet him down in the foyer of the hotel. But I made sure that Hkaw Win and I took extra time, so we wouldn't run into him. So, we went downstairs around 10 o'clock and, of course, there he was. He was having problems with his phone and was unable to make the connection with his people – the ones who were going to pick him up. He then asked if he could borrow our phone to make the phone call. Then he told us again that we should come to church with them, but this time he insisted very strongly, and my beloved wife said, "Let's go." She knew that God had a plan and that He was working it out even if I didn't see it.

Within a few minutes we got picked up by this couple, and the five of us headed off to the downtown part of the city of



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Beijing. We would be going to a church where the people rented a theater on Sundays. And, the only way you could get into the church was by showing your passport. Once we found a parking spot, we were on our way into the church where the service had already started. As we walked in, there was a tremendous anointing of God's presence on the place. Here we were, in the heart of the communist city, together with 1500 or 2000 people with our hands lifted up and praising God for all His love, grace and mercy. The sermon that the pastor preached that day deeply touched my heart, and I found myself just quietly weeping before the Lord throughout much of the service. I realized how negative I had been and how I had wanted my own way, but God was again going to show me His redemptive power, love and grace.

After the service, the couple and our new friend took us out for lunch and we had a great time of fellowship and were able to share with them about our discipleship ministry. Then they asked us what we were doing that afternoon. I said I wasn't really sure now at this point, and they asked us if we would like to go with them to the forbidden city – we could all go together. Here God was stepping in again. The unique thing that happened was that we went down there, and our hosts paid everything for us. God had worked it out ahead of time that we could go to where we wanted to go, but He was also going to provide a driver, food, and Chinese translators. Again, Hkaw Win reminded me about how much God surely loves us.

Later that day, after we got back to the hotel, I asked the manager if there was another room available. I told him that I would like to move because I found it hard to sleep with the elevator going up and down all night long, just on the other side of our bedroom wall. In broken English, he shared with me that, yes, he had another room that he was going to give us – a

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deluxe suite at no extra cost! This suite now had a full living room, two complete washrooms, two televisions, and a separate bedroom with a king size bed. By this time, we could see that God was going the extra mile and not only showing us His love, but lavishing it upon us!

Over the next few days we didn't see or hear anything from our new friends, but we did have an opportunity to go on several tours – they included one of the most exciting tours I've ever done, the Great Wall of China. We spent hours walking along the top of this wall that stretches over 21,000 km. That evening when we got back to the hotel, our new friend (who was also staying in the hotel and needed to check out) wondered if he could come and stay in our room until his flight went out in the evening. I thought that maybe this was why God had provided us with such a large room. Later that afternoon, after a time of prayer, he headed off to the airport.

Then the other couple called and asked us whether we would like to go out for supper with them so that we could talk with them a little bit more about the Ministry of Project LAMBS. He had a ministry in China and she had a ministry in Hong Kong. They felt that our materials and tools could be of great help to the people whom they served. Again, God was opening more doors so that we could help in the training and equipping of His disciples.

But when we got picked up, there was already another couple in the car, and they had all decided to take us out to a Chinese restaurant. It was a place that was large and full of many people because, again, this was the 60-year anniversary of communism. So here we were, in the middle of the restaurant having a very nice meal, when one of the couples (after they'd been chatting with some other couples from northern China)

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told us that these northern China people wanted to become Christians.

Our friends asked us if we could lead them to the Lord Jesus Christ. I said that yes, we could, and now I understood why God had given us a larger room, because now we could go back to our hotel and spend some quiet time there talking with them about the plan of salvation. But the couple from northern China insisted that they wanted to give their lives to Christ right here in this restaurant. They wanted this to be a memorable night that they would never forget. Now I need to tell you that I was a little nervous because China has strict laws when it comes to propagating and sharing Christianity in their country. I was thinking that if I opened my Bible here on the table with all these other people watching and then, through a translator, had them pray the sinner's prayer, it probably wouldn't be long before I would be going to jail. But again, God had everything under control. I shared some Scriptures with them and they prayed the sinner's prayer out loud and, at that moment, made a strong decision in their hearts to serve Jesus Christ no matter what the cost would be. I personally couldn't believe what was happening! In fact, I was so shocked that I had them write out a short testimony and sign it in the front of my Bible because I knew people back home probably wouldn't believe what had happened.

But that wasn't the end. They now asked the waiter to take a group picture of all of us around the table and, after completing that, we went outside and, in front of the hotel, took some more pictures. For them, this was the most exciting thing that had ever happened to them. Then we decided to go get some food, snacks and drinks, and go back to our room because these people now wanted to be discipled in Jesus Christ. It was around 9:30 at night and they wanted me to teach them some

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basic things that would help them in their walk with Christ Jesus. What immediately came to my mind was that I should teach them about prayer. I felt that there was nothing more important that they needed to know than how to communicate with God and how God would communicate with them. If, at least, they could establish this line of communication, they would be able to do many things as Christ's servants. By around 11:30 PM that night we began to spend time in prayer and, as they began to pray and call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, He began to deeply touch their hearts with His joy and love. Christ began to flood their hearts powerfully with His Presence. By the time we had finished praying I asked them whether, through their prayer time, they had personally met Jesus Christ and heard His voice speaking to them. They both just smiled at me and said, "Yes". Again, what a powerful evening! We will probably never see each other again until we all get to heaven, but God had shown Hkaw Win and me that He was the Sovereign One and the King of the whole universe, and that He, at any time or any place, was able to carry out His divine will no matter in what country we might find yourselves. We serve an awesome God!

## India

There was another trip that God was placing on my heart; I didn't know how it would take place but, again according to His sovereign will, He made it happen. It all began when Dr. John Lucas asked us whether we would consider going to India to do some discipleship training amongst a number of people groups with whom he had been working and providing support over the last number of years. I told him, at the time, that we could not go because we just didn't have the finances to take on another trip and project, but it wasn't long before he called me back and asked us if we would go if he would pay for all our tickets and travel. After a few days we

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responded in the affirmative, and we were again about to see another number of miracles taking place. God was preparing to connect us with a variety of people groups and give us the opportunity to train and equip people for Jesus Christ. We would be able to teach leadership, for God Himself would provide us with locations to teach and places to stay.

Over our six weeks in India, we were able to teach and preach at crusades, open up a Bible school, and even dedicate new churches for God's glory. We met with hundreds of pastors in a variety of cities. We also saw a number of our books translated into different languages and then be printed, dedicated, and handed out to thousands of people. My heart was so often deeply moved during my time in India (some of the visions are described in the appendix of this book). God spoke powerful truths into my heart, showing me that, not only was he going to use me to teach others, but He was going to use my brothers and sisters in the Lord to teach me and to move me into a deeper walk with my Lord Jesus Christ. Never had I been so deeply moved, and also deeply empowered by God's Holy Spirit, giving us wisdom and understanding of how we could equip people for the work of service. The Body of Christ is not dead. It may be going through struggles, persecution, and trials, but in the midst of all this, is becoming strong. He is being highly lifted up in the nations around the world.

## **Naga Land**

Following our time along the East Coast in the southern part of India, the Lord opened another door whereby we could team up with ministry people from Canada who were doing some training amongst the Naga people. Here again, our hearts were deeply touched during the many revival meetings. We went from mountaintop to mountaintop, visiting churches and communities that had once been full of headhunters, but now

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were believers in Jesus Christ. Amongst this people group, thousands were coming to Christ. During the revival meetings, we saw many come forward and receive salvation, healing, and deliverance from various types of bondage. We were told later that, because of the many meetings that took place, revival didn't stop following our departure, but continued on, and many more people experienced salvation and the church continues to grow in love because of the gospel of Christ.

It was there, while I was staying amongst these people, that God began to put several visions in my heart (as recorded in the appendix section of this book). My heart was being deeply stirred. The people in Naga Land had a hunger for the Word such as I had not seen in a long time. The presence of Christ flooded over me, and His Holy Spirit was with me, helping me to disciple and equip His people for service. We provide them with materials and tools. It was not long after we left that they translated the Bible Information Handbook into their language and distributed thousands of copies amongst the believers. They also printed and distributed over 1500 of our Bible Dictionaries and Concordances, new tools that they had never had before.

There is so much that I could share about our six weeks in Naga Land but, again, I want to just focus on the redemptive plan of God, not only for my life, but also for the lives of people with whom we came in contact. While I was in Myanmar, I heard about a village of Kachin people amongst whom God was doing a powerful work. We didn't even know where the village was or how we would get there. We didn't know if it would even be possible to go there because the government did not allow foreigners to go to certain places in this part of the country. But, as usual, Hkaw Win always seemed to have some type of connection with people wherever we went, and this

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applied here as well. It turned out there was a young man who actually knew me from the time I had been teaching in Myitkyina and he was now in our area. Of course, it turned out that he was from the exact same place where this group of people lived – once Buddhist but now converted to Jesus Christ.

We were able to make the connections by phone and then fly to the city where he was. He reserved a hotel for us and, after we arrived, we got to meet with him and some of his friends. He told us that he had arranged a taxi for us. We would have to take an approximately eight-hour journey north and, sometime in the evening, we would arrive at an old traditional Kachin home out in the middle of a tea plantation.

Following our arrival, we were given a small room with only a curtain in the window. The walls and floors of the house were made with bamboo; the house itself was built on stilts and underneath was where the livestock slept at night. Hkaw Win and I had what you might call a small single bed with a one-inch mat to sleep on. Our washroom and shower were the outside. This may sound primitive to many who read this but, for me, I was glorying in the experience. It was as if I had stepped back in time where I could experience what many missionaries went through when they first came to these places some 100 to 200 years ago.

Our time with these people was amazing beyond what we could possibly have believed. The doors were opened whereby I could teach at the children's school and then do discipleship training at night. On Sunday we had services with the local body of believers and, because I was an ordained minister, they wanted me to serve them communion on the last Sunday. But I need to tell you how this community of believers came about and what God was doing because, again, He showed us that He was not limited in His power and authority.

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The main leader of the church was a former Buddhist monk and a leader amongst his people. But somewhere along the line he was able to get a portion of some of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and he began to read it. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God began to touch his heart from Jesus' own testimony of Himself as given in the Gospels. He began to realize that he was serving a dead religion; he had now been shown a true faith in the One Who had died for him because of his sins. He then gave his heart to Jesus Christ and it wasn't long before his wife and children also became believers in Christ, in addition to some of their relatives. But at the same time, he became ostracized from the community in which he had grown up. His other relatives and friends did not want him to be part of their activities anymore, and several times he was beaten by other monks because of his leaving the Buddhist faith and their way of life.

Now God had brought Hkaw Win and me to this place, and God was doing something miraculous amongst a small group of people. Not only had they began building a small church, but had also begun to establish a Christian school. What was so unique about the school is that, because of the war in Myanmar, they decided to take in nine children from Myanmar to teach and educate them, not only in various subjects, but also in their faith in Jesus Christ. One of the amazing things that took place (because of where the children come from), these children knew how to find things in the Bible and how-to sing hymns from the hymnbook. So, on Sunday during the morning service, the children would teach the adults how to sing hymns and read the Scriptures out loud to the congregation. Now these people were overjoyed that God had not forgotten them and had divinely brought them a teacher who could help ground them in their faith after all these years. I had the honor of being the first



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white person to ever come to this area, and I am trusting that one day I will be able to go back again.

God did another thing during this time; we had the opportunity to travel even further north in India to meet a number of Kachin people who were Buddhist. At first, I didn't know how they would accept me, but I felt God was leading me to speak to them about their culture and tradition (which I had studied and written about extensively). Also, I felt led to speak to them about how some of their Kachin words have traditionally been used over hundreds of years of history. It turned out, as I was sitting with these elders, I pulled out the Gospel of Matthew which we had translated into the Kachin language, and began to explain various words to them and what they meant in the Kachin language. They were so surprised what I knew and, by the end of our time together, we had become friends. The senior elder of the group even gave me a special gift and prayed for me, that God would continue to use Hkaw Win and myself amongst the Kachin people. God had shown me that He was fulfilling the promise that was given to me in a prophetic word on the last day of my engagement ceremony in Hkaw Win's home. As you may remember, I had humbled myself before Hkaw Win's mother and submitted myself to her as a matriarch in the community; the pastor had said that because of what I had done, God would give me much favor wherever I went amongst the Kachin people. And to this day that has been true in many, many countries around the world. God's love, mercy and grace have filled my heart with his redemptive power, giving me the ability to truly traverse this world as His ambassador of reconciliation.

## Malaysia

After we had been in Thailand for a while, God was speaking to my heart about going to Malaysia to see the Kachin

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who, because of war and persecution, had fled the country of Myanmar. Again, we just bought our tickets, not sure where we would be going and who we would be meeting when we got to the country, but the Lord opened up another door. As we got off the plane, people texted Hkaw Win, confirming that we would be picked up at the airport – it turned out to be the pastor and one of his leaders. They had booked us a hotel in the capital city and we were on our way there. Again, God was showing us how he would go before us if we would just trust him. We were now in a strictly Moslem country and would be ministering to people who were there, either under the auspices of the UN, or even illegally.

It wasn't long before God began to open up many opportunities to meet both leaders and pastors. Almost every night we would be out ministering in various churches where the services would often start around 10:30 PM and, most of the time, I wouldn't get up to preach until midnight. The services were often over between 1:30 and 2:00 in the morning. Then we would go out for a meal and have great times of fellowship.

During our time in Malaysia we did get to see some unusual “touristy” things, but we also got to work with leaders who, under the UN, were trying to help people who seemed to have no recognition within the country. Often many of them would get picked up on the streets at night and put in jails and detention centers where, sometimes, they would have to stay for six months or more with little help or hope. Life was very challenging for the Kachin people but, in spite of all these difficulties, their faith in Christ seemed to become stronger and stronger each day. These persecutions and trials were driving them to become a strong body of believers. Again, our hearts were deeply touched. We were able to minister to many people

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and see many others come to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ and His salvation.

We were in Malaysia for about 10 days and, even during that short time, it wasn't easy going, because there was a lot of conflict – even amongst various people groups. There had been a number of bombings in the country and it seemed like certain Muslim groups were trying to kill and put fear into other Muslim groups. One day after one of the bombings, we went to the mall and security was very tight as it was around the Christmas season. Soldiers with machine guns, grenade launchers, and 50 caliber guns mounted on trucks were everywhere. Inside the mall there were more soldiers with machine guns and dogs. I must admit that, during these times, Hkaw Win and I were a little bit nervous and felt that we should maybe stick closer to our hotel.

During these many “side trips”, God had not only spoken to our hearts but also shown us how much He loved us. Also, He showed us how much He cared for His children. We never knew where He would take us next. We would wake up in the morning with little or no agenda but, by the end of the day, God would fill it in with all kinds of meetings where we could teach His word and encourage others in their faith in Jesus Christ. God opened doors that we thought were impossible to open and gave us favor, not only amongst the Christians, but also amongst the non-Christians. All He wanted us to do was to seek His face and walk in accordance to His will for our lives. Many times, I had to tell the Project LAMBS board that I didn't know how much money it was going to cost or who we would be training, or how long we would be gone, but all we (as a board) knew deep down in our hearts was that God was commanding us to go and to simply trust Him. All I can tell you is that He has fulfilled our wildest dreams and, through His

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great love, has taken care of every detail just like a father would care for his children.

## **New Emphasis:**

Our emphasis over the years has changed somewhat. We used to do a lot of discipleship work within local churches and communities. Now we spend much of our time discipling and equipping church leaders to do the work of the ministry within their own local churches.

Also, as a strong believer in the doctrine of salvation, I've taken a large amount of time to reintroduce this doctrine into the churches of Myanmar. It seems that, over the last 20 to 30 years, many people were going to church more out of a cultural religious upbringing than through a personal salvation experience in Jesus Christ. As I've taught the doctrine of salvation, many churches have been blessed to see thousands of people make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Now they not only know about Him, but understand Who He is. They know what it is to have Him living through their lives each day and seeing the "living water" flow from them to others.

We have also continued to prepare more leadership books which have been translated into a variety of languages and distributed throughout the churches so that people can learn more about Jesus Christ and His teachings. We've also encouraged church leaders to catch a deeper vision of, not only discipling the people that they serve, but also to begin to prepare people to do mission work, both in their own country and abroad. We need to help them see the bigger picture of how God wants to network people together. In these last days the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is growing and maturing, but there is still more work that needs to be done and there is still a great need for people to go out and preach and teach the good news of Jesus Christ.

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Hkaw Win and I have been so blessed to have this opportunity to go forth and visit so many communities of believers around the world and to help them in their personal faith and journey with our Lord Jesus Christ. In every school and every training time that we've been able to do, we have seen God's miracle hand touching people's lives and making changes, both in their personal lives as disciples, but also doing the same in local churches where they serve.

I must say, that in each of these chapters, so much more could be written. The things that God has shown us, and the things that He has done through our lives, have been numerous and miraculous. I stand in awe of how God can take a person like me from the streets and inject me with His redemptive grace and love, and then give us the ability to go out and serve others in His Body, in so many places where we never dreamed it possible to go.

The journey of life has many twists and turns, but God is there to lead us each day, helping us to grow in Him. We truly are branches that He has taken and grafted into Himself so that we can bear fruit that will last. I have seen how Jesus Christ turns negative and challenging events into positive, both for His glory and for His people. His redemptive power is always there, but we must turn aside from the things of this world and accept His plan and will for our lives and then to walk every day as children of His Kingdom. He is truly a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Psalms 119:105). Today He desires to use each one of our lives in a unique fashion, grouping us together with others so that, through His redemptive power, we can have the opportunity to serve Him – not so much because of who we are but because of Who He is in us. Each day of service prepares us for more exciting ministry for Him, both today and in the future.

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The foundation stone of the above testimony come from Proverbs 3:5-6

**Trust in** the LORD with all your heart,  
*(Make Him LORD of your life.)*

And **lean not** on your understanding;  
*(Think outside of your own box.)*

**In all** your ways **acknowledge** Him,  
*(Bear testimony of Him daily.)*

And **He shall direct** your paths.  
*(Fill up - Rise up and walk in Christ.)*

***Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ!***

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## Chapter 9

### Redemptive Power during Writing

I am not sure if this would qualify as a “thorn in the flesh” for me, but spelling and grammar must be right up there! I like to spell words the way they sound and, also, I have a lot of trouble with homonyms (words that sound the same but have different meanings). For many years I tried to avoid teaching in a formal setting because, when I wrote on the blackboard or overhead, I couldn’t tell if I had spelled the word correctly. I also felt that people had a higher expectation of me because, not only was I a pastor, but I also had a doctorate degree.

I have these various degrees because God put around me many, many friends who could spell and who knew how to write grammatically correct English. When I graduated with my doctorate, I threw a party to which I invited all my friends and thanked them for all their help. They really made me look good. I told them that this doctorate was not just mine, but ours. We did it together.

I felt that, as long as I just preached, I was okay. But in 1996 God called me into discipleship equipping ministry and this would require me to write out complete Bible school courses in point form. To this point the Lord has enabled me to write out more than 20 courses on a variety of topics. These courses have now been taught in many countries around the world but, again, I owe much gratitude to a list of proofreaders.

After Irene’s home-going God brought, as you know, another wonderful lady into my life. She was the one who encouraged me to write various booklets on leadership. She told me to keep them short and to the point. Pastors don’t like reading big thick books. With her help and prayers, I have been

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able to complete another 23 books that have been used by many churches and have been translated into a variety of languages worldwide. God has been so good! His redemptive power, grace, and love have never ceased to amaze me.

Over the last six years we have begun to experience the Holy Spirit impressing our hearts with the importance of writing and providing Bible tools. Many of these tools have come about because of various pastors having a need, asking whether there was any way that we could prepare tools that would help them with their leadership in serving the Body of Christ. What follows is a description of how we tried to answer their questions, and we have seen many amazing miracles as a result.

## **Bible Information Handbook:**

This particular book began to take shape about five years ago. I was teaching a class to a number of pastors in Chang Mai, Thailand. After the second day of teaching, they inquired as to whether we could produce a book that would help them as pastors. Also, they needed a tool that deacons could use as they went and ministered in various homes. So, after sitting through a full day of classes, they were willing to come back in the evening and spend another two hours, working together as a team, putting together some ideas of what should be in this Bible information handbook.

After the teaching module was completed, we continued to gather information from various sources, compiling 34 chapters of various pieces of information that would help leaders in their work of service throughout the Body of Christ. After compiling the information in English, he began the work of translation. Several people would come over daily to our apartment in Chang Mai, preparing the materials in the Kachin



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language as well as English. After about a year of working through the manuscript and having several people proofread it, it was ready for publication. Since then, we have published over 220,000 copies of this handbook; it has been distributed in various parts of India, China, Cuba, Mexico, as well as throughout Myanmar in both the Kachin and Burmese languages, plus a variety of other languages and countries.

But we soon saw that God was not yet finished and, since that time, we have now seen this handbook published in more than 18 different languages worldwide. People from a number of countries just keep coming and volunteering their time, translating this tool so that their people will have resources, both for themselves as well as for the people that they are discipling. Again, it has been truly amazing to see what God has been doing with this booklet. Shortly you will read how this book has been taken and made into apps so that people can download it onto their android phones. The Holy Spirit can, and has, raised up people from various places around the world, connected them together in service so that His disciples in the Body of Christ may grow and mature.

## **Disciples' Dictionary and Concordance:**

This Bible tool came about when we first started discipleship training amongst the Kachin people in the northern part of Myanmar. We had already gone through three graduation classes but, in the fourth cycle, we realized that people needed some type of dictionary and concordance whereby they could research and find things in the Bible for themselves. They needed a tool in their own language that would help them study and prepare messages from the Bible so that they could preach, teach, and equip others for Jesus Christ.

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It took over a year to gather the information and, in many ways, we are still gathering information for this book. At first, I didn't know what to do with all these notes, but God opened the door for me to go over to Payap University in Chang Mai, Thailand, where I met some very encouraging people. They were part of the Wycliffe team and SIL group that specializes in getting the Bible translated into the languages of various people groups. Also, they have a program called Flex where one can learn how to build a proper dictionary. So, within a few weeks, I was in their course learning how to assemble a workable dictionary which pastors could use in their Bible study.

Now, it's important that you see God's humor in all of this! Remember, I'm a bad speller and I'm not good at grammar, and now God was asking me to prepare a Bible dictionary/concordance that people using English, Kachin, and Burmese, would be able to use as a source of information for growing in Christ Jesus. I even got a certificate from the linguistic school, stating that I'd successfully completed the course. From there, I met more technicians who helped to give me an understanding of another program which could be used for Bible translation. The miracle that took place was that God gave me the ability to understand how to take two separate programs, FLEX and Para-Text, and run them simultaneously on my computer. I was then able to take information from these two programs and prepare a document which has now become a mini-dictionary/concordance. It is over 450 pages in length and, as of this year, has been translated into an English/Kachin and English/Burmese Bible tools. Our goal is to put this tool into 10,000 Kachin pastors' hands and 10,000 Burmese pastors' hands. Also, with the help of Webonary, it will go on the World Wide Web as a tool that people can use for their research and then, one day, it will be available as an app, downloadable on

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one's phones and tablets. Again, I can see the redemptive hand of God in all of this. I sometimes think of that verse where God says that He will take the foolish things of this world to confound the wise – this has definitely been true in my own personal life.

## **Disciples Principle of Faith:**

Through people in various churches, God began to challenge me about grounding people in theology and doctrine. I could sense that in very many churches the whole area of teaching has declined, and most people only attend the Sunday morning service. Churchgoers need to be asked two simple questions: 1) Do you believe that we are in the last days? 2) Do you believe you know enough of the Bible so that you will remain grounded in the truth of God's Word, not falling into some type of deception which Scripture teaches us will be rampant in the last days?

Then pastors in Asia began asking me if I could write some type of theological book which they could use as a tool to help ground the church in doctrinal beliefs. The underlying reality is that many believe true doctrines, but don't have the understanding of why they believe them. I was amazed that pastors repeatedly kept asking for help in this regard. I discovered that this was being asked about, not only on the mission field, but also in various churches throughout North America.

I must admit that theology was not one of my top 10 classes which I most enjoyed when I attended Bible school. To tell the truth, I felt that theological courses were something that you needed to get through so that you could arrive at the point where you could do what God was calling you to do. It's only been in the latter years that I realized good theological training

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is the foundation stone upon which everything else needs to be built. Again, it seemed as if the Holy Spirit was asking me (with the help of others) to compile a teaching book that could help the church become more equipped and disciplined in the doctrines of faith.

In the vision that God gave, such a book should be laid out in a systematic way, but that it would be done a little differently than teaching was traditionally done. I was not going to argue a certain position or justify why we believe the things we believe. I believe God was calling me to write a handbook that would help disciples of Christ – those who had already made a commitment in a personal way to Jesus – to truly understand what it is that they believe, and how the Bible works itself out in their everyday walk with God.

God clearly showed me what was needed in this book and what I should do about it. At the time of this writing, it is close to 440 pages of basic material that, if studied, will help the student to more deeply understand how the word of God can affect their life and journey here on earth. This book now has become a template that other people groups are translating into their own languages. It will be used as a teaching tool within a variety of denominations around the world. God has put together a team of proofreaders to help me assemble this tool in such a way that it will be simple enough for the every-day person on the street to understand. Again, I must say how I've been overwhelmed by God, and by the response to this tool that He is using to help others grow in Christ Jesus.

## **Matthew:**

The idea of producing the book of Matthew as a Scripture portion came from touring the front lines in the Kachin northern state. The soldiers had no Bibles or even a

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Scripture portion at all, and so the leadership asked me whether we could produce a portion of Scripture that would be small enough to fit in their shirt pockets while they were on the front lines. So, again, we took up the call to begin taking some of the information learned at Payap University and applying it to the preparation of the book of Matthew. We needed to correct some of the mistakes of the old translation, and we wanted to update the Scriptures with cross-references and titles for easier access and understanding.

But even after we printed 10,000 copies, this wasn't the end, as God seemed to be leading us to do more. Soon we saw the need for materials for the children in the Internally Displaced Camps in which people were finding themselves because of the war. So our attention turned to adding full color pictures to the Scripture portions for children. God provided us with a wonderful artist who produced all the pictures we needed for the book of Matthew. We also added some study helps (such as a prayer for salvation) at the end of the book. But still it seemed that God was not yet finished with this vision that He had placed on our hearts. More copies were needed, and now this Bible booklet of Matthew has been printed over 35,000 times and is being used in Kachin summer schools and Christian schools, where teachers can use it as a tool to help their students learn to spell and read the Kachin language.

I believe in the power of the Scriptures and, if we can just get people to read the Word, God through his Holy Spirit will speak into people's lives and draw them into a personal relationship with Him.

This project has deeply touched my heart; many times, I have found myself weeping, thinking about where I came from – living on the streets of St. Thomas, a broken person heading down the pathway of destruction – but now experiencing the

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redemptive power of God's grace and mercy. Because of His power, He was now asking me to take His Holy Word and prepared for the Kachin people.

Our hope is to one day complete the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, as well as the book of Acts; we envision cross-references, titles and full color pictures throughout. This project alone would take over a year of full-time study and writing but, Lord willing, we believe He will give us the strength. We hope to fulfill this bigger vision one day in the future.

## **YouTube / Facebook:**

Over the last number of years, began to produce teaching materials that we could upload to YouTube and Facebook. Of course, anytime you start something new, a brand-new large learning curve forces one to learn a whole new language and way of doing something. We've produced a number of 15-minute discipleship teaching videos which people can now view. Our hope is to do a lot more of these videos but, again, it takes time and people who, not only understand this technology, but can make possible the promotion and production of materials which will be available to people from around the world.

Over the last while we've also been setting up a Facebook site for Project LAMBS to which we can upload and share information for people all over the world. I've been told many times that younger people in North America do not use Facebook very much, but we have learned that the Asian community uses it quite extensively. We have close to 5000 followers and the majority of them are between the ages of 18 and 25. Just think about that for a few moments – every time we post something, we are reaching out to this large number of

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people, both Christian and non-Christian. Again, we face many challenges with this project because of the work that is needed to be posting every 3 to 5 days, but I must tell you that we have received many requests for prayer and discipleship materials from many, many countries. This is yet another door God has opened, and with the help of fellow servants, we hope to minister to these people in a variety of ways, both through written and video blogs. This avenue has also allowed us to come into more personal contact with people through the Facebook messenger service whereby we can both text and even call people free of charge worldwide! We have seen that most people need someone to give them hope and encouragement. They also need someone who can help direct them to Jesus Christ Who alone is the answer to all their needs.

God wants us to be vessels of His redemptive power to all peoples throughout this world; He doesn't want us to just hang on to it for our own needs. We serve an amazing God and, if we are just willing to put ourselves into His hands and work alongside people in His Body, through the power of the Holy Spirit, he will continue to change people regardless of their nation, their language, or their tribe.

## **Apps:**

Two years ago, God connected us with the Bible Society in Myanmar and, through that connection, we met a student who, while studying to be a dentist, was also very knowledgeable in the building of apps. As of this writing, the Bible Information Handbook is not available at the Play Store free of charge in English, Kachin, Burmese, Spanish, Chinese, and the Philippine languages. This is a tool that fully one-third of the world's population can now download to their phones and study for personal discipleship, as well as for the equipping of others whom they serve. Again, this is amazing to watch.

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God brings people together worldwide to accomplish something for His glory

If the reader is interested, he or she can go to the Project LAMBS website ([projectlambs.com](http://projectlambs.com)) and see what has been accomplished over the last 23 years through the power of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, when I have the opportunity to go back and teach a course, or just take the time to read one of the leadership books, I am amazed by what the Lord has done – how He spoke the materials into my heart and then surrounded me with people to bring to fruition the equipping material for the Body of Christ Jesus worldwide.

As you can see, God truly does take the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. I've been so honored and blessed by God. He has shown me so much grace and mercy that, even in my weaknesses, He has shown Himself strong. People who know me well also know that the materials and tools that I've written and assembled together – these people very definitely realize this had to be a God-directed calling. He has taken me far, far beyond my ability, and I pray that all the things that He has helped me to do will strengthen His disciples and bring honor and glory to His Name.

God's redemptive power is given to us so that we can be channels through which He can flow out into the lives of others. I truly believe that God today is working through those who are willing to die to self-will and commit to living a God-directed discipleship lifestyle. God is redeeming people today through faith, if we just believe He can and will use us as His redemptive disciples for His glory.



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## Chapter 10

### Redemptive Power as an Apostle for Jesus Christ

As I've stated previously, my parents gave me two names, not knowing that in some ways it has turned out to be more prophetic than I would ever have dreamt. As I look back over 45 years of ministry, I can see that God used me as a "James" for the first 24 years in Canada. But then, 21 years ago, after God did a miraculous work in my heart, I became "Paul", a missionary who would travel not to just one country but one who has now traveled to over 30 countries – teaching, training, and equipping people for the work of service.

A few years ago I was just attending a Sunday morning service in a church. A fellow pastor and friend of mine, Gerry Broesky, began sharing with the congregation and, I believe, his words were directed very specifically to me. To all who were there that morning, he stated how he felt that God had called me to be a Paul to the nations. He said that I would travel to many parts of the world as Paul himself had done, but that, at various times, I would also come back and report to the church or churches as to what God had been doing in these various countries. At the time, he did not know that my middle name was Paul and, after he finished proclaiming this exhortation, I put up my hand; he recognized me and I said, "I need to let you know that this is a confirmation of what God has been doing in my life already. I also need to let you know that the middle name my parents gave me over 60 years ago is Paul."

For the first number of years I was a discipleship trainer, working with various churches and denominations, helping congregations to become more equipped in the Word of God itself. There is a great need for believers in Christ to have a

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deeper understanding about the truth of God in the doctrines of faith.

As I have traveled the journey that the Lord has given me, I can see that He is bringing things into greater focus – for now I am more like Paul, equipping and training the Timothy’s and Titus’s of churches as well of different denominations worldwide. I’ve been blessed to see a convergence of the next generation getting a clear call from Christ Jesus to serve leaders within various denominations. But these leaders still need fathers who will give them hope and encouragement by providing them with resources and tools so that they can carry out the work of ministry for God’s glory.

Because of the ability that the Internet affords to us, it is a joy to be able to minister in so many countries every month. Many of these men and women just need encouragement and support, not only physically, but emotionally and spiritually as well as they need the call that God has given them to work in His vineyard.

Over the last three or four years the message I’ve been receiving from the various Timothy’s is about how I might be able to help them become servant leaders for Jesus Christ and then, teach them how to transfer that servant leadership principle to the people under their care. As Jesus said in the Scriptures, the harvest is truly ripe, and we need to pray for laborers (Matt. 9:37-38). What I have seen is that there are many laborers around the world who are willing to serve and even to lay down their lives, but they need to be networked with others so that they will know and understand that they are part of the true Body of Christ worldwide. They need to know that they are not forgotten individuals, but that they are a team of disciples of Jesus Christ, proclaiming the Gospel of to a lost world.

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As time has passed, I have more clearly seen how multifaceted ministry works. I have seen how God uses these leadership gifts to direct and help His Body around the world. It has been made clear to me that I have a number of these leadership gifts. For many years I felt God had given me the gift of evangelism through preaching. Now, in the latter years, it seems that the gift of teaching is strengthening and becoming more prominent in my life. But in the last year or so, it is gradually being confirmed by many that God is also giving me the gift of apostleship – to be an overseer and equipper for pastors and missionaries in Canada, as well as around the world. Many times, the word has come to me personally that God has given me favor amongst the nations as an apostle.

This leadership gift of apostleship has really humbled me, and sometimes terrified me, because of the responsibility and accountability that comes along with it. Well I know that the very words we speak and the books that we hand out can have a dramatic impact on people's lives, potentially for both good and evil. Our communication can draw people closer to our Lord Jesus Christ or can potentially drive them far away into falseness and deception.

## **Apostleship Outreach Overseas: (Cross cultural ministry)**

Over the last number of years, the Ministry of LAMBS has become more focused on equipping and training leaders around the world. The result is that I have, in effect, become pastor/shepherd to thousands of leaders worldwide. I have been blessed by the privilege of teaching and equipping them with tools that will help them to do the work of service; it's not been all one way, however. Many of these people have also poured into my heart words of encouragement, allowing my faith to take me to new and deeper levels of trust in my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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Following is a list of countries to which God, through His redemptive power, has called and gifted me, allowing me the honor of doing the work of service and apostleship amongst His people.

**Myanmar:** Military dictatorship/semi-democracy: Buddhism

**Thailand:** Military dictatorship/semi-democracy: Buddhism

**Japan:** Democracy: Shintoism/Buddhism

**China:** Communist: Confucianism/Taoism/Buddhism/Ancestor  
Worship

**India:** Democracy: Hindu/Sikhism/Buddhism

**Malaysia:** Democracy: Islam/Buddhism

**Vietnam:** Military Dictatorship: Buddhism

**Laos:** Military Dictatorship: Buddhism

**Philippines:** Democracy: Roman Catholic

**Jamaica:** Democracy: Protestant

**Dominican Republic:** Democracy: Roman Catholic

**Mexico:** Democracy: Roman Catholic

**Cuba:** Military Dictatorship: Roman Catholic

**Ukraine:** Democracy: Catholic/Orthodox

**Israel:** Democracy: Judaism/Islam/Christian

What I see above is that the Church of Jesus Christ is alive and growing. Within these countries, there are people who have a deep hunger, not only to be disciples of Jesus Christ, but to be leaders who will disciple others as well. The desire of their hearts is to be equipped for the work of service and to be given

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the tools that are needed so that they can help other leaders in their countries. Often, they need fellowship/relationship with an older brother and sister in the Lord – people who can encourage them in their faith walk with Jesus Christ.

Again, my travels have shown me that, though the harvest is truly ripe, the laborers are few (just as Jesus said in Matthew 9:37-38). When we, as leaders, take up the call to go out and lead others, we will soon discover that there are many thousands of other leaders who, with all their hearts, desire to serve the people with whom God has entrusted them.

There is such a great need in the world for apostleship ministry to bring together, in harmony and unity, the community of believers in Jesus Christ. God’s design for leadership structure can be likened to a skeleton for the body. That’s where it starts. Then the Body of Jesus Christ needs to move with strength, mobility, and power, being a true lighthouse for Jesus Christ and his Kingdom here on earth. There is a “bigger picture”. It is time to lay aside our “little boxes” and views in which we may have been trained at various Bible schools. We need to connect with others and help each other; sometimes that may mean allowing others to come alongside or even “stand on our shoulders” so that they can reach the potential of the calling of Christ in their lives for the people whom they serve. In James 4:10, the Scriptures tell us that we need to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift us up.

It would be easy to write another book, testifying of what I’ve seen and experienced in every one of these countries – people who are willing to lay down their lives, people willing to suffer for the cause of Christ. My heart is challenged daily with the needs that there are in these countries. In many of these countries, Christ’s disciples and leaders live under dictatorships

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and military regimes where, in the last number of years, these regimes have taken up the offensive, trying to destroy the local churches that are found throughout their countries. Yes, they have, in many cases, successfully destroyed the buildings, schools, hospitals, and many other Christian endeavors, but they have not been able to destroy the faith that dwells and lives deep within these people's hearts. The world thinks that, if it destroys the outward, it has also destroyed the inward temple of Jesus Christ, but this is far from the truth, because suffering and persecution has only strengthened the Body of Christ even more, in most of these countries.

## **Apostleship Outreach Canada:**

In my pastoral journey with the different denominations across our land, I started off by being involved with the Evangelical Fellowship Baptist churches, then with the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement. From there, when I moved out to Saskatchewan, I became involved with the Northern Baptist churches. Then, after graduating with my BRE from Briercrest, I moved back to pastor in Steinbach. There I was an interim pastor for one year at the EMB church. It was during this time that I met Pastor Glen Forsberg. He was the senior pastor at the Full Gospel Chapel in Steinbach. He was the president of the Steinbach Ministerial and I was the secretary. It was during these meetings that we began to discern each other's hearts and our calling for the Lord Jesus Christ.

After completing my one-year internship at the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church, Pastor Glen approached me and asked me if I would consider coming on as their youth pastor and evangelist at their church. I learned that this church was part of the Fellowship of Christian Assemblies. After prayer and seeking the Lord's will for our lives, we decided to work part-time on their ministerial staff at the

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church. This was to happen while I was working on my master's degree at Providence Theological Seminary. But it soon became evident that, as the youth group began to grow, that my intentions of a higher education were not going to work out and so, after a few months, I went on the church staff full-time. It was the following year (June 1981) that I was ordained by the Fellowship of Christian Assemblies.

As I began to learn the background and history of the FCA, this became a starting point and I soon saw that this was a comfortable fit for what God was laying on my heart in terms of being His servant in the future.

I spent four years there as a youth pastor and they were gracious to give me time off with pay during the summers so that I could complete my master's degree at Briercrest. But, as it turned out, as time drew closer to graduation, there was also a "change in the wind" taking place at Full Gospel Chapel. Pastor Glen was stepping down and moving to Wetaskiwin; Irene and I felt led to move on. We became the senior pastors at McMurray Gospel Assembly in Alberta. There we had a wonderful three years of ministry and were involved in building the new sanctuary but, after those three years, it became time to renew our commitment for another three years. It was at that time that we felt God was calling us to take some time to spend with our children in the Steinbach area.

After some time, I was approached about becoming the senior pastor at Full Gospel Chapel in Steinbach. Things were not going well at the church, and they felt that God could use Irene and I to help bring healing and direction back into the church. The people were very gracious to us because we had gone through several years of challenges within our own home and we kind of felt that we didn't measure up to be leaders, and especially to be the senior pastor of the church. But they shared

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with us that our journey would be the foundation that God would use to help bring healing into their church. I will always be thankful for that season of time when we came together for Christ's glory – the church was able to minister grace to us as we were able to minister grace to the church.

As I mentioned earlier, it was at about the end of a four-year term that I began to sense that God was calling me into a different type of ministry. My mind and my heart had been challenged to go out and make disciples, and to bear fruit that would last. I wanted to see quality, not quantity. I believed that missions, evangelism, and discipleship were all needed, just like three legs of a stool, keeping things upright and able to move forward for Christ as his body of disciples.

My journey with the FCA over the last number of years helped me see and be involved in things that have stretched me far beyond my abilities. I had served as a secretary at conventions. I've been on committees that helped set up the FCA doctrinal statement. I'd helped lay the groundwork for an eldership team that would be overseers for the FCA pastors across Canada. I had opportunities to attend conventions, both in Canada and the USA and, over the years, have met and had great fellowship with many wonderful brothers and sisters in the Lord who so often spoke words of encouragement into my heart.

It was in 1996 that I left the pastoral side of ministry and moved in to full-time mission work. At first, I didn't understand what all this meant and how it was going to impact my life, but my heart had been dramatically touched by having served as a leader who focused on discipleship making. This often took Hkaw Win and me out of the country for long periods of time, and I'd meet our FCA pastors only when speaking in their churches or at their conventions. It was during this time that my



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heart became more open to the direction that missions was going in the FCA itself. It seemed to be a time when overseas missions were decreasing, and home missions were becoming elevated to a higher place of prominence within our FCA churches in Canada.

It was during these times of fellowship and, especially at conventions, that I began speaking up concerning the direction of missions within the FCA. Speaking with key pastors in Canada and the USA, I sensed that we were of the same heart, and that something needed to be done to move the profile of missions to the higher plane on which it had been founded many years past.

It was in 2015 that the delegation at our FCA convention in Toronto voted to appoint me mission coordinator. At that time there was no job description or term of office but, as we began walking down this road, I could see, that once again, missions was becoming part of the DNA of the Fellowship of Christian Assemblies across Canada. One of the first tasks was to help coordinate how we could highlight missions in a more specific way within our conventions. Our first attempt at this was at the Grand Prairie convention where we added another day on to the convention. Delegates were asked to stay the last day, Friday. That day we would focus on highlighting different missionaries and their work. Together, we also had round table interaction discussing some of the challenges that missionaries and churches were facing. I was very pleased to see the results that came out of these times. Pastor Glenn Breikreuz and his team did a marvelous job of making the first missionary focus session a success.

It was also during this convention at which the delegates were asked to discuss a motion to consider appointing me an Elder of the FCA in Canada. For two reasons, I struggled a lot

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with this idea. Not only was I not pastoring a church in Canada but, because I was a missionary and spent most of my time outside of Canada, I would not be able to communicate well with the other elders. But they insisted that this would work out okay and, if I could be a part of only a few of the elder's meetings, at least I could bring a perspective of missions outside of Canada.

Since that meeting, we have had another convention, this one occurring in Cornwall, Ontario. Again, on the Friday, we had about 45 people remain to hear various missionaries teach and exhort on different issues that they faced, and things they learned while they were on the mission field. A book entitled "Missions and Missionaries" was featured; I had written this book from the perspective of my first 23 years of life as a pastor. Also, it was a testimony to what I had learned over the last 21 years as a missionary. Again, my heart had a smile as I realized that something, I had written could possibly be of worldwide use in helping both pastors and missionaries understand some of the challenges when the missionaries were at home as well as when they were abroad.

From these two conventions, as mission coordinator and as an elder in the FCA, these roles provided me with the opportunity to make sure that all missions would be featured at our conventions each year. As elders, it was our responsibility to ensure missions were highlighted at our conventions in Canada as well as internationally. I must tell you that one of my weaknesses is administration, and I must rely on others to do the organizing of the details for conventions. I am so grateful for the help given me by the elders and various others who have moved this vision of missions within the FCA to a higher level of consciousness in our churches and at our conventions.

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There has been an increasing clarity of the need to better connect missionaries and churches as well as to strengthen the lines of communication within the FCA and abroad. As I've learned in conversation with missionaries, I began to realize the pain and struggles through which they go, and how that many of them feel lonely and even feel a sense of being second-class citizens, as it were, within our FCA.

Our next convention was the International Convergence in Winnipeg in 2018. At this convention we decided to move away from the one set day for missions, and that the concept of missions would be integrated throughout the international convention itself. Missionary speakers would be highlighted, and mission video blogs would be shown throughout many of the key meetings, climaxing in times of prayer for the missionaries themselves. I quickly realized that, as missionary coordinator, much more needed to take place because, at this convention, we had over 55 missionaries attending. This was very exciting for me, seeing them mingle with each other as well as with the pastors, building bridges of relationship that I believe will last for a long time. You may find it strange, as a reader, that I put this information into a testimonial book concerning the redemptive power, grace, and love of Jesus Christ in my life. But, again, you need to be reminded that I was an orphan, my mom and dad having left me, at the age of eight, living on the streets, living a life of stealing, abusing myself with drugs and alcohol. I had watched my life disintegrate. I wasn't good enough in school or other types of education and yet, now find myself as an elder, mission coordinator, working and serving over 450 pastors and missionaries Canada wide. And, because of this last convention, God connected me with our missionary coordinator (an Elder in the USA) and seeing the like-mindedness that we both have – it really touched my

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heart. I never dreamt that I would find myself in such a place as this.

Over the last three years, you could say that the biggest challenge I faced was this whole concept of leading others. I have never felt that I was good enough to lead in such a way. I like the idea, and feel safer as a follower, rather than as a leader. But, about two years ago, even though I had been leading in many areas, God once more confirmed my role by speaking to my heart, reminding me what He had called me to be; I should now stand up in His church, in his Body, and be a leader for His glory.

I can see that my responsibility as a leader within the FCA, churches and, most of all, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, is to build relationships and bridges between Christ's disciples. We should be focusing on how we can come alongside each other, helping each other, and serving each other in God's Kingdom. The purpose is not to rule over each other, but to rule together as leaders under the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Following this convention, I could hear more clearly the cry of the missionaries, how they have big hearts for serving in the Body of Christ wherever that may be, but they do need "fathers" who will speak openly, and help be an encouragement to the younger generation. Bridges of fellowship need to be built so that missionaries will not feel alone but will feel part of a greater movement for God, both in North America as well as around the world.

The ministry walk is not an easy journey. Worldwide, there is so much out there that is counterfeit; however, where there is counterfeit, there is also the genuine. The church needs overseers can see the "big picture", people who can see the

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local as well as the worldwide reality. Ministry is not something you claim for yourself; it is given to you by others in the Body of Christ. I must admit I often struggle with this gifting as it means that, on occasion, I need to give a corrective word in love to both leaders and disciples within the church. But, again, I have been called by Christ Jesus and I need to accept this call and the responsibility that goes along with it. I also need to accept that what He leads us to do today, he empowers us to accomplish. What He is done in the past, He will do now. He has equipped us and trained us so that we can, for others, be conduits of His redemptive power, grace, and love. Since I have accepted His redemption, I also need to live it out. I need to plant the seeds of redemption in the hearts of the people around me. Freely I have received – now freely I need to give.

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## Conclusion:

*Then Jesus explained: My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work. You know the saying, four months between planting and harvesting. But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest. The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! You know the saying, one plants and another harvests. And it's true. **I sent you** to harvest where you didn't plant; others had already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest."*

John 4:34-38 (NLT Bible)

As I look back, I can see God's redemptive plan for my life, and I can see how He wanted me to be an ambassador of His redemptive work. The journey has not been easy and it seems that one lives in a state of constant flux while being molded into that which He has planned for a particular season of life. The key here is to realize that He doesn't stop molding us into His image. The Father's grace and love are always there. He is the vinedresser Who grafts into our lives things that are needed, but He also removes those things that are harmful and unfruitful.

My journey in Christ has been possible, only because of His redemptive work for me on the cross of Calvary. He died so that I could live. He covered me with His blood so that I could enter the Holy of Holies where I could bow before Him as my Lord and King. I pray that, as God gives me breath, He will also give me knowledge, wisdom, and understanding as to how to serve others, encouraging people around the world, and fulfilling the call of being a "Paul".

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One final reflection: Psalm 119:105 states, “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*” Truly, He has fulfilled this Scripture in my life, and continues to do so. To God be the glory, great things he has done!

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## Appendix

### Radio Poem

*God, I don't understand the people in the world that I live.  
They seem to come and go like a fever,  
And I see there is no one who wants to stay  
In some places and time everyone runs astray.*

*My mind is going for the evil,  
Even though I do not try to give.  
It seems that friends and friends until everything is at an end,  
But why are there no friends just because you have met your  
end.*

*The world is blaming us kids for all that is going wrong,  
But no one thinks about what they done.  
Where and the hell are they when you want them.  
Uptown drinking just like a kid.*

*Then they say, we are the ones who have gone astray!*

The Kid  
January 1972



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## **Vision One: Rod of Fire**

One afternoon I lay down for a rest and, even though I was tired, I could not immediately fall asleep. It wasn't long though, after praying and asking God to give me strength (I had been feeling weak for so many years), that I did fall asleep. I had been dragging myself around, and my lack of strength was one of the main reasons, at first, that I did not want to go on the India trip. I had even complained to my doctor about how I felt. But after he ran several tests and had me checked out for several things, he finally said there was no reason for me not to go on that trip to India. It was in this state of thinking that a vision came to me.

The vision consisted of a glass tube full of energy. It was clear, like glass, but there was a tremendous light radiating from inside the tube – with electrical beams flashing out like lightning bolts. It was radiating a lot of power. Then I saw the hand of God take this tube of power and place it inside me. It was plugged into my brain and, then inside me, it went along the full length of my spine. This power began to radiate throughout my entire being. The power began to heal and restore. At that moment I woke up, and I knew something powerful had happened.

Not only was this a vision, but I soon realized that God had stepped in, answered my prayers, and healed me. He told me that this season of weakness was now over, and that He was restoring me back to full strength. But I needed to be wise as to how I walked and lived for Him.

## **Vision Two: Missionary Train**

It was between 4:30 and 5:30 Friday morning, March 13, 2015. I woke to the sound of someone shoveling coal into

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the fire bin of a steam engine. When I looked to see who it was, it was Jesus, smiling at me and saying, “Morning!” That was the end of the vision but, even though I woke, the vision was very clear and fresh in my mind. What you are about to read is what I saw during the vision.

The steam engine was sitting on a side track with a switch to the mainline in front of it. The engine, coal car, and train car were all hitched together. There was not yet a coach because, along the journey, more cars would be added. As the trip continued, other cars would be switched off and on at sidings. Sometimes we backed up from a point and connected with them. There were times of backing up and times of moving forward. People from the past, in those extra cars, were connected to the future.

The first “switch” before me was for Friday, the day we were leaving. As we moved from Nagaland to India and on to Asia, the Holy Spirit was about to throw open another switch. It seemed as though, in the future, the train would come back to many of the same places, but this time with people and supplies, providing encouragement, food and help for people along the mainline.

It seemed the train itself had been sitting idle for a while, being refitted and overhauled and prepared for the journey that lay ahead. I believe this vision took place when the rod of fire was placed inside me during the first vision of healing and restoration in Pastor Joe’s church in India.

Today there was a readiness as we got into the car for Asia; there was the first chug of the engine as the wheels began to move. The Holy Spirit is waiting at the switch. Praise the Lord, He is ready to throw the switch and open the line so that we can continue traveling and ministering to others.

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The train itself was clean, black, and shiny – a refurbished steam engine. The fire was going and the steam building. Jesus Christ was standing with the coal shovel, a beautiful smile on His face. It seemed that He was excited that the trip was about to begin. Within moments He called out to the switchman that the line should be opened, and the journey begun.

The coal car was filled with gifts and prayers. It seemed as if the different pieces of coal had on them the names of people who had given and prayed for this ministry. The coal car was now full and ready for the trip. Jesus was shoveling these precious gifts into the engine. These would heat the boiler and drive the wheels.

The car attached behind the coal car look like a box car but, as I glanced inside, I saw Bibles, books, school courses, resources, gifts for children, children’s books in different languages, and even some bags of food. There were over 1 million pieces of material to be delivered along the way. Many different languages were represented on these gifts. The car was full.

As we traveled further down the mainline, we picked up a passenger car and, in this car, were people from various countries – people with whom we would connect to help distribute, translate, teach, and serve with a vision of wanting to bless, serve, and lead others to Jesus Christ. We were to pick them up for a season and/or drop them off at places where they would be needed to serve. We also would pull into stations along the way and freely give out supplies. It seemed as if the more we gave out, the more remained inside the large train car. God was doing a miracle of multiplication.

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When I looked down at the tracks, a voice came to me and said, “These tracks represent the will of God.” These tracks would lead and direct us to places we were to go. There would be sidings along the way where we would make short stops. At each stop we would connect with more people – and each time such a connection occurred, the train seemed to jerk forward, connecting us all together for service.

As I recount and write out this vision, something powerful arises within my heart and soul – a fire that I have never experienced before. It seems as if my lungs are filling with fresh air and that there is a strong readiness to see the wheels turn. My eyes seem to be on the engineer who keeps shoveling, as well as on the gauges as the pressure builds and on the giant piston and wheels that are about to begin turning. The whole train is ready. Soon the brake will be released, the cars will tighten up, the switch will be thrown, and the journey will begin. Ah, Lord, use my engine for Your glory. With your anointing power, fire the wheels of this old engine in response to the call of the people.

I can feel the power rising up and surging through my bones. The call from the altar placed deep within my heart has resulted in the Lord’s anointing flow. It results in a deepening feeling of faith and assurance, as well as much anticipation of the future, knowing that no matter what happens, I am like an athlete in the starting block, ready for the sound of the gun. I feel strength in my firmly planted legs. The train is all connected, the coal car is full, and the rest of the cars are now tightened up, ready for the first thrust of the steam coming from the fire in the engine. I can almost literally feel it. Ah, my Lord, I am excited and ready. My eyes are clearly focused on You and Your will for my life. I may be an old steam engine, but Christ has refitted me, and I feel totally renewed and ready. One of His

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hands is now reaching to release the brake and the other is reaching for the throttle. I feel the power surging through my veins.

I pray, O Lord, that this vision will be fulfilled according to your timing and that You will bless others who desire to serve You. May they “get on board” and also be “refired” for service to the nations and people who still need to hear Your Gospel.

## **Vision Three: Full Gospel Discipleship Book**

While I was in Nagaland, I woke early one morning with a vision of a manuscript concerning something that God was laying on my heart to write. I saw various diagrams as well as a complete outline of what should be in the book. The vision was so strong that I went up to the rooftop of a building with a note book and began to write. This process of waking up early and going to the rooftop overlooking the city, went on for days but, after about a week, it was completed. Then, when I arrived home, I began to type it. The key focus that God wanted me to see was that many people misunderstood the total ministry of the Holy Spirit, seeing only a small part of what He does. Also, He wanted me to see that He was God of order, just as He demonstrated with creation. He wanted me to see that the Holy Spirit arrives in an orderly fashion and that He has a step-by-step process through which he takes disciples of Christ. His goal is to make us effective servants in the Body of Christ. He also showed me that the church, by and large, was just picking up the crumbs from the table, and that the Holy Spirit has so much more that He desires to do in and through our lives. So, for those who are interested, you need to get a copy of this booklet – it all came about through a vision and word of wisdom and knowledge.

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## Visions Four: Marriage supper of the Lamb

A number of years ago, while I was reflecting on the whole subject of Jesus, our King and His Kingdom, and thinking how that in the book of Revelation the following phrase is repeated seven times: “Out of every nation, tribe and tongue and people. (NKJB)” Because I travel the world, I have seen so many different people groups who worship and praise God in very unique and special ways. They express worship to God from their hearts, and commit themselves to serve Jesus Christ, no matter what the cost. And I soon began to realize that, when we get to heaven, I believe all the uniqueness of tribes in peoples and nations will still be reflected in God’s Kingdom – this is what is going to make the Kingdom of God so wonderful. It was during this time of reflection that God gave me the following vision.

What I saw was amazing. The church had just been raptured into the heavenly realm. The great body of believers was filing into the Kingdom of Heaven through these unbelievably beautiful open gates with an angel on either side. As people were moving through the gates, I noticed that a variety of different cultures, people groups, and nations were represented. Everyone was talking and excitedly chattering because the day which they had all been anticipating – meeting Jesus for the first time face-to-face – was now at hand.

The next thing I saw was thousands upon thousands of people gathering around in this large open area. At one end of this area was a platform and, seated thereon, were God the Father and Jesus Christ; hovering over and above was the Shekinah glory which, to me, represented the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit. On each side were six more thrones, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. People were excited to be in this place. The area was full of much jubilation. Then it seemed,

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within a few moments, the gates through which everyone had passed, were now closed. The Son of man, Who was also the Lamb of God, began to stand up. There was a great hush that came over the people, and all eyes were focused on Him.

What I saw next was so amazing. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, walked to the far front of the platform and, pointing at us and then turning back to His Father, said these words: “Father, it is my joy to present to you, for the very first time, my bride.” At that moment there was a thunderous, joyous sound of praise that came up from the people.

The next thing that took place was that the Father Himself stood up, as it were, to greet the Bride of Christ. Between the Father’s throne and the throne of the Son, the platform appeared to open up as a doorway into another great meeting area and, in this area, there were tables prepared for us to celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb. The tables were beautifully arranged. Everything was perfect. All that was needed was laid out before us. And, as we began to file in between the two thrones, we knew it was time to sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb. What I realized at that moment was at all Scriptures, all covenants, and all promises had now been completely fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ. At that moment the vision came to an end, and I knew I had seen something that would forever completely change my life.

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## Report Card

**CITY OF ST. THOMAS  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Progress Report

**Grades 1, 2, 3.**

Pupil's Name *Jim Humphries*.....

Grade *3*..... School *Locke's*.....

SCHOOL YEAR 1962 TO 1963

Teacher *Mrs. F. Davis*.....

Principal *L. Rickwood*.....

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**SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE**

TO PARENTS:

The child's attitude towards school affects the degree of success that he will achieve.

Parents can help create desirable attitudes by taking an interest in what the school is doing, by encouraging the child in his efforts to interpret the school programme, by keeping in touch with the child's teacher, and by refusing to discuss any topic in the presence of the child which could weaken his confidence in his teacher or the school.

It is important that parents get to know their child's teacher. Interviews can be arranged after school hours by contacting the School Principal.

E. C. REEB,  
Superintendent of Public Schools.



# Redemption

## PUPIL'S ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Name *Jim* .....

SUBJECTS:	FALL TERM	WINTER TERM	SPRING TERM	FINAL
1. Reading (Oral)	D	D	C	D
2. Reading Comprehension	D	D	E	E
3. Printing or Writing	C	C	C-	C
4. Phonics	C-	E	E	D
5. Arithmetic	C+	C+	B	B
6. Spelling	E	E	C-	E
7. Language	E	E	D	E
8. Social Studies	E	E	E	E
9. Health	E	E	E	E
10. Art	C	C	C	C
11. Music	C	C	C	C
12. Exercise Books	E	E	E	E
<i>Science</i>	E	E	C	E
<i>Medians</i>	C+	C	C	
Average	D	E	D	E

LETTER SYMBOLS: A—Excellent      B—Above Average      C—Average  
 D—Below Average      E—Unsatisfactory.

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## TEACHER'S COMMENTS

Fall Term Jim seems to have a nice cheerful disposition. I believe he could do better if he ~~kept~~ <sup>kept</sup> beyond. He becomes little inclined to work & what he does is messy. I believe the work is beyond him.  
 Reading at home about will help. Also help him with his adding tables, which he doesn't know. He bothers everyone near him.

Winter Term Jim's general Arith. has improved - when he gets it finished.  
 It will take much improvement as you can see, for him to succeed in his year. His work is still very messy and I sometimes wonder if it is his eyesight that is affecting it. He complains he cannot see the B. Board & the nurse says he needs his eyes tested by an eye Dr. Could you see your way please to have this done?

Spring Term Conduct shows slight improvement. As you can see the overall picture shows the work is still beyond his ability to do.

	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June
Effort	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	
Conduct	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	C	
Days Absent				1	2		1	7	1	
Times Late										

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Name of Pupil *Jim Humphries*

**SCHOLARSHIP**

A. 80 — 100 Outstanding Achievement (Relatively few children)  
 B. 70 — 79 Above Average Achievement  
 C. 60 — 69 Average Achievement (Majority of children)  
 D. 50 — 59 Below Average Achievement  
 E. 0 — 49 .....(Note comments)

Letters are used in Grades I, II and II  
 Grades and marks are based upon daily work, tests and examinations.  
 Where a number of D and E grades occur, an interview is recommended.

S U B J E C T (POSSIBLE MARK, 100%)		FALL TERM		WINTER TERM		SPRING TERM		ESTI- MATE FOR YEAR
		Pupil's Mark	Class Avge.	Pupil's Mark	Class Avge.	Pupil's Mark	Class Avge.	
Oral Reading 1—6	L	D	C	D	C	D	C	D
Printing and Writing 1—8	L	E	C	D	C	D	C	D
Spelling 2—8	M-	20	72	14	73	25	72	E
Composition 7—8	M-							
Language 1—6	M-	61	67	58	68	53	64	D
Grammar 7—8	M-							
Reading Comprehension Literature 1—8	M-	49	70	60	67	57	69	D
History 7—8	M-							
Social Studies 1—6	M-	47	65	42	65	54	66	E
Geography 7—8	M-							
Mathematics 1—8	M-	80	72	70	79	66	68	B
Science 1—8	M-	44	61	54	66	60	65	D
Health and Physical Ed.	L	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Art	L							C
Music	L							C
Indus. Arts - Home Econ.	L							

# Redemption

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## Disciples Gospel Creed:

1. I do believe and confess in the Living Word of God who, in the beginning was and is God, who created all things and without Him nothing was created, and as the Word He became flesh and dwelt amongst us, the only begotten of the Father who is full of grace and truth
2. I do believe and confess in the virgin birth of the second person of the Triune God Head, God's Son, Jesus Christ through the woman Mary and that she was imbued from on high by the power of the Holy Spirit and conceived and gave birth to a Son whose name is "Emanuel, God with us".
3. I do believe and confess in the life of Christ who lived and taught here on earth proclaiming the Father and the Kingdom of God, exemplifying to all that He was the only way, truth and life, and that one should take up the cross and follow Him.
4. I do believe and confess in the physical death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, where He bore my sins and opened to people a way into the Holy of Holies where we could stand before the Father, clothed in Christ's grace and righteousness, proclaiming that we have died to ourselves and now live our all, as disciples, for Jesus.
5. I do believe and confess in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ that after being dead for three days He rose victorious from the grave, becoming the firstborn among many, putting to death the old man and making way for a new man, clothed and filled with His power and truth.
6. I do believe and confess in the ascension of Jesus Christ, that from the time of the resurrection, to the day He was taken up into the clouds, being seen by many, is now in paradise, preparing a place for the disciples, interceding before the Father on our behalf.
7. I do believe and confess in the Holy Spirit who, as one of three Persons of the triune God, is sent by the Father to regenerate, baptize into Christ's Body (the Church) and fill believers (His disciples) with power, anointing them with the fruit of the Spirit,

# Redemption

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gifting them with gifts so that they can serve the body of Christ Jesus throughout the world.

8. I do believe and confess in the one church of Jesus Christ, which He birthed on the Day of Pentecost through the Holy Spirit, Jesus being the head, making her a living organism, with the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ on earth and giving to her His presence of love, making her a place of refuge, encouragement and nurturing, a place from which the teaching of Christ would go out, a place for all who would receive Him as their Lord and Saviour to have fellowship.
9. I do believe and confess in the second coming of Jesus Christ, that He will soon come again with His army as Lord and King, defeating all enemies and binding Satan and putting to death the curse of sin and disobedience once and for all, resulting in a new kingdom and new earth and heaven.
10. I do believe and confess in the literal place called heaven, where all will be judged, a place where the Lamb's Book of Life is kept, a place where one day, as a disciple, I will go, a place of no more sickness or death, a place where I will become a new creation with a new name, a place where we will come face to face with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, Redeemer for all who have believe in Him, and that we will gather together with Him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, worshipping and adoring our King Jesus for all eternity.

I now and forever confess my total allegiance to My LORD and King Jesus Christ both now and for all eternity. Amen.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*This came to me during an early morning time of meditation and prayer at Hkaw Win's home in Myitkyina. God was challenging me to challenge others to take a total stand on what the Full Gospel of Jesus Christ is and to stick to it no matter what the cost may be.*

# Redemption

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## Redemption for All

### Scripture Reading:

... You redeem my right of **redemption** for your self, for I can not redeem it. He has sent **redemption** to His people: He has commanded His covenant forever: Holy and awesome is His name. O Israel, hope in the LORD, for with the LORD there is mercy and with Him is plenteous **redemption**. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads because your **redemption** draws near. ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the **redemption** that is Christ Jesus. Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the **redemption** of our body. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and **redemption**. In Him we have **redemption** through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. In whom we have **redemption** through His blood, the forgiveness of sins ... but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal **redemption** for us. And for this reason, He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the **redemption** of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

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Ruth 4:6; Ps 111:9; 130:7; Luke 21:28; Rom 3:23-24; 8:23;  
1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 9:12; 9:15

### Discipleship Directive:

Redemption, Christ's amazing gift of love through His sacrifice, saves us from the penalty of our wicked ways. This word is linked closely to the word salvation. In faith, whoever chooses to believe in Christ's redemptive sacrifice, will be saved (See the words redeem and Redeemer.). A picture of redemption is illustrated to us in the book of Ruth, where Boaz claims the right of redemption. It comes through Naomi who is a relative and because of that it leads to Boaz claiming the hand of Ruth in marriage. He became a kinsman redeemer. Christ was sent on a mission by the Father to be our personal redeemer if we so choose. Redemption works two-fold. One, it is a gift of salvation that Christ paid for us through His shed blood on the cross of Calvary and

# Redemption

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offers to us by His grace. Secondly, it is also a lot like sanctification where it is an on-going process as we walk out our journey as a disciple here on earth. Each day the Holy Spirit continues to draw us to a deeper walk in Christ Jesus and this is where we become more mature where the results produces fruit that will bring honour and glory to Christ. He is daily pouring out His redemptive power on and into our lives, redeeming us from our daily struggles and trials. Therefore, Paul states to the Colossian church, *“In whom we have **redemption** through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (Col 1:14).”*

## **Dedication Prayer:**

Dear Lord, I want to thank you for the redemptive work that you did on the cross for me. You knew that mankind’s only hope could only come through salvation. By your coming to this world you opened the door to redemption and you so freely gave it to us by your unfailing sacrificial love and grace. I stand in wonder of how each day you show us areas that you desire to redeem us from so that we can enter a deeper personal relationship with you. I pray that you continue each day to send forth the Holy Spirit to teach me and encourage me to understand how broad your redemption and power is for those who will trust in faith to you.

Your servant,

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# Redemption

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## Redemptive song by Fanny Crosby, 1882

(1) Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,  
His child and forever I am.

*Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever I am.*

(2) Redeemed, and so happy in Jesus,  
No language my rapture can tell;  
I know that the light of His presence  
With me doth continually dwell.

*Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever I am.*

(3) I think of my blessed Redeemer,  
I think of Him all the day long;  
I sing, for I cannot be silent;  
His love is the theme of my song.

*Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever I am.*

(4) I know I shall see in His beauty  
The King in whose law I delight:  
Who loving guardeth my footsteps,  
And giveth me song in the night.

*Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever I am.*

(5) I know there's a crown that is waiting,  
In yonder bright mansion for me,  
And soon, with the spirits made perfect,  
At home with the Lord I shall be.

*Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever I am.*



# Redemption

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## Pictures



**The Humphries Family**

# Redemption

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*We've  
shared  
so  
many  
memories!*



*I am the Way the Truth and the Life!*

# Redemption

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*Our first mobile Gospel team!*



Fountain Sunday School Bus

# Redemption

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*Jim with his grandfather and father*

# Redemption

*Visiting Pastor Don after  
25 years!*

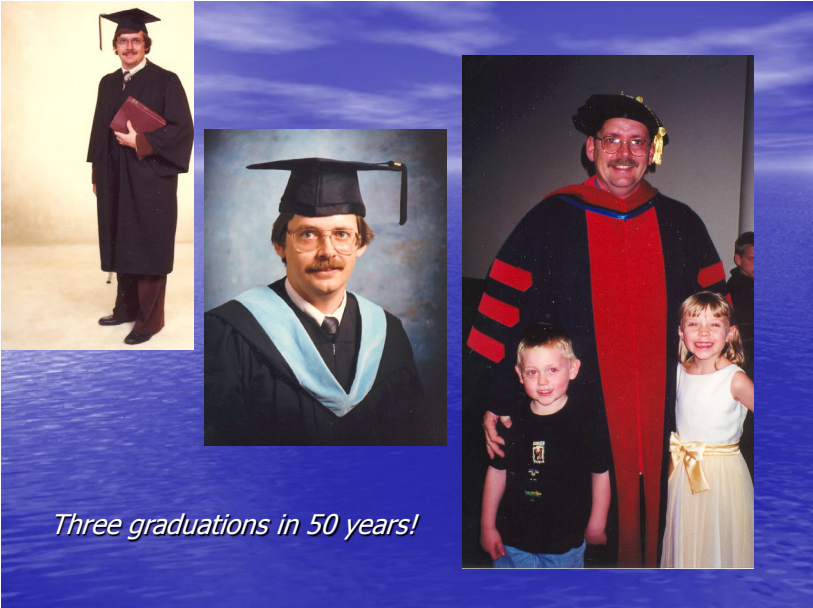


*Jim visiting with his sister Barb and brother Doug in Ontario*

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# Redemption

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James and Hkaw Win's Wedding Day