

# BEING AND MAKING A NEIGHBOUR



JOAS NATAN

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*Freely I received it from God and freely we place it in the hand and heart of the reader.*

## About the author

### **About the Author**

*During his lifetime the author was exceedingly blessed by God; of the many blessings, one stood out: his whole life he, as an average person with average abilities, was subjected to above average requirements. This put him in a position of total dependence on God. God blessed him with providing in all his needs and used him to serve his fellow men.*

*He tried teaching, then helping schoolchildren with challenges, and then he turned to working with Adults helping them to solve their problems. Now at the age of 80 he is not practicing as psychologist any more, but is still endeavouring to serve God and his fellowmen by writing what God shows him.*

*God was the real Author of the book and the writer chose a pseudonym, Joas Natan, meaning 'God Gave', so that all the glory and honour would belong to our wonderful God.*

*May this book be to His glory according to His will and may it benefit you, dear reader.*

*2 Corinthians: 12:9*

*And He said to me: "My grace is sufficient for you. For My strength is made perfect in weakness.*

## Index

<b>Part 1: Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Introduction	5
2. First losing of a neighbor	8
3. In the Garden of Eden	12
4. Brothers and Neighbors	15
5. Noah	17
6. Friend of God	19
7. An uncle and a neighbor	22
8. Story of a slave	24
9. Israel 1	27
10. Israel 2	30
11. Getting to know your neighbor	32
12. More about My -self	34
13. The other neighbor	36
14. The self-neighbor	37
<b>Part 2: Chapter</b>	<b>page</b>
<b>The practical part of being a neighbor</b>	
1. Five levels of communication	40

2. Friends and neighbors	42
<b>Part 3: Eighteen stories of becoming a neighbor</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Part 4: A modern story of being and becoming a neighbor</b>	<b>76</b>

# Being or making a neighbor.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The neighbor story

(Luke 10:30)

*A Jew going on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes and money and beat him up and left him lying half dead beside the road.*

*By chance a Jewish priest came along; and when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Jewish Temple- assistant did the same thing; he too left him lying there.*

*But a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw him, he felt deep pity. Kneeling beside him the Samaritan soothed his wounds with medicine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his donkey and walked along beside him till they came to an inn, where he nursed him through the night. The next day he handed the innkeeper two five pound notes and told him to take care of the man. 'If his bill comes to more than that', he said, 'I'll pay the difference the next time I am here.'*

*(Then Jesus said :) "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the bandit's victim?" (The Living Bible)*

The traditional interpretation of the question Jesus asked is the one leading to declaring the Samaritan the good neighbor. This interpretation places the Samaritan in the center of the story. But it is also possible to put the victim in the center of the story in which case the question of Jesus makes more sense :(" Which of these three was a neighbor to the bandit's victim?") We find

support for this interpretation when we look at the story from the perspective of John 13, in particular to the words of Jesus in verse 8:

“If I do not wash you, you have no part with me.”

Only when Peter became as the victim in the story in his total dependency on his Helper, Jesus, could he be redeemed.

Peter did not want Jesus to wash his feet. How the Son of God could go on His knees before him, took the position of a slave and wash his dirty feet? The moments Peter gave over and let God wash his feet he was released of all his own efforts to be good and holy. Nothing he could do could match what Jesus was doing for him. The Son of God was preparing him for the same thing; to become a servant of mankind to bring them into God`s kingdom. When he discarded himself he was ready for the indwelling of Holy Spirit of God Himself. He became ready to humble himself, to accept his own inability to redeem himself and to give his life over to Jesus to do with him as He pleased. In this way Jesus was becoming the Good Samaritan and he, Peter became the helpless victim of the robber of true life, satan.

Like the person on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho we are on our way from birth to death. The robber of the real life, satan, are on the lookout for us. He and his followers may come in the form of deceptions, our own ambitions, unhealthy longings, desires, sins, demon possession, worries, unforgiveness, lack of love and many more. Many times we will also be lying alongside the road of life, half-dead, maimed, and bruised, bleeding naked and humiliated, and helpless in our sins. When we are robbed of what is dear to us, like our relationship to God, the robbers of our peace and love will leave us. Many people will pass us without helping us, even people we thought were Christians, yes, even Christian leaders. If we are blessed enough by a Samaritan, a person we did not think high of offering us a helping hand, we might accept the helping hand, the bandaging

of our wounds, his offer to transport us, to bring us to a safe place and lift us up financially. **When we accept the caring love provided, we will make the helper our neighbor.**

By accepting the washing of his feet by Jesus, he was stripped of his own importance, he became totally dependent on God and learned to trust God even if he did not always understand God's ways.

This book is about these incidents; it will help you to get a better understanding about the following:

1. Discovering the truth about who your neighbor is.
2. Help you to discard self.
3. Inspire you to bring the Good message to people and to bring glory to God.
4. Making a friend and being a friend.
5. Enjoy a modern story about a neighbor

## Chapter 2

### **The first losing of a neighbor**

It all started when Lucifer, the devil, was kicked out of heaven. His sin was his ambition to become god. Because of all his wonderful talents, like making music and his beauty he gained a lot of self-confidence. He liked himself so much and was so conscious of himself that he lost his grip on reality. The reality was that God was the only God and he, satan, was a servant of God, deeply dependent on God. In his dependency on God, God became his utmost neighbor. When satan started believing his own lie that he could become God himself and that he could push God from His throne, God casted him out of heaven and he lost his only true Neighbor. Thousands of followers were cast out of heaven with him. Since then satan and his demon followers had a lot of negative influence on the creation of God. Satan not only lost his God and neighbor he also lost his love for the rest of God`s creation. He became hateful to all that God represented and he had only one aim and that was to damage God`s creation the best he could. He came to this world to destroy, to kill and to deceive.

Satan`s first victim was the best of God`s creation namely Adam and Eve. Since these two were made in the image of God satan went for the jugular of God, or so he thought. In satan`s misguided self-image of his own importance he thought he could kill God in going after the crown of God`s creation, mankind. He understood little about creator God, the omnipotent God, the eternal God, the loving God and the omniscient God. But he managed to trick Eve into believing she could become like God by knowing everything. He deceived her by half-truths, by boosting her ego, by blatant lies and by engaging her into an argument. The moment she thought she could outwit satan she was lost. He is the devil, the master of deception and he knew the weaknesses of mankind. In His loving kindness, God wanted mankind to love Him voluntarily otherwise He could



have created robots with no will of their own. The freedom to choose implanted in man was the one character of God given to mankind that elevated mankind above the rest of God's creation. When man decided to elevate himself to the level of satan by trying to be god to himself, satan achieved his goal. Man now was a fallen creature like himself. In man's quest to become his own God he destroyed his relationship with God. He now was competing with his Creator. He was no more the dependent servant of God. He was like the Jewish priest and the Temple assistant. God warned man that satan would not rest but seek to destroy him. God likened satan's attack on man to a snake striking at man's heel. But God also gave mankind hope when he predicted that the seed of man, referring to the coming Messiah 4000 years later, will crush the snake's head. This is precisely what Jesus did when he rose from the dead, conquering death, the ultimate reward for sin, after His crucifixion.

God created His perfect creation by speaking: "Let there be....."

Words have immense power of blessing spoken by a redeemed sinner. A curse can be spoken by an unredeemed sinner. Usually the words coming from the mouth had its origin in the inner person, from the heart of man. If the person speaking is an unredeemed sinner the word's origin is in the natural hateful self-loving soul of the sinner. Coming from the mouth of a redeemed sinner it is coming from a new heart created by the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is easy to determine what the heart of man is like by listening to the words he speaks. You can be the judge and determine for yourself the origin of the following words as indications of attitude or conditions of the heart:

*Words indicating self-love; self-centered words like, I, me and myself. Words indicating pre-occupation with acquiring more and more money and love of money. Words indicating an arrogant, proud boaster. Blasphemous, abusive and scoffing words. Words indicating disrespect for people in authoritarian positions. Words indicating ungratefulness. Profane words, words indicating*

*disrespect for God. Slanderous words, false and accusing words. Words indicating low moral values. Betraying words. Words indicating love for sensual pleasures above love for God.*

The Bible says these words and attitudes will be abundantly evident in the end times. He also warned about people identifying themselves in this way.

*“Avoid all such people- turn away from them” (2 Tim.3:5)*

There are also people who can be identified by other attitudes coming through their words like: *Words of love expressing compassion. Words expressing joy. Words spreading peace. Words proclaiming patience with others. Words showing kindness, goodness and benevolence. Words that have to do with faithfulness. Words of gentleness and self-control.*

When we look at the story Jesus told about the victim attacked by robbers it is not difficult to guess which group of people would use which category of words.

One can predict that the humble, self-discarding, dependent person like the victim in the story of Jesus will draw people like himself to himself to let them become his neighbors. In the case of the story told the victim never spoke a word, so also the benefactor. Your circumstances, your attitude, your helplessness, your body language, your heart can speak on your behalf. God spoke in the beginning of creation and everything came into being. The victim did not speak but a relationship, a friendship was born between him and his benefactor when he silently submitted to his benefactors loving help. Actions can speak louder than words and the actions of the two parties in this story created a permanent bond for the future.

The making of a neighbor and being a neighbor not only started this way in the Garden of Eden it developed throughout the ages for 6000 years and it is still continuing in the days we are living in. In the intimate bond of a neighbor relationship mostly you will find the two elements of humble disregard of the self and the loving care for another. A person once said:

*“A humble person leans on God. A proud person leans on self.”*

In the following chapters we will take a closer look at how the business of being and making a neighbor developed in the Bible.

## Chapter 3

### In the Garden of Eden

God cancelled all the input Adam could make in creating his wife when He put Adam into a deep sleep. Adam was powerless; he could contribute nothing to the creation of Eve. In his helplessness he was in the ideal position to give over to God to do as He pleased. He was also in the perfect position to receive a neighbor, his wife. Even she was in a perfect position to receive a neighbor when she was submitted to God's will when He created her from Adam's rib. She was the perfect neighbor to Adam. She was created to be his helper. She was submissive and humble till satan corrupted her thinking with his lies. So a tight relationship came into being between God, Adam and Eve. To love your neighbor was a natural relationship.

As long as the essentials of a neighborly relationship remained the unity continued. But satan already had his plan in place to destroy it. If he could only get the creations of God to think highly of them, to throw away their humbleness, to deceive them into thinking that they also can be important and self-sufficient. If they could believe they do not need God anymore, that they can challenge God for superiority he could destroy their relationship. Only satan with his cunning wisdom, could have devised a plan so evil. God created mankind with a free will and the ability to make choices. He did this in order that mankind would obey, honor, love, respect and glorify Him out of a choice made from a free will and not because He programmed them to do it. This very Godly trait was used by satan to fulfill his plan for man's downfall. He concentrated on the softer target, the helper, the more vulnerable Eve. In his usual style he made use of half-truths and lies as well as his intimate knowledge of the core of man's weakness namely his wish to become important, to be a somebody, in essence to challenge God. His plan concentrated on letting Eve feel good about her. Thus he asked her:

“Is it true that God said.....”

This was a master move of deception. Eve was so flattered that satan, this wonderful intelligent being, was asking her a question as if he did not know the answer. His question was easy to answer and to deny but she did not know he was setting her up to deceive her. He engaged her into conversation and in reasoning, a place where she had no chance to counter his cunningness. It seemed to Eve that satan was willing to listen to her so why should she not listen to what he had to say. Then satan gave her the death blow. He zoomed in on her weak point namely her longing to become a person of importance. First he contradicted what God said and showed to Eve he was above God and knew more than God did. This must have had a big influence on Eve and made her more willing to listen to satan. He used the very thing that led to his own downfall, when he challenged God thinking he could be better and smarter than God. He promised Eve knowledge more abundant than anything she could have imagined if she would only ate from the tree of all knowledge, which God prohibited them. She fell for satan`s lies.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good (suitable and pleasant) for food and that it was delightful to look at, and a tree to be desired in order to make one wise, she took of the fruit and ate; and she gave some also to her husband, and he ate.”(Gen. 3:6-Amplified Bible)

With the falling into sin Adam and Eve lost their most precious neighbor, God. They chose to be independent, not to humble themselves; they tried to be self-sufficient, to be important, to focus on themselves, to do their own thing. This was all the things you do if you want to lose your neighbor. Instead of a loving relationship with God they became afraid of God and in focusing on themselves they discovered their nakedness. In an effort to correct their own wrongdoing they tried to cover their nakedness with leaves from a fig tree.

God expelled them from the Garden of Eden. The earth was now cursed and Adam could only survive by working hard. He wanted to be independent of God and God granted his wish.

When he was expelled he lost the companionship of his loving Neighbor, God. Because God is a loving God He not totally distanced Himself from His creation but gave them a promise for the future. He would again become their loving friend and he would crush the head of serpent, satan, in the distant future. So mankind made a bad choice and in doing so lost his first and best Neighbor.

## Chapter 4

### Brothers and Neighbors

“My name is Cain. I am the thirist person born on earth. My father, Adam, was created by God out of dust. My mother, Eve was made out of a rib of my father. I knew I was special for my mother named me Cain meaning in the words of my mother: ‘I have gotten and gained a man with the help of the Lord.’ As I was the firstborn I got a special position in our family. Perhaps this lead to my feeling of superiority towards my brother, Abel. I decided to follow my father’s calling and started working the ground to produce crops. Because of my father`s disobedience to God the land was cursed and it was hard to produce a crop. I put all my efforts to work and produced crops. I knew it was with the help of God and decided to give Him some credit, but mainly the crop was because of my own hard work. Giving God recognition in producing the crop I was not very honest. I knew I could get on without really depending on God. My brother Abel differed a lot from me. He was dependent on God and trusted God to bless him. We both brought offerings to God out of what we produced. I brought an offering out of my own efforts and Abel brought an offering out of what he believed God blessed him with. God accepted his offering but not mine. So I became angry and jealous of my brother. God intervened and said to me:

“Why are you angry and why do you look sad and depressed and dejected? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin crouches at your door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.” (Gen: 4:7)

Because of my independent nature I decided to ignore this advice. Every time a saw my brother I was reminded of my rejection. In this way he became my enemy and I decided to kill him. Many years later John would speak about me. I can see in my vision of the future in what he would say:

“And not be like Cain who took his nature and got his motivation from the evil one and slew his brother. And why did he slew him? Because his deeds, his activities, his works were wicked and malicious and his brother`s were righteous.”(1 John 3:12)

I not only killed my brother but he was also my neighbor. We were very close, closer than most other people on this earth. By not being submissive and accepting the advice of God, I preferred my own way. In not allowing God to be my utmost neighbor and by killing my neighbor-brother I shut them out of my life. God placed a mark on me to safeguard me against the wrath of other people because of my murder of my innocent brother. So I became a lonely wanderer on the face of the earth. My only neighbor was satan whom I chose to obey. Other wicked people also welcomed my company. Many times I longed for the company of good people like my brother but later I detested them again and hated them. As I am from this world I can understand what John would be writing about me and the world's view I stood for when he would say 4000 years later: *“So not be surprised and wonder brethren, that the world detests and pursues you with hatred.”(1 John 3: 13)*

I know I cannot accept love and help because I chose to do my own thing. I am not going to allow other people to become my neighbor. I do not need them, in fact I hate them.”



## Chapter 5

### Noah

Noah depended on God. This put him in a position to make God his neighbor. He trusted God, was obedient to God, he was humble and he was willing to let God help him. Out of all the millions of people on earth God selected Noah and his 7 family members. They would be the only survivors of the flood God intended to bring over the world.

These were terrible times. It was much like the times we are living in. God predicted what the end times, we are living in, will be like. Deception will be the one thing threatening the children of God. As in the days of Noah Satan is rampant in our days. In the days of Noah deception was mainly through demons who married ordinary women living on the earth. Thus they created the giants of the old times. Goliath was an offspring of such. The arrogance of Goliath is an indication of the deification of man, the absolute opposite to what a man should be if he wants to create neighbors. Satan's main aim was to corrupt the lineage through which Christ would be born. The disruption of the God-given genetic composition of mankind was a master plan. He almost succeeded because God had to eliminate the total human population except for Noah and his family to safe guard the purity of the ancestors of Jesus. In today's time the corruption of the human race is through trans-humanism. In China they succeeded in creating a being which is a cross between a human and an animal. They call it a Chimera. Mankind today believe they can improve on God's creation of man by extending man's capabilities through technological manipulation and extensions to the human brain by connecting the brain to super computers.

Amidst lots of ridicule Noah kept on building the ark. People could not believe that he could put so much effort into building such a massive structure that could float on water without any water nearby. Noah stayed true to the instructions of God and completed the ark according to the instructions of God because he trusted God. He knew his only hope amidst the corrupt people of

his time was to depend on God and do what God told him to do. God treated Noah as a friend, a neighbor and spoke to him. After the flood the first thing Noah did was to bring an offering to God to thank Him and honor Him. Even when Noah made a mistake and drank too much of the wine he made. God did not reject him but kept on blessing him.

Noah is an example of how one can make God your neighbor by being humble, by trusting God, depending on him, discarding self and self-interests and letting God guide you.

The example of Noah rubbed off on his two sons Shem and Japheth. When their father drank too much and lay naked in his tent they showed respect for him and covered his nakedness. For his indifference to his father's honor the other brother, Ham, was cursed to be the servant of his brothers in future generations. By not willingly displaying a servant's attitude God cursed him and his generations with servant hood to his brothers. Shem and Japheth became neighbors in their joint effort to cover their father's nakedness but Ham was excluded.

## Chapter 6

### Friend of God

Abraham trusted God. He trusted God so much he followed wherever God led him. He seldom trusted in his own wisdom. When God told him to leave his country he obeyed. When God told him to enter a new and unknown country he did it without questioning God. When God said, 'move', he moved. When God said, 'stay', he stayed. Seldom did he put his own judgment above what God told him to do. He was humble, loving, loyal, trusting and obedient. He had a perfect attitude to create a neighbor. Many people would have liked to help him, to be his friend and to support him. God was no exception and walked and talk with Abraham like a friend.

But Abraham also had to grow in his relationship with God. Two aspects of his relationship with God had to improve. He did not trust God enough for an heir and he did not trust God to protect him as far as Sarah his wife was concerned.

Sarah gave her slave, Hagar, to Abraham on her behalf so that Hagar could give Abraham an heir. She said to Abraham:

"See here, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. I am asking you to have intercourse with my maid; it may be that I can obtain children by her."

Abraham listened to her and heeded what Sarah said. By taking the matter of an heir into their own hands they discarded the promise of God to give them a child. God so much loved Abraham that he softened the negative consequences of his bad choice and even blessed Ismael, Hagar's child,. It was 13 years later that God fulfilled His promise to Abraham when Isaac was born from Sarah.

Abraham also did not trust God to safeguard him when he had to go to Egypt because of a terrible drought in Israel. Abraham feared for his life because of his beautiful wife, Sarah. He

thought the Egyptians might kill him in order to get hold of Sarah. God in his goodness took no offence and even blessed Abraham with livestock and precious possessions from the king of Egypt who only wanted to get rid of Abraham and the curse upon the king for taking Sarah as wife.

A second time Abraham asked Sarah to present herself as his sister was because of the same reason when he came to Gerar and he feared the king Abimelech would kill him because of Sarah his wife. In a dream God warned Abimelech to let go of Sarah, otherwise he would lose his life. Again God chose to bless Abraham:

“Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham and restored to him Sarah his wife.”

If you once give your life over to God and trust Him to provide for you, you receive the best neighbor you can have. He will stay your friend through thick and thin. He may even correct your mistakes and forgive your trespasses as we see in the life of Abraham.

Abraham`s biggest test was yet to come.

“After these events, God tested and proved Abraham and said to him: ‘Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I will tell you.’

God was telling Abraham that he must take his only son, the son he waited many years for, and go and offer him. He would have to cut Isaac`s throat and then burn him.

Apart from the offering of Jesus when He willingly and voluntarily gave himself as offering on the cross at Calvary the following sentence is one the most remarkable in the Bible: (Gen. 22:3)

“So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac; and he split the wood for the burn offering, and then began the trip to the place of which God had told him.”

He did not hesitate, he did not procrastinate, he did not reason, he trustfully obeyed God and did what God told him to do. God tested him to the utmost. Only when he took the knife and was about to cut Isaac`s throat did God stop him and gave him an animal offering in the place of Isaac.

Only the offering of Jesus on our behalf could be bigger when He gave his life for our redemption. In the case of Jesus there was no substitute; He had to be the offering!

Abraham showed us how total self-discarding really looked like. Jesus said that if we want to follow him we must crucify ourselves and follow him. Here in Abraham we find the perfect example of what self-crucifixion looks like. Abraham became to us the pointer to Jesus who would give his all for the redemption of our sins 2000 years later.

## Chapter 7

### An uncle and a neighbor

“My name is Lot. My uncle is the well-known Abraham. My life was intricately involved with my uncles. My father, uncle Abraham’s brother Haram, died when I was young. My mother did not figure much in my life. Uncle Abraham took the place of my deceased father. It was no wonder that I moved with Uncle Abraham to Canaan when God told him to move. Because I was young and dependent I trusted Uncle Abraham to make the right decision for me. By letting him into my life and letting him help me he became more than relation, he became my neighbor, always near me and always willing to help. By letting him do it we came close to one another. As we moved into the land God promised to Uncle Abraham I grew up and was also blessed with my uncle. I accumulated wealth but nothing compared to what uncle had. We accumulated so much wealth there was not enough grazing for our flocks together. My uncle was such a loving, sharing and humble person. He said we must part but he gave me the first choice as to which part of the land I preferred. To our east lay the wonderful Jordan valley with abundant water and lots of grazing. There were also prosperous cities like Sodom and Gomorrah. It was an easy choice for the arrogant, selfish lad I became. So I chose to go that way. My unselfish uncle was content and took the not so nice mountainous and desert area to the left. He knew that richness and provision came from the blessing of God and not the land you choose.

In making this selfish choice with only my own interest to guide me I thought I could now manage life on my own. I forgot about God and my neighbor Uncle Abraham. My worst choice was when I decided to move to the big city, Sodom. The people were very liberal and sinful. Many years later in the modern times of the year 2022 it would be much like in my time; the only moral law accepted would be the law of relative morality which means if something works for you it must be

right. In this way people will be discarding the laws of God. They would put their own desires above what God wanted them to do. It was no surprise that the men of Sodom embraced sodomism. I, with the help of God stayed true to the marriage type God instituted, namely a relationship between one man and one woman, his wife.

One day I was watching the people of Sodom when I saw two strangers entering town. My heart went out to these strangers and I invited them to my home to spend the night with us. At first they were reluctant but later they accepted my invitation. Little did I know I was entertaining two angels who came to destroy Sodom and the other nearby cities because of their unrepentant sinfulness. Abraham interceded for us and God showed mercy even when He could not find 10 righteous men in Sodom. I and my wife and 2 daughters came alive out of Sodom but my wife looked back when we came out of Sodom. I don't know if she longed for what she left behind but when she looked back she turned into a pillar of salt. The three of us survived because Sodom and the other nearby cities were utterly destroyed by God. Perhaps of the near death experience I gave myself over to alcohol abuse. My 2 daughters had intercourse with me and out of their offspring two nations came into being namely the Moabites and the Amorites.

When I turned away from my neighbor, friend and uncle, Abraham and indulged in my own pleasures my life had a downwards turn. Luckily there is always mercy from our loving God who never forsakes us even when we make mistakes.”

## Chapter 8

### The story of a slave

Our human nature's default position is independence. Being independent is part of the old original sin of man to desire to do his own thing, to be his own god. The opposite attitude is the slave attitude, to discard yourself, to humble yourself, to depend on God, to let Him have His way in planning your life, to submit, to accept His redemption for your sins, to live as if you desire a neighbor.

The slave attitude is best found in a small helpless baby. Everybody is drawn to this helpless, love accepting creature. No wonder Jesus loved children so much. A slave had, in biblical times, a very low standing in life. This is evident in very few slaves in the Bible mentioned by name. The slave Onesimus was mentioned as a slave of Philemon. He ran away and became a Christian through the influence of Paul. Rhoda was mentioned but it might have been an indication that this slave was from the island Rhodus. For a short time Joseph was a slave but he eventually became the under prime minister of Egypt. Israel was as a nation slaves in Egypt for 430 years. Abraham mentioned a slave Eliezer, who came from Damascus. The name means: 'My God is my Helper.' He was a trusted person and was the head of Abraham's household.

Slaves from Hebrew decent were released after 6 years and became free again. Slaves out of other ethnic groups remained slaves for life. The owner of a slave could set him or her free. One of the longest chapters in the Bible is Genesis 24 with 66 verses. This chapter records one incident and the central player in this chapter is a slave, most probably Eliezer mentioned by Abraham in Gen 15:2, who was at this stage an old man. This chapter has to do with Abraham who wanted his slave to go look for a wife for his son, Isaac. Abraham was living in Canaan and he did not want Isaac to marry a girl from the heathen nations. He sent his slave to his family living in Mesopotamia where Nahor, his brother lived. Eliezer was fully trusted by Abraham. He made the



slave responsible for finding a wife for Isaac but said to him that God will send an angel with him to find the girl. Eliezer fully trusted God to perform this miracle. When he came near to the place where Abraham's family lived he came to a well. This was a place where people gathered to water their animals. Here he became apprehensive and pleaded God to give him a sign that the person he encounters will be the person God intended to be the wife of Isaac. He was asking God for two things:

“See I am standing here by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming to draw water. And let it be so that the girl to whom I say, I pray you, let down your jar that I may drink, and she replies, 'Drink, and I will give your camels drink also'- let her be the one whom You have selected. Before he had finished speaking behold, out came Rebekah, who was the daughter of Bethuel, son of Milcah, who was the wife of Nahor the brother of Abraham, with her water jar on her shoulder. And the girl was very attractive, chaste and modest and unmarried. “  
(Gen.24:15)

She spoke the exact words the slave requested God to confirm his choice for a wife for Isaac. So the arrangements for the wedding were made and the next day the procession departed back home to Abraham and Isaac. The first meeting between Isaac and Rebekah is so beautifully described in the Bible it needs no comment :( Gen.24:62-66)

“Now Isaac had returned from going to the well Beer-lahai-roi (a well to the Living One Who sees me), for now he dwelt in the South country (the Negev).

And Isaac went out to meditate and bow down in prayer in the open country in the evening; and he looked up and saw that, behold the camels were coming.

And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel. For she had said to the servant, who is that man walking across the field to meet us? And the servant had said, He is my master. So she took a veil and concealed herself with it

And the servant told Isaac everything he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah`s tent and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother`s death.,

Eliezer was a slave with a slave mentality; he had very little self-confidence, was submissive and depended on God to direct him. He also trusted his master, Abraham, when Abraham told him an angel of God will go with him to help him find a wife for Isaac. God honored the dependence of Abraham and Eliezer and blessed them by answering their prayers. It must have pleased God to see people depending on Him to provide for their needs, to trust Him and to accept His will for their lives. Their neighborly attitude pleased God.

## Chapter 9

### Israel

The making of a neighbor was first illustrated by Jesus with the parable of a victim who was helped by a Samaritan. But many years before, God illustrated this principle with Israel.

Israel as a nation came into being through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his 12 sons. The 430 years in Egypt contributed greatly to their becoming a nation. The 66 offspring who started out when Jacob came to Egypt 430 years previously during the world draught, now increased to over 3 million. But the once proud and independent family became the slaves of the Egyptians. They not only became slaves in a physical sense they developed a slave mentality. These few facts encompass one of the big wonders of God. He promised Abraham that He will make him a big nation and He fulfilled His promise. It is interesting to see how God directed the development of the Nation of Israel. He gave individuals the ability to make choices but in those choices He fulfilled His will. As Joseph said when he exposed his true identity to his brothers:

“As for you, you thought evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive, as they are this day.” (Gen. 50:20)

Many times in a person`s life God will find it necessary to intervene and teach him to be humble and dependent. In his dependence his will learn to accept help from others. This will teach him the essentials of trust and believe. This is contrary to what the natural man desires, namely to be independent and to do his own thing; in short, to be his own god.

The way God interceded in the building of Israel as a nation centered on Joseph, son of Jacob. He was spoiled and favored by his father, Jacob. His brothers hated him. When the opportunity arose they decided to kill him. God intervened as He had other plans for Joseph and arranged that he be sold as a slave to traders who brought him to Egypt. The once proud and

spoiled young man was stripped of his fancy clothes and thrown into a dry pit from where he was sold to traders who were on their way to Egypt. He was on his way to be prepared for what God had in mind for him. First he was being taught the basics of humble trust without which he would not be able to perform his tasks in future. He became a slave and was forced into submission. To survive he had to become humble, obedient and respect authority. Although he was well bred and had a good education he lacked a neighborly attitude. He had to become submissive and learn to accept the help of others. When Joseph landed in jail his only hope of getting out was through the steward who was with him in jail. The steward was restored to his position in the palace but he forgot about Joseph. Joseph had to wait three years before he was ready to be elevated and the steward would remember him. For 13 years Joseph was formed into a humble, dependent person before he would be ready for the position of prime minister of Egypt. He had to learn the language and customs of the Egyptians and so God allowed him to go through a steep learning curve for 13 years. During the draught, Joseph brought his family to Egypt where he could look after them. Initially Jacob and his family experienced a lot of privileges in the best part of Egypt allotted to them by the Pharaoh. But God was busy with the preparation of his special nation. They had to learn to trust in God and not in their circumstances. During the 430 years in Egypt Israel's numbers grew rapidly to such an extent that they became a threat to the Egyptians. The Egyptians began to strip the Israelites of their privileges and treated them as slaves. Life became hard for the Israelites. They were oppressed and began to suffer. They cried out to God for help. They were ready to make God their neighbor, their Helper, their Savior. They were ready to accept God's help and to trust Him, to make Him their Neighbor. The table was set for Israel to become a nation. The release of Israel came with the death of the first born males of the Egyptians. The Egyptians feared that God would wipe them out as a nation and Pharaoh decided to let Israel go. The death of the first born males of animals and people led to the release of Israel from the bondage of the heathen nation. This was a

symbolic event pointing to the release of mankind from the bondage and slavery of sin in the distant future. It pointed to the coming of Jesus and the spilling of His blood. Israel as a nation came into being when they trusted God and did as He told them. They killed the lamb as they were told and painted the blood onto the doorposts. When the Angel of death passed, their first born males were not touched while the houses without blood on the doorposts lost all the first born males. God initiated the Passover so that Israel would never forget this occasion. Today we are still remembering this event with Passover festivals over the world.

Jesus fulfilled the promise of Passover when He as the sacrificial Lamb was nailed onto a wooden cross at Calvary. The blood of the lamb on the wooden doorposts would be everlasting pointers to the blood on the wooden cross of Jesus 2000 years later. Nothing ever on this earth could be more humbling, more self-denying, more depending on God, than this perfect example of Jesus Christ our Savior. When we become like Jesus on the cross: nothing, stripped of self, totally dependent on God for strength and resurrection from death we are ready to accept Him as our everlasting, loving, saving, and helping Neighbor.

## Chapter 10

### Israel (2)

The release of Israel as a nation out of Egypt was just the beginning. Israel still had a long way to go to get rid of the slave mentality cultivated in Egypt for 430 years. The fact that they had been released was so overwhelming to Israel; God had to confirm it for them. First He had to teach them the lesson of full dependence on Him. He brought them to the Red Sea. They were led there by God's presence in the cloud by day and the fire column by night. The 3 million people were stranded. To crown their predicament God arranged a further threat. He hardened Pharaoh's heart for the last time and convinced him to bring Israel back to Egypt. He took his whole army and chased Israel. Israel could see the dust of the coming army and knew they were doomed. They needed a miracle to save them; in front was the Red Sea and at the back was Pharaoh's mighty army, coming for them. God placed Himself between Pharaoh's army and Israel by means of the cloud. On Pharaoh's side it was dark and on Israel's side they could see. God not only tested Israel's faith in Him but He also strengthened their trust in Him by the wonder He then did as recorded in Exodus 14: 15

"The Lord said to Moses: 'Why do you cry to Me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward! Lift up your rod and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it and the Israelites shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.'

17. And behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go into the sea after them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and his entire host, his chariots, and horseman.

22. And the Israelites went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right and on their left.

23. The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea.

25. God clogged and took off the chariot wheels.

26. Then the Lord said to Moses, Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians

27. And the Lord overthrew the Egyptians and shook them off into the midst of the sea.

30. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.”

The deeper meaning of this astonishing deed of God is still today the bedrock of the saving of God`s children and the making of a neighbor namely: dependence, discarding of self and own abilities, willingness to accept help, trusting in the one offering help, moving forward in your trust in the one helping you.

## Chapter 11

### Getting to know your Neighbor

My Name is: I AM.....

Yes I AM: Omnipotent. All powerful with infinite power.

Omnipresent. Present on every place

Omniscient. I know everything

I am also: Love

Forgiving

Full of mercy

Kind

Good, without sin

Not bound by time; living outside the constraints of time.

I was since the beginning and will always be and I am now.

The creator of everything except sin.

I am the sole purpose of life.

I am Three: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In Me you will find:

Love

Peace

Joy

Patience

A friend

A tender heart



Dependability

Self-control

Humbleness

I am everything to everyone within the limits of goodness, integrity, trustworthiness and sinless purity.

I forgive sin for those who trust in my son, Jesus Christ as their Redeemer, Who died for their sins and was raised from the dead by Me.

I give my Holy Spirit to everyone who accepts My Son`s offering on the Cross of Calvary for their sins.

The blood of my Son, Jesus, cleanses from sin.

My Holy Spirit will live in you and be your Advocate, Comforter, Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Strengthener and Standby.

In Me you will have everything you need for now and the rest of eternity.

**I WANT TO BE YOUR NEIGHBOR IF YOU WILL LET ME AND ACCEPT ME.**

**BUT**

**THEN YOU MUST BECOME AS THE VICTIM ALONG THE ROAD, I TOLD YOU ABOUT.**

## Chapter 12

### More about Myself

I created you to honor, obey and serve Me. I made you for My pleasure. You are not God, I am the only true, living God. I am jealous about My position of being God and do not share it with anyone. Therefore I placed a restriction on your abilities. You will be able to understand many of my creation but not all of it. You will also not be able to fathom the depth of My being although you will be able to know enough about me to stand in awe in My presence. For instance, you will not be able to go beyond the understanding of what I revealed about Myself. When you ask the questions like: Where does God come from? Why did He made satan? Who influenced satan to aspire to be God himself? You will not be able to find answers while you are living on this earth. Perhaps I will reveal answers to you when you are in heaven with Me. There is one comforting thought I am blessing you with: There is only one God, I AM. I am all mighty; know everything and I do have a plan for this world and for your life even when you do not understand what is happening. This is where communication with Me becomes important.

To communicate with me you must believe I am all that I reveal about myself. You must also know more about yourself;

Many years ago I created the first human being Adam and later blessed him with his helper, a wife called Eve. They did not have self-awareness they only trusted and obeyed Me. They were sinless and I walked and talked with them. They did not even know they were naked because no evil thought entered their brains. They trusted me. Satan fell from My grace because he started believing he could challenge me as God and push Me from My throne. Perhaps it was because of all the blessings I bestowed upon him like his beauty and his talents for music. After he had been cast out of heaven he hated Me and did all he could to harm Me. So it came about that He decided to deceive Adam and Eve in letting them believe they could become like Me by knowing everything.

First he engaged them into reasoning thus shifting their awareness to self, away from trusting solely in Me. This was very clever of satan. He strengthened his arguments by concentrating on Eve, the helper. As he is the father of lies he employed a half-truth to draw her into reasoning with him. He took her being into a dimension of cognitive thought away from walking in faith, a heart dimension. My daily communication with mankind ceased after I expelled them from Paradise. But I kept the means of communication open for those persons who were prepared to trust me. By believing in Me mankind will be able to communicate with me. Believe open the heart-dimension. The self-god of mankind created in his mind is then exposed as a lie created by satan`s deceptions of man. Man chose to trust in the lies of satan and was persuaded to follow after his own heart and so became his own god. The main barrier between Me and mankind became mankind`s choice to try and be his own god following his own will and trying to create independence from Me. I put the means of communication into man`s ability whenever he is willing to discard himself, to crucify his own will, willingly declare his dependence on Me and accept My help and My redemption. The only way back to Me is when you see yourself as the victim along the road, totally stripped of self and the self-god, willing to accept My help and redemption and allowing Me to become your Neighbour.

I believe you now have better insight in yourself and your relationship with Me.

## Chapter 13

### The other neighbors

Making God your neighbor by crucifying yourself and your self-interests, by acknowledging your dependence on Him, by trusting Him and allowing Him to help and save you, is the best thing you can do if you never want to be alone. But what about other people you will meet along your life's journey? Many books have been written on this subject. Dale Carnegie wrote a book "How to make friends and influence people". It was an instant bestseller and even today many decades later it is still available in bookstores. This shows you how relevant the topic remained for the last 2000 years since Jesus told the parable of the good neighbor. A neighbor and a friend may not be the same, but can be the same. The difference between the two words indicates the complexity of being a neighbor. When Jesus told the parable He was speaking about a neighbor. Most vocabularies explain neighbor with living proximity. It may be that Jesus had something more than that in mind. One might even bring the big command of loving your neighbor as yourself to mind. Jesus told a whole story to get to the question:

" Who do you say was a neighbor to the victim?"

If proximity was the norm then the other two clerics passing the victim by would also be included. It was clearly not the case. The victim was the central person in the parable. He made a neighbor of the person who offered him help by accepting the help. Making a neighbor has to do with your circumstances and your reaction to your circumstances. In the parable, Jesus told, the victim's circumstances put him in a position of total dependency. He reacted to it by accepting his hopelessness and allowed the passer-by to assist him. This made the passer-by his neighbor. In these circumstances it will not be hard to also love your neighbor and thus turning the good deed done unto you onto someone else. Jesus taught us that we can love because He loved us first.

Out of His love for us we are enabled to love people we meet along the way.

## Chapter 14

### The self-neighbour

We discussed people around you as your neighbour and God as your Neighbour but one other relationship remains namely your relation with yourself. To be in a relation with your neighbour you must be aware of your neighbour. God started out on His long journey with mankind by creating him without self-awareness. Thus he had a relationship with God and Eve but not with himself. He was not even aware of the fact that he was naked.

Satan specialised in self-awareness. He became so aware of himself that he made himself into a god unto himself. He was a beautiful and talented creature but he was not god. God threw him out of heaven because of his ambition to challenge God for supremacy. He targeted mankind to see if he could deceive them into believing that they also can be their own gods. First he had to create an self-awareness with the people. His target was man`s emotions and to control his emotions by means of his senses. First he engaged Eve by means of a question to get into her mind because he knew man`s feelings came from the way he gave meaning, his cognitive processes. He also knew that man was living through faith because man trusted God and knew only truth. He decided to negate faith and concentrate on the mind, emotions and senses of man. The technique of asking a question to engage the mind is even today a trusted mechanism. To take control of the situation he created confusion by means of deception in Eve`s mind when he questioned her with a statement including a lie of which he knew:

“ And he, satan, said to the woman, Can it really be that God has said, You shall not eat from every tree of the garden?”(Gen.3)

Eve corrected him but she was ignorant of what really was going on; satan was creating a self-awareness within her. What he was really saying to her was that she was more

knowledgeable than himself. Therefore he came to her so that she can answer his question. He flattered her and made her aware of her cognitive abilities. She also felt proud and good about herself seeing that this beautiful talented creature was coming to her to teach him. Satan knew that this poor innocent creature was no match for him if he could engage her into a reasoning bout. He further misled her by teaching her to desire what her senses told her was desirable. He used the senses of sight, smell and taste. Before he tempted her she longed for nothing because she had everything. By making her aware of the one tree of which she was not supposed to eat he deceived her and the fact that this was the one she may not eat created a longing to satisfy self. Even more tempting was the lie of Satan that she, Eve, could become her own god by knowing everything like God. Eve became a willing victim of Satan's deception and fell into sin. She also misled her husband and he fell into the same sin.

Satan succeeded in making man aware of self. By shifting his focus from God to himself he lost his self-awareness. It not only brought shame but also fear. Previously they were in a loving relationship with God and they walked with Him. Now they feared him and tried to hide from God. Thus the table was set for man's own solution to his problems where he would try to get through life without the help of God. Modern Psychology was born and is till today the solution to the problems of secular man.

The modern sinner is no different from his original fore-fathers; he is still arrogant, self-willed, looking for his own solutions to his problems, trying to create his own securities, trying to be independent, being afraid, trying to be his own god. No wonder he is constantly on the run, seeking for answers by cognitive initiatives, always busy with himself, always trying to find sense in life by means of his thinking processes, always trying to enjoy himself by means of self-gratification through his senses, always seeking his own solutions as long as it is without the help of God. In this way he ruined his life. His relationship with self and self-

indulgence ruined the good that God placed inside him. The relationship with self became a one to nothing relationship. The person man tried to bond to was so imperfect, so messed, up that his relationship with self came to despondency. Man was not made to live in himself, for himself. Man lost out on all the good God intended for him. To many the only solution to this predicament was to end it all and suicide became the great escape.

God promised the first man that he will die if he eats from the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God this promise was set into fulfilment. Even today mankind is paying the price for first man`s disobedience. For 70 to 80 years man struggles through life and then he dies. But God not only made the promise of death. He also promised that someday the woman`s Offspring, our Jesus, would crush the serpent`s head and fulfil victory over satan. Every carnal man who accepts the atonement of Jesus on the cross for his sins would be set free and live for ever with God.

A wonderful plan was set into motion by our Dear Jesus to fulfil this promise. If man wanted to follow after Jesus he has to crucify himself, carry his cross and come after Jesus. To crucify himself meant he had to die of self, carry his cross of self-crucifixion, repent of his sin, accept that Jesus paid for all his sins, go through the waters of baptism and allow the Holy Spirit to lead him, manage him and bear fruit through him.

When man does this he dies to self and the only true relationship with a real neighbour becomes possible with God as his Best Friend and in a loving relationship with neighbours along the road of life.

## **Part Two**

### **The practical part of being and creating a neighbor.**

#### **Chapter 1**

##### **Five levels of communication**

To connect as a neighbour it is important to make use of communication. Every communication between 2 human beings will fall into one or more of the following five levels:

1. Cliché communication.

This type of communication does not say a lot. It is usually only for introduction or to let the other person know you are within communication reach. Words falling into this type of communication will be greetings like: "Hello, Hi and Good morning."

Although this level of communication usually does not say a lot the user of it may mean something like: I acknowledge your presence. I would like to take our conversation to the next level. I am well educated and know this is the right thing to do. It may also carry caring and genuine interest in someone.

2. The next level is the conveying of facts and the reaction to the facts like agreeing and presenting more facts. This is a very basic type of communication like listening on the radio commentary about a tennis match. No hard thinking is required and facts are exchanged. Usually it leads to the next level of communication where two persons are concerned.

3. This next type of communication usually entails some thinking processes. Usually you will find the words "I think....." In this level of communication like: "I hear our boss is going overseas and I think he is wasting the company's money." The moment you share your thoughts you are going to a deeper level of communication. This is



rewarding but also dangerous as you are exposing yourself by revealing a deeper level of yourself.

4. The next level of communication is when you share your emotions. This is a very dangerous but also highly rewarding type of communication. In our previous example it will go like this: "I hear our boss is going overseas, but I think he is wasting the company's money. Thinking about it makes me sad and mad." Usually emotional words draw an emotional response from your neighbor if he or she is willing to expose something about them.
5. The highest level of communication is the one without words. These intimate moments only come when two people know and care about each other on a deep level. People married for a long time sometimes experience moments like these by being in one's company just enjoying the others presence without speaking. The victim and the Samaritan in the story Jesus told must have been experiencing something of this deep level of communication as Jesus recorded nothing about any spoken words during the encounter. Only loving care bonded the two, the one giving and the other receiving.

## Chapter 2

### Friends and neighbours

The Oxford Dictionary defines Friend in the following way:

“One joined to another in intimate and mutual benevolence. Get on good terms with: Those responsible for you , a sympathizer, a helper.”

When one compares the definition for neighbour with the above mentioned it seems as if there are many resemblances between the two. Our study has mainly to do with “neighbor” but the literature is also full of many suggestions on how to make a friend, which in our case may also be used to indicate how a neighbor can be made. One study indicates 102 ways one can befriend someone. We will select out of these those that are applicable to the story of the victim and the Samaritan Jesus told.

We started out by indicating the importance Jesus placed on the victim, the one being robbed, beaten and left to die on the road side. We saw how he created a neighbour by the way he responded when the Samaritan came to his help. He knew he was helpless as he was not in a position to help him. He was willing to let someone help him, he accepted the help offered, he trusted the person offering help, he used what his beneficiary offered him, the transport, the provision of money, the safe haven and the succeeding visits. In this way he created a neighbor, someone to love, to care for and to bless the rest of his life. If he was not willing to accept his dependency he would surely have died.

Even from the Samaritan`s point of view things had been done to create a neighbor when he willingly, out of compassion, lent a helping hand to the victim.

When looking at ways to befriend someone we will look from both perspectives; the victim`s and the Samaritan`s. Not all 102 ways to make friends will be covered, only those applicable to our study on how to be a neighbor and how to create a neighbour. Many persons

contributed to this part of our book: Mainly the information was found on internet interspersed with experiences of the author during his time as practicing psychologist. The following persons need mentioning:

1. Be a good listener

Listening and others will feel respected and understood. The Samaritan in our story had to listen to the silent outcry of the victim lying along the road. The two pastors passing on the other side of the road shut their ears to these outcries for help. No bond was formed; no help was rendered even when the victim was dying. The victim too had to listen to the Samaritan's expression of love and empathy when he started nursing the victim. By letting the Samaritan help him he was responding in a way a good listener should.

2. Stay in touch

The Samaritan cared so much for his new friend that he followed up on his friend's progress in the inn. It is not mentioned in the story, Jesus told, but we who are filled with the indwelling Holy Spirit are in a position to fill in these blank spaces. We know how the victim reacted as we are also responding as victims along the pathway of life. Surely the victim was grateful and accepting as he was nursed in the inn and I am sure he made the Samaritan his special neighbour because of what he did for him. Out of this incident developed a life-long friendship of love between 2 neighbors.

3. Say yes

We live in a negative world in negative times. To encounter a person with a positive life attitude is refreshing. Most people say with everything they say and do: "No, not interested. Get out of my way. I am happy to be on my own. I don't need your help. Go and bother someone else." Whenever you open yourself to someone else you are saying: "yes, come in, come join me in my inner being. I care for you. You are welcome to come and join me and help me."

#### 4. Smile

Talking with a warm smile and consistent eye contact makes the other person feel comfortable and interested in the conversation. Sometimes it will be hard to smile in a certain situation but you can still be open and receiving even in difficult times and situations. The more you open up the better the chance of creating a new neighbour. To smile is to display friendliness, one of the fruits of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

#### 5. Show up and make regular contact

Many times opportunities for friendship and neighbourly contact are missed because people fail to be present. The two clergies in our story chose not to make contact with the victim. It was impossible for them to create friendship or to let them become neighbors to the victim.

#### 6. Mirroring

There is a psychological strategy called mirroring and it involves subtly mimicking the other person's behaviour. This technique can lead to another person becoming more interested in becoming your friend. This is a manipulating technique not grounded in love and caring and as such cannot be recommended. But, without actively trying to manipulate another person two persons with the Holy Spirit's indwelling will mirror the inner dynamics of their inner motivation to live. Both will show the fruit of the Holy Spirit and as such will be connected. Many a time you will encounter a person not known to you but you will feel an inner connection to that person. It may be worth your while to follow the inner urge to know this person better.

6. Complimenting. The wise King Solomon warns us about manipulating other persons by ways of insincere compliments. Take for instance the knowledge about

Spontaneous trait transference. That is the knowledge that people tend to associate the adjectives you use to describe other people, with your personality. If you describe someone else with positive adjectives, people will associate you with those qualities. Spontaneous love and caring for your neighbours will have the same influence. People will associate your personality with the way you respond to other people.

#### 8. Communicate positive emotions.

People are strongly influenced by the moods of other people and can even unconsciously feel the emotions of those around them, Dr. Schiff states. The importance of emotions in relations is emphasized by Paul in Phil.4:4-7:

"Rejoice in the Lord always, delight, gladden yourselves in Him; again I say, Rejoice! Let all men know and recognize your unselfishness, your considerateness, your forbearing spirit. Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything. And God's peace shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ and so fearing nothing."

Be assured your joy and your peace in Christ will influence those around you. But also beware your hate, your criticism; your bitterness will also create a barrier between you and other people.

#### 9. Reveal your flaws

Most people are acute aware of their own flaws. When you reveal yours it is easier for them to identify with you, to empathize with you and to help you. This is a very important aspect of being a neighbour. In our story this is the core of constituting a relationship with a neighbour. Your vulnerability, your need and your outstretched hand for help usually is the one thing that draws the other person into a willingness to come near to you and to bond with you, thus becoming your

neighbor and friend. But people sometimes misuse this when they become a professional beggar without any need to let you become their neighbour only with the sole purpose to manipulate you. In this way you may become a victim of an unscrupulous person using you to support his unhealthy lifestyle. In this way you may even enable him to live a life without taking responsibility for his life.

9. Be conscious of how you reveal yourself.

When you have a choice of how you are revealing yourself be on your guard. Your respect for other persons will be evident in the way you show how you care about yourself when coming into their presence. Being too informal, sloppy or dirty may indicate that you do not value your company. This may lead to resentment and hinder the making of a neighbor. Overdressing may also create problems and make another person uncomfortable in your presence.

10. Tell them a secret.

Jesus often used this technique to bond on a deeper level with His disciples. Jesus disclosed Himself to His disciples when He told them about His Father, what will happen in future and about Himself. In His self-disclosure He let them into a closer relationship with Himself and they confided in Him because they came to trust Him. In the same way we can also bond on a deeper level with people when we let them into secrets about ourselves. However be aware of disclosing intimate knowledge about negative aspects of other people`s lives. This can easily ruin what you have built up, as your neighbour will lose his trust in your integrity.

11. Ask questions.

Asking questions usually show you are interested in a person. Beware your body image may cancel the message you are trying to convey to the other person. Arms crossed, looking down and body turned can make it appear you are not open to contact with the other person.

12. Cherish the people you know.

There is a saying: "Familiarity breeds contempt". Dear, good people close to you may be neglected and ignored as a possible friend because you grew so accustomed to them. When trying to understand them better and taking note of their opinions and expertise you may discover a person you never knew before, someone you would like to know better.

### 13. Make the first move.

In our story of the Samaritan the victim was hardly in a position to make the first move. His dependency and helplessness appealed to the Samaritan and he reacted to what he saw.

Sometimes, like in this case, the cry for help may be subdued and your willingness to hear another person will be the deciding factor in initiating a friendship.

### 14. Reciprocal Friendship

Rarely, if ever, will a friendship last if it is only coming from one side. Reaction in a positive way on a friendly approach towards you and the lasting effort to work on the relationship will give the friendship a better chance to carry on. Only when you are genuine in your efforts will the feeling of permanence and caring last in a relationship.

### 15. Be yourself

To be genuine and congruent are becoming scarcer by the day. We live in a time of the lie being the most predominant thing. As we move closer to the end times the influence of Satan, the father of the lies, is getting more dominant. Very few things are really true. We live in a virtual world where pictures are truer than the reality you experience, where sounds are disconnected from the true source, where people are not what they seem, where holograms are replacing reality, where deception is more true than truth for people, where people create a virtual world more to their liking than the world God created. In his quest to be his own god, man created a fantasy world more real than the illusion of the drug world he tended to escape into. The illusion is a fake, but he

that lives in the illusion does not care as long as he is enjoying himself. Friendship also becomes a fake, a role you play without genuineness that will guarantee permanence. In this fake world it is becoming harder to find genuine friendship built on the love of the Holy Spirit of God in people's lives. Because of the pain many genuine people experienced because of their vulnerability they tend to close up in distrust and hide their inner genuine self behind the walls of protection of self.

#### 16. Try to be honest with yourself

How will you know how to look for qualities in yourself with which to relate in other people if you cannot identify those qualities in yourself? How will you be able to know yourself if you are always trying to be the person you think other persons will be able to relate to. Without a genuine identity you will not be able to build a lasting relationship. Why be a fake person in a fake world?

#### 17. Doing things together.

A good test for integrity and being genuine is in the test of doing something. If you are not genuinely interested in something you won't carry on for long with that activity. You will get bored or the effort to continue will become too much of a burden. When you try to carry on with this activity together with someone else your falseness will soon become evident to yourself as well as your partner and your ways will part.

#### 18. Be patient

On average it takes 140 hours of time spent together to make a good friend. The more the frequency the better, for instance it is better to spend 140 hours divided into 140 episodes of 1 hour together than 10 periods of 14 hours each. No two people are exactly the same and it will take some compatibility to develop a relationship into a friendship. Motivation and reason for bonding are factors that will determine how strong and lasting the friendship will be.

#### 19. Find time for solitude



Spend time with yourself but be careful of not spending all your time with yourself as you might become reclusive and blunting your ability to connect with another. In solitude you may discover what you really like doing and in this way to find a companion that will be able to share your interests and capabilities.

#### 20. A sunny disposition.

In our story of the Samaritan our Samaritan is drawn to the victim because of the victim's plight. He had a soft caring heart and felt deep compassion for the victim. In everyday life you as a Christian will be drawn to a person in need in a similar way. The victim, as the central person in the story had nothing to offer the Samaritan. He was completely helpless and had only his dependency to offer. This made him the hero of the story as Jesus intended it by His question: "Who was a neighbour to the victim?" In the same way we make Jesus our most intimate neighbour when we crucify ourselves and admit to Him that He is our only hope and that we are saved from the consequences of our sins only by His merit on our behalf. In our daily lives we might also make our fellow human beings our neighbors by admitting our dependency on them, by discarding ourselves and our own needs, by showing our vulnerability and accepting the help they provide. When we humble ourselves, forget about our needs to be big and important, to be self-sufficient and to be our own gods we are getting into to position of making a friend of a passer-by.

#### 21. The topic

To engage someone it is helpful to get the person to talk about something they like or enjoy. If you can get the person to tell a story it would even be better for early bonding. Jesus many times used parables, which are stories about persons and circumstances his listeners could relate to. A story is a wonderful medium to grab a person's interest. When someone becomes interested in what you have to say it creates a positive feeling not only towards the listener but also in the

speaker. If you can contribute to the pleasure of the listener you may feel you are worthwhile. This only can be effective if you do not use it as a manipulating tool but out of a deep caring feeling towards your neighbor.

## 22. Be honest

Honesty builds trust between people. When people start to trust each other the relationship moves to a deeper level of intimacy. As seen in the 5 levels of communication this is a deeper more permanent level of friendship. Don't expect people to pour out their deepest feelings. Many times these feelings are holy to the person and the sharing only comes when deep trust was built. If you are not honest in your revelation of self don't expect the other person to reveal his or hers intimate feelings.

## 23. Empathy

To be sympathetic is to look with compassion at another's plight. It is to feel sorry for someone in need. To be empathetic is to go deeper into a person's feelings by identifying with the person as if you are in the person's shoes and it is you feeling the pain. To be empathetic is only possible in a climate of love. Only love makes you willing to experience what the other person is experiencing. An empathetic relation opens you to act on your feeling and to be a blessing and help to another. Empathy goes together with deep communication where you sense a need rather than perceive a need. When your heart goes out to another person he will pick it up and respond in a positive way opening the possibility for a lasting friendship.

## 24. Mirror another's strengths

To build positive rapport mirroring another person's strengths in an authentic and sincere way back to them, can be handy tool. To be authentic and sincere makes this tool not a manipulative way to influence people but can be the strength of the bond between people. Identifying the positive strengths in a person may be challenging and to stay sincere while trying to

mirror these traits can be hard. The results in helping your friend to grow these traits will be rewarding.

#### 25. Have reasonable expectations

We are all human beings with our own imperfections. When you are working on a friendship it is important to keep it in mind. The way the parties will handle the imperfections of the other one will determine the outcome. If you are perfectionistic inclined and expect the other to be the same you most probably will not be building a lasting friendship. When you are open for compromise, apologies and forgiveness and your partner has the same attitude it may be the beginning of a very rewarding relationship.

#### 26. Show interest.

The core of the soul of most people, even Christians, tends to be self-centred. When someone shows genuine interest in you and what you are doing, who you are and what makes you tick, the chances are good that you will like that person. Again, if you are trying to manipulate rather than showing genuine kindness and interest you will destroy the relationship.

#### 27. The give or the receive

Solomon, a very wise man, said that it is more rewarding to give than to receive. It is true even today thousands of years after he said it. There is however a provision. You can hardly give if you did not learn to receive. To give love and kindness to others you first have to accept love and kindness from God through His Son, our Jesus. Out of His love for you, you will be able to give love to your neighbour.

#### 28. Be in- person

To speak to someone on your phone, to send a text message, to send a what's app, to watch a show, to read a book are virtual experiences and can never be the same as in-person friendships. You need in-person meetings to really bond with someone.

### 29. Power of words

To enhance conversation it is necessary to say: "Yes, and ....." to what somebody said. First agree and then add to the statement. A sure conversation stopper is to say: "No, but....." This will take the conversation down a negative path. To keep your integrity it is not always in your power to agree to a statement against your values. You may make your stand in a non-aggressive way.

### 30. Practical efforts

The Bible is clear about the power of words but it is even clearer about the importance of deeds. You may not tell a hungry person to go and have a nice meal without providing for the nice meal with money or food. Friendships require effort, sacrifices and devotion.

### 31. Be enthusiastic

In the story Jesus told about the victim and the Samaritan the Samaritan was enthusiastic in his efforts to be of help. Even the story creates enthusiasm in the reader when he hears about all the help the Samaritan is so selflessly providing. The total dependency of the victim in quietly accepting the help is creating a picture of how one might respond to help provided when you are in a difficult position. Enthusiasm attracts people while a dull and boring person might create the opposite reaction.

### 32. Starting a conversation.

The best way to start a conversation is to make an observation and then inquire about it like: "I see you are interested in this painting. What is catching your attention?"

### 33. Don't follow your natural inclination.

Usually a person confronted with people he does not know will tend to withdraw and first try to orientate himself and become accustomed to his surroundings. This is not the best way to react to an unknown crowd. Rather look for someone looking interesting and start up a

conversation by one of the means already mentioned. Always try to be positive and try to find something you like or are enjoying about the moment.

#### 34. Deepen the conversation

This may be achieved by asking deeper questions about a person`s life. Usually a person will only be willing to share deeper feelings if you are willing to go the same way.

#### 35. Do unto others.....

Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you. This Biblical wisdom applies even to the times we are living in today. So be the friend you would like the other person to be unto you.

#### 36. Ask for help

These 3 words were the core of the story Jesus told. The victim was so traumatised that he not even was in a position to ask for help. His situation spoke for him and begged for help. To be willing to express your need for help will in most cases have a positive influence on people. Most people will find it hard to acknowledge their vulnerability and will try to carry on without the help of other persons. The secular person`s aim is to be independent, to be master of his own fate, to be the king of his own castle. This is not conducive to the building of good friendships.

#### 37. Identify a need and do something about it.

#### 38. Boundaries

Most of us want to be people-pleasers. It is a human desire that others like you. People respect others who are willing to create boundaries. They may not be so likeable but will be respected.

#### 39. Seek vulnerability and connection

Vulnerability is scary, but humans are made for connection. Even the most introverted people need closeness with others. The benefit is worth the risk.

#### 40. Priorities

A friend of mine has the following priorities:

Highest priority is God

then his wife,

then his children,

then his career,

then himself

then other people.

It is important to remember that people, like my friend, have multiple priorities. You may not be the highest priority on your friend's list. Don't try to be something that won't fit into your friend's priorities. There is nothing wrong with you. Try to find out how his priorities are organized.

#### 41. The bubble of the comfort zone

Nowadays it is easy to live in a comfort zone and live without personal involvement. This comfort zone of minimum social contact creates a false bubble of security. In fact it is not reality, it is virtual or nominal, not existing in essence, only in a word world. Personal contact and real communication is much more rewarding and closer to reality. If you stay too long in this bubble you will find it hard to face reality again when forced to come out of your bubble.

#### 42. Live an uplifting life

In addition to having compassion for others you are always appreciated when you go out of your way to recognize the good you see in others.

#### 43. Genuinely

Always connect with other in a genuine and honest way. Only talk about activities or ideas you genuinely like or believe. If you show respect, warmth and are sincere, a connection will form between you and someone you are meeting. Dr. Hafeez said:

"Genuinity attracts others who want to connect genuinely and these people will be your true long-time friends."

*(Many of these 43 ideas came out of an article compiled by Kaitlin Vogel as part of "Healthy Now" newsletter. She used many person`s contributions. Some of these well-known persons are: Amber O`Brein, Susanna Guarino,dr. Markesha Miller,dr. Holly Schiff, dr.Jaclyn Bauer, dr. Tina B. Tessina, Lily Clark, Helen Chao, Risa Williams, dr. Gail Saltz, Joyce Marter, dr. Fumi Stephanie Hancock, dr Carly Claney, Dr. Tari Mack, Audrey Hope, Grace Hanzel and dr. Sanam Hafeeza.)*

## Part 3

### Stories of being and becoming a neighbor

Some of these stories will be based on Bible stories Jesus told, some will be about characters found in the Bible and some stories will originate from secular experiences of ordinary people.

#### 1. The cow and the leopard

A farmer was alarmed by his dogs barking regularly at night without an apparent cause. He installed a night camera and was surprised by what was captured during the night. His old cow acquired not long ago was the culprit. To his amazement he saw a leopard approaching his cow. The cow was not in the least afraid of the leopard and actually welcomed the presence of the leopard. The leopard cuddled unto the cow and the cow protectively bent over the leopard and started licking him. When the farmer enquired at the previous owner of the cow the owner told him about this cow. The small leopard a month old was found in the bush. Apparently the mother died and the little one required urgently food. The cow was available and had no problem supplying the small leopard with the milk needed. Soon a strong bond developed between the two animals. The cow became a mother to the leopard and what was now happening was the natural bonding of a mother and child. No wonder the dogs got upset at night. Even in the animal kingdom you make a neighbour if you are willing to accept help when you are at need and willing to accept help provided.

(Article and confirming photos from download Quora)

#### 2. Paul

Ken Foreman spoke in a sermon about how Paul found sense in his life while suffering in jail. Paul spoke in the most trying circumstances in jail the following words recorded in the letter written to Philippians (1:12-13):



"Now I want you to know and continue to rest assured, brethren, that what has happened to me (this imprisonment) has actually only served to advance and give a renewed impetus to the spreading of the good news (the Gospel).

So much is this a fact that throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest here my imprisonment has generally become known to be in Christ that I am a prisoner in His service and for Him.

And also most the brethren have derived fresh confidence in the Lord because of my chains and are much bolder to speak and publish fearlessly the Word of God."

To a certain extent Paul represents the victim in our story of the Samaritan. He was also helpless in his trying circumstances, he was beaten, humiliated, stripped from the little possessions he had, he was discarded by clergy amongst the Jews, and he was left for dead by those that stoned him. He made many neighbours while he was in prison because of his dependency and his willingness to accept the help of others. What drove him was his love of Christ and the urgency to get the Good News of the Gospel to the people. From the many good things we can learn from Paul we find one in particular, illustrated in this part of the history of Paul. He did himself what he told us to do in his letter to the Romans namely to repent which means to renew our minds. By changing the way he thought about his circumstances he rose above the occasion and was no more a slave of the circumstances but became free from the negative way in which he could give meaning to what was happening to him. His suffering became the least of his problems when he compared it with what it was achieving in the lives of other persons like the spreading of the Gospel.

Paul's journey with Christ started when he was on his way to Damascus to arrest people following Jesus. This Paul was a man of capacity, he had status, was strong in himself, believed in

himself and his own strengths, he was not dependent on anyone, he was well educated and people looked up to him. In short he believed he did not need anyone else. So actually in this state he was of no use to God. God first had to make him an instrument of His will. He did this by knocking Paul of his donkey blinding him, speaking in an audible voice to Paul and confronting this wise and learned man with a question he was not able to answer:

"Why are you persecuting Me?"

In a few seconds God stripped Paul of all he cherished and counted as worthwhile in life. He became as the victim in our story of the Samaritan. In his deep dependency, brokenness, blindness, humility and uncertainty he accepted Jesus as his neighbour, his only hope, his Saviour, his new goal in life. From now on he would learn where his strength is going to come from. Eventually his well-known words would echo over the earth and millenniums to come till it is still heard in our times and is as true as it ever was (2Cor. 12:10):

"So for the sake of Christ, I am well pleased and take pleasure in infirmities, insults, hardship, persecution, perplexities and distresses; for when I am weak in human strength, then I am truly strong (able, powerful in divine strength)."

### **3. Human-Animal world**

The principal of creating a neighbour in your dependency and need is even found when the human and animal worlds interact as told in this account of an incident that happened in 1941 (Quora):

"A hunter was walking in the snow in Alaska when he came upon a wolf caught in a snare. The wolf was aggressive and did not want him to come near her. So he could not release her. When he got near to her he saw she was suckling little ones. No baby wolves were to be seen in the near vicinity. The hunter saw the footsteps of the wolf in the snow and followed it for a few hundred meters when he saw the 4 pups, evidently very hungry. He picked them up and brought them near

to their mother. They quickly ran to her and started suckling. The hunter stayed close to the wolf for a few days and during this time befriended and played with the little ones. The mother gradually accepted him and eventually let him free her from the trap. She took the little ones with her and before she left the scene she turned around and gave a long wolf howl as it to thank him for what he did for the family.

Is it possible that a wolf could have made a neighbor out of a human person by accepting the love and assistance he was providing?

#### **4. God can teach you to make someone your neighbor?**

Jacob spoiled Joseph. He favoured him above his brothers. Joseph was blessed with dreams predicting his future as a leader. He became self-centred and was too self-confident. In order to prepare him for his future role as second in command of Egypt God permitted him to go through trials. These trials were meant to humble him, to teach him to be dependent. First he had to become a slave. His brothers rid him of his nice clothes and threw him into a dry well. Later they took him out and sold him to slave traders who sold him to Potiphar in Egypt. God`s blessings stayed with him and he soon became the leader of Potiphar's household. He had to be tested again and when he withstood the seduction of Potiphar`s wife she falsely accused him of attempted rape and he was put into jail. He again rose to a leading position and God blessed him with the ability to lay out dreams. The cup bearer of the Pharaoh remembered about Joseph`s ability to lay out dreams when nobody could interpret the Pharaoh's dreams. Joseph learned his lessons well and knew by this time that he was totally dependent on God for all the good things in his life especially when he was going through a trial and had to suffer. It was easy for him to declare to the Pharaoh that it was not his wisdom but God`s grace Who opened the meaning of the dreams to him. God gave him favour with Pharaoh and Pharaoh appointed him as his second in command. Joseph stayed humble throughout his reign and when he disclosed him to his brothers he calmed their

fears of his revenge on them by giving them the assurance that although they meant evil with him God changed their plan to His plan for the survival of Israel as a nation. God used Joseph's dependency to draw other people to him who elevated him to high positions. Joseph's brothers also came to wisdom when they were fully dependent on Joseph's goodwill when he disclosed him to them. At this time they made Joseph their neighbour when they accept his position and trusted him with their lives.

Most of all God became Joseph's neighbour when Joseph was stripped of his own importance and learned to accept the help of God, to trust God and to give his life over to God.

### **5. From high to low to highest**

Moses grew up in a palace. He was treated as Pharaoh's grandchild, the adopted son of his daughter. Moses knew he was an Israelite and he loved his people. One day he defended one of the Israelites against the attack of an Egyptian and killed the Egyptian. When he later tried to settle an argument between two Israelites one asked him if he is going to kill him like he killed the Egyptian. Moses then knew that his secret was out and he fled before the Egyptians could kill him. At this stage he was 40 years old. His life became hard. Now he was not more the young prince living in the palace. He was faced with hardship and became a shepherd to survive. He was humbled and learned to depend on God to survive. God was moulding Moses into an instrument useful for His purpose. But first Moses had to learn to be dependent on God and to trust God for everything. He also had to learn to accept help. God confronted him with a task he was not up to. He would have to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. He was now 40 years a shepherd and was well prepared for the task God chose him to do; he was humble, he was depending on God, he knew the Egyptians language, he was educated in their ways and knew how to relate to them, he loved the Israelites, his own people. Most of all he lacked the one skill absolutely necessary for this task, the ability to speak well in front of people. This was the one thing that is similar to the plight of the victim in our

story, so dependent on help from someone else. When he came with this need before God he was making God his neighbour. Moses was now ready to fulfil the task God prepared him for. God responded to his need and sent Moses` brother Aaron to assist him and to be his spokesperson. God also assured Moses of His presence when he gave him special abilities to do wonders with his staff, like turning it into a snake. Later Moses would part the Red Sea by stretching his staff over the water. Many years later King David would also honour God`s presence in the rod and staff when he wrote Psalm 23 and declared in verse 4:

"Yes, though I walk through the deep sunless valley of the shadow of death, I will fear or dread no evil for You are with me; Your rod to protect and Your staff to guide, they comfort me."

Jesus knew our infirmities and our need for assurance of His nearness. Therefore He gave His indwelling Holy Spirit to be with us and to live in us. As long as we depend on Him and let Him comfort, guide and strengthen us He remains our loving Neighbour.

## **6.Habakkuk**

In the three chapters of the book Habakkuk, God explains more about His way of working with mankind, again emphasising the importance of dependence on Him. The poor people in Israel were perplexed by the suffering they went through at the hands of their enemies, the leaders of Israel. How could God allow such unrighteousness? This is a question that would echo through the thousands of years till our time. Seldom in the history of mankind the poor and under privileged were not oppressed by the leaders. To ask why god-fearing people suffer is to indicate a believe in a wrong theology. It is an indication that the lie of prosperity teaching took hold of your believe system. Life on this earth was not meant to be the best. The best is reserved for the time when the New Jerusalem will come down from heaven and God will dwell for ever on this earth amongst His followers. This will be the time when satan and his followers will be in hell and have no influence on earth any more. In his conversation with God, as recorded in the Book Habakkuk, God revealed to

Habakkuk that God`s people will suffer even more later when the Chaldeans, who are worse than the wicked Jews, will be allowed to submit the Jews. In answer to this enigma God answered Habakkuk that the just shall live by faith in God and have the confidence that God is doing what is right. To give the oppressed some hope for the future God assured Habakkuk that the oppressor will be judged and ultimately righteousness and justice will prevail for the people of God.

This jewel of a Book in the Bible underlines again the worth of suffering, of humiliation, to the advantages of carrying your cross of discarding yourself, of accepting salvation and help. This can only be if there is trust in God and what He is doing. Habakkuk comes to the wonderful conclusion that ought to be also the guideline of our life on earth in Chapter 3:17 when he declares:

"Though the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on vines, though the product of the olive fails and the fields yield no fruit, though the flock is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the victorious God of my salvation"

Man`s dependence on God comes to fruition when he trusts God not for provision, security and prosperity but for the fact that He is God, the Great I AM.

## **7.The sin of man**

Man was created good, dependent on God. He owned nothing, not even clothes. He did not know about death, decay and sin. He blissfully lived according to what God told him to do and not to do. He was submissive to God. As God said when He looked at His creation:

"It is very good."

Satan fell from God`s grace and was cast out of heaven because he wanted to be god. Satan was not satisfied with mankind living in peace, harmony and blessing in the Garden of Eden. He deceived mankind with his lies and persuaded them to the sin which caused his downfall. He told Eve she could be like God by knowing everything if she was prepared to follow her own inclinations and ignore the command of God not to eat from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

So man followed satan and decided to be his own god. Man`s effort to elevate himself to godlike status was the core of man`s downfall not only 6000 years ago but during all the ages even till today. Most of the sins of man is the expression directly or indirectly of his need to be his own God. The basic needs of natural man are to be somebody, to be independent of other, to create security that will make him independent, to be good to himself, to enjoy himself, to be lazy, to serve himself and to ignore the needs of others, to sit on his own throne not thinking about God , not crediting God, to live without thanking God for everything, to enjoy his own efforts and achievements thinking he deserved it and it was brought about by his own abilities. When he thinks about eternity and how he can get into heaven, he will depend on his own good deeds and his own ability to shun evil.

No wonder Christ`s first requirement for following Him is that man must crucify himself, get off his self-throne, be willing to follow Jesus and not to try to be the leader himself, to be humble and to think more about the need of others than the need of his own selfish ego.

### **8. The solution to man`s problem**

There is only one God; the great I AM, His Son, Jesus. and the Holy Spirit. God is jealous of His position as the only God. It must have been a great disappointment to Him when mankind failed to acknowledge Him as only God and tried to match His supremacy. He had to punish mankind for this sin and had to fulfil His judgement namely death. God loved man so much that He punished him but did not reject him. In His love for mankind He made a plan to redeem mankind from his well-deserved everlasting punishment in hell. But God cannot be anything than a Just God. In order to be just the sin of man had to be punished. Someone else had to be punished in the place of mankind. The dilemma was that the person being punished had to be without sin, without the cardinal sin of trying to be god unto himself. In the whole creation there was only one sinless humanlike person namely Jesus, God Himself, as part of God. So God had

to give something on Himself to be punished in the place of mankind. Love is the only motivation for something like that. There were 2 requirements for man to be redeemed in this way; first he must know and acknowledge his sin and then he had to accept the substitute Offering of Jesus in his place as wholly, complete, adequate and enough without anything he could contribute to it.

The offering of Jesus had all to do with the sin of man trying to be his own god, to be important, to be in control of his own life, to be independent and to direct his own ways. So He the highest God, the most Supreme Being, He that made man, He had to become nothing, had to become the lowest, had to become like the person He created, be dependent, have no security, had to suffer as if He was the culprit and eventually died, nailed naked to a cross on the highway where everyone could see Him. The Highest had to become the lowest the perfect atonement for the lowest who tried to be the highest.

The only way mankind could become part of this process was if man could willingly give up on his own efforts to be god, to admit his folly of trying to do it, to crucify himself and all his longings, his own efforts to be good, give up on the lies satan taught him namely that he could be god and accept salvation on the premise that he owed his new everlasting life to what God did for him and not to any thing he did to earn his salvation.

In His loving kindness God decided to help mankind acknowledging his own inability to save him by two means. First He gave his 10 Commandments to teach man that it is a futile effort to keep them all. He also sent trials and tribulations to get mankind into a position where he was willing to admit his own inability to be his own god. Our story of the victim along the road is a perfect example of God`s intervention in man`s life to save him from himself and his own misguided goal to live an independent life and thus being his own god.

As the seal of man`s redemption, Jesus gave His Holy Spirit to live in man to guide him, to rule over him and to bear fruit in and through him, the fruit of love, peace and joy.



## **9. The suffering of Jesus**

Jesus is the perfect example of the story He told about the victim along the road. The suffering of Jesus commenced long before He was nailed to the cross. Every time He as God was subjected to dependency, he was paying for the sin of mankind who was endeavouring to be god of his own life, to be master of his own fate, to be independent of God, to do his own thing. Let us look at Jesus our Neighbour

### **9.1 The birth of Jesus**

God created through Jesus everything. He, the Word of God, created everything. Did Jesus ponder in his mother`s womb these amazing facts; He the Creator was now being created in a virgin girl where he resided in her, totally helpless, 100% dependent on her goodwill, on the food she ate, how she safeguarded Him against the elements of nature and how she lovingly attended her body who had to feed Him and His body inside her.

How is it possible that He, the Almighty God, could subject Him to the natural birth process He created in woman, without trying to help the young girl, in total dependency on her?

How could Jesus allowed it that He who made everything had to gasp for breath after he was born, He that made the very oxygen he was to inhale?

How could you Jesus allowed Himself to be humiliated to total dependency when You had to suck on Your mother, to let her clean You, to answer Your call when You were uncomfortable, when You suffered pain, when you the Living Word, were not allowed to speak, only to cry as only means of communication?

How could you have loved us so much, to allow this suffering to safe our everlasting souls?

### **9.2 Growing up**

Jesus grew up as an ordinary boy, in an ordinary home, with ordinary parents in poor circumstances. Did you think of heaven and Your Father, Jesus when you had to learn to walk, when

You fell and shed your blood on the stone, when your parents cheered You on for getting to walk the first steps? Yes Jesus, You, who made the knee cap, Who designed the connections from the limbs to the intricate delicacy of the brain, Who determined the electric charge necessary to give the right message to the next brain cell? How did you manage going from Creator to a wobbling baby, held by your hand by Your parents? Is that what love is? Is that what it means to crucify yourself, to get off your throne, to become dependent, to be the victim in order to let another one become your neighbour? Not much is known about the years Jesus grew up. We know about the time of His Bar Mitzvah he went to the temple and had discussions with the priests and clergy to the amazement of His parents. But always He was the submissive child honouring his parents.

Jesus what did it feel like when You were taught by Joseph, Your father, how to make a chair a cupboard, to fix a leaking roof of a house, to be a carpenter and handyman? Did You know when You started to work with wood that wood would play an important role at the end of your life? When You used the plane on a rough edge of wood would you be thinking of how the rough wood would one day deposit splinters in your back when You had to carry Your cross to Calvary? Even so, dear Jesus, You would carry on, only thinking of the many souls You would be saving of eternal damnation by Your pain.

### **9.3 Drowning under water**

To the ordinary person baptism symbolizes the washing off of the old sinful nature of man, the drowning of the old sin nature, the death of the old man. It also symbolizes the getting up, the start of a new life, the inhaling of the Ruach, the breath of life when the first breath is taken when the person gets out of the water; the infilling of Holy Spirit. It is also the symbolism of being born again not only out of water but by Spirit.

Jesus also went through the water of baptism. He did not have a sinful nature. He is the sinless Son of God. He did it for us to help us identify with Him. His baptism was symbolic of the death He would suffer for us, in our place, and of His resurrection when He would come back to life.

What did it feel like Jesus, experiencing the first signs of Your future pain, the total submission to Father`s will in order to save us sinners from His wrath for our sins? Could You see all the grateful souls, redeemed from hell, singing to Your glory for ever to come? Was it enough motivation to know that Your deed, your suffering, would impact us, making us willing to stretch out a hand of faith to You, thus making us Your neighbor?

#### **9.4 The first message**

Many references make Jesus the bridegroom and the church, His followers, the bride. Jesus, did Mary, Your mother, knew these facts? Was this the reason she prompted You to start your public appearance at the wedding in Kana? Was this wedding symbolizing the wedding between You and Your bride? Was this the reason she asked you to make wine out of water well knowing that water symbolizes the people of this world and wine symbolizes blood, Your blood that would change the sin of mankind into blood washed children of God?

#### **9.5 Help for the Almighty**

Thank You, Jesus, for selecting ordinary people to help you carry Your message of salvation to all people. You could easily have done without them but You chose to present Yourself as needy, as depending on them, thus making them your neighbours. Will we ever understand the magnitude of the only true God becoming like the neediest man to elevate this needy man to the true status of carrying God inside himself; to be like God. This time fulfilling his need to be God in a God acceptable way. Thank God this was only possible when the old man died to himself and his aspirations.

#### **9.6. A woman neighbor**

After a long hard walk Jesus rested next to a well in the town Sychar in Samaria. A woman came to fetch water. He, the Creator of all, found it necessary to ask the woman for a drink of water. By putting Himself in the position of a dependent person he gave the woman the opportunity to become His neighbor. Because Jesus is omnipotent and knows everything He had the saving of many people in Sychar through this woman in mind. To discard himself was not hard for Jesus as long as He could save souls in this town. First He had to bring in the soul of this woman and then he could use her as an evangelist to bring in the rest of the town. Jesus is so clever that in His conversation with the woman he brought her to the position where she asked Him for water and thus making her the dependent victim of thirst. Now she was thirsting for the water of salvation but Jesus had first to bring her to repentance and acknowledgement of her sins so that she will long for what He had to offer her. He disclosed Himself to her and then she all forgot about her purpose of coming to the well because she had to tell the towns people about Jesus. Eventually the most of the town became followers of Jesus and He stayed two days with them. Was this a payback for the kindness of the Samaritan's good deed by helping the victim along the road to Jericho or was it the conclusion of the story he told about the victim along the road when the Samaritan showed up to help? Why Jesus, are you so full of love and compassion, so caring, so eager to bring in the contemptible, the despicable like the Samaritans?

## **9.7 Faith**

You either trust in self or you trust in God. As long as you trust in yourself you make yourself your god. When you trust in God you make God your only God. It is really bad when you trust in self but when difficult times arrive you try to use God as a temporary helper like a spare wheel on a motorcar. These people are the ones Jesus spoke about as the ones He would spit out of His mouth because they were neither hot nor cold.

To trust in God, to have faith in Him, is the ultimate position of a victim not being able to help himself, the ideal position to make God your neighbor, to discard yourself, to crucify yourself and draw a line through all the self-help plans offered by the world.

### **9.8 Start living**

Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again before he could enter heaven. That meant that he had to die to self, before he could come to the new-born life. Where he previously was born out of water out of the mother's womb he now had to be borne by Spirit to get everlasting life. Jesus does not resurrect persons living. To be resurrected you had to be dead, dead to self, acknowledging your dependency on God to give you new life, a new life without a sin nature. The only way to get this new life is through faith, to trust God to speak the truth, the truth that Jesus was punished on your behalf for your sins and that His offering was the only punishment that could set you free from everlasting punishment in hell. Nothing you could do could be good enough to earn your redemption from the price that had to be paid for what you did wrong or the good you chose not to do.

### **9.9. Nothing out of self**

Of the sweetest words in the Bible are those spoken by Jesus in John 5:30:

"I am able to do nothing from Myself, independently of My own accord."

In Jesus` total dependence on God He made God His neighbor. From the earliest of times this was the relationship between Jesus and His Father. As long as He stayed in this relationship he had access to unlimited power. He found it necessary to renew this intimate relationship on a regular basis and usually went to a secluded spot to speak to His Father. He got His revelations, His knowledge, His power, His wisdom, His love, the Words He had spoken and the deeds he had to do from His dependent relationship with His Father. The most devastating moment in the life of Jesus was most probably the moment on the cross when he cried out (Mark 15:34):

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani"

Which means:

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me," meaning:

"deserting Me and leaving Me helpless and abandoned."

God had to turn His face away from the suffering of His dear Child. He could not face all the filth, the sin of all mankind through all ages and all of future resting on His sinless Son and saw Him collapsing into death under the weight of it.

No wonder God`s wrath will never be lifted from those human beings who would reject this offering of Jesus. Only those who are willing to become like His Son in total dependency on God for their salvation, and release from the consequences of their sins, would be count good enough, on behalf of what Jesus went through, to enter into God`s kingdom.

### **9.10 Jesus the Dependable**

A certain government official asked Jesus to help him. He was at his last resort for help. He was desperate and could only say the following:

"Sir, do come down at once before my little child is dead!"

He spoke out of a deep need and an unshakable trust in Jesus. That was enough to make Jesus his friend and neighbour and Jesus said:

"Go in peace: your son will live" (John 4: 49)

It was later confirmed that at the exact moment Jesus spoke, the child was healed. The urgency of the fathers need and his total dependency and trust in Jesus made it so easy for Jesus to react immediately.

### **9.11 The wrong neighbor**

It is possible to put your trust and dependency in the wrong place. Jesus says in this regard in John 5:39 the following:

"You search and investigate and pour over the Scriptures diligently, because you suppose and trust that you have eternal life through them. And these very Scriptures testify about Me. And still you are not willing but refuse to come to Me, so that you might have life. 43. I have come in My Father`s name and with His power and you do not receive Me (your hearts are not open to Me, you give Me no welcome.)

If we apply these words to the story of the victim it would be as if the victim received an invitation from the Samaritan to help him but decided that he would rather trust the donkey to help him and to bind his wounds. The donkey is a good and useful animal but can only be of use in service of his master. The same goes for the Bible; it is useful and teaches all that is necessary for salvation but it cannot save. It is only in the service of the Master it gains its power.

### **9.12 Eat when you are hungry**

God works in mysterious ways. He can appease your hunger but He can also make you hungry. In John 6 we find 5000 men with their wives and children following Jesus, hungry for the Bread of Life. They came to a secluded place far away from the nearest shops and the people grew faint for lack of something to eat. They became dependent on an outside source to feed them. This is where Jesus became their ultimate neighbour. In doing the miracle of supplying food to the crowd he gave them the opportunity to accept Him and what He could provide for them, not only to survive the day but to survive eternity if they accept Him as their Saviour and eat the bread of life by trusting in Him. Later Jesus would help His followers to remember Him, the bread of life, by giving them Holy Communion. God blessed mankind with hunger pangs to remind them about their dependency on Him. To the specially blessed the physical hunger changes to a spiritual hunger which can only be satisfied by Jesus through His indwelling Holy Spirit.

### **9.13 Compelled to make a neighbour**

Our God works in strange ways. One day Jesus and His disciples encountered a man blind from birth. The disciples wanted to make an intellectual discussion about the plight of the poor man. They wanted to know who sinned, this man or his parents for they believed his blindness was because of sin. They were amazed when Jesus said neither the blind man nor his parents were responsible for his blindness. Jesus said:

"It was not that this man or his parents sinned, but he was born blind in order that the workings of God should be manifested, displayed and illustrated in him."

Here we have a blind man totally dependent on other since birth. Never before was a person in his position healed so there was no expectation from him to be healed. When Jesus called him he might have expected some gift like food or money. He must have been surprised to notice that this man, called Jesus, was preparing an ointment for his eyes from saliva and ground. Then followed a few key words from Jesus: "Go! Wash!" Then the blind man's reaction: "He went and washed" Then follows the comment on the incident: "He came back seeing." Apart from what happened the dynamics working in the fulfilment of this wonder is the same as with the victim in our story; we find a helpless person, willing to accept and trust the help of a stranger and thus making the stranger his neighbour by letting him help him. The key to this wonder can be found in humility, dependency, trust and acceptance.

### **9.14 Ultimate dependency**

No man is so utterly devoid of self-help as a dead person. To illustrate Jesus' willingness to be the perfect, loving, helping neighbour we found the history of the resurrection of Lazarus in John 11. Lazarus loved Jesus as his friend and I am sure he must have asked his sisters to send for Jesus when he realized he was terminal ill. He was a believer in Christ as the Messiah and death was not a threat to him. Perhaps he was a bit disappointed that Jesus did not come in time to save him from



death. Jesus had from the beginning a bigger plan with the death of Lazarus. He knew what He wanted to do; the death and resurrection of Lazarus would bring many people to trust in Him as Messiah. All people willing to die to self and who were willing to trust in Him as the sole solution to their sin problem would honour Him as their nearest Neighbor.

Their lives would become entwined with His. All they had to do was to trust in Him, to accept Him as their Saviour and loving God and remain in the position of worshipper of God, not trying to be their own God by trying to earn their own salvation through their good deeds.

#### **9.15 The time has come. John 12:24**

The message of this book is best summarised in John 12:23-25

"And Jesus answered them, the time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified and exalted. I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just one grain; it never becomes more but live by itself by itself alone. But if it dies, it produces many others and yields a rich harvest.

Anyone who loves his life loses it, but anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. Whoever has no love for, no concern for, no regard for his life here on earth, but despises it, preserves his life forever and ever."

Total death to self, equals disregard of own abilities, a willingness to step down from the throne of the self-god, to become dependent, to open the self for help from others, to make a neighbour by accepting what is needed in your life be it money, medical care, friendship or salvation from Him, your dearest Neighbour.

#### **9.16 Washing of feet**

The recurring theme of Jesus' stay on earth is His cross. Almost every recorded instance has to do with His cross bearing until it cumulated into the physical crucifixion of Jesus. It was all necessary because Jesus had to pay for the one cardinal sin of man namely his self-elevation in his

quest to be his own god. Jesus, the God, had to become the least, to step down from His throne to become a mere human creature to atone for this sin of man. His suffering and humiliation by becoming man stripped from His Godhood was the cross he had to bear to suffer in man`s place.

One of the most humiliating cross bearing moment of Jesus` stay on earth was when he went on his knees before the person who would sell Him out and washed the feet of Judas His betrayer. When it was the turn of Peter to be washed he refused Jesus. He was still on his own throne and not humble enough to let Jesus wash his feet. He was used to take the initiative, to lead, to be somebody. Now Jesus was teaching him to be submissive, to be on the receiving end, to agree to your own inability. When Peter understood that his dependence, shown by him letting Jesus wash his feet, was a sign of his trust in Jesus to save him, to help him become what he could never do on his own. It was and still is the only way we can become one with our God; by letting Him save us. Only after you made God your neighbour can you become a neighbour to someone else and start washing feet too.

### **9.17 The world will not wash your feet**

In John 15:18 we find a test to be applied when you have an encounter with the world and a worldly person and you want to know if you are in the right company.

"If the world hates you, know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would treat you with affection and would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world , no longer one with it, but I have chosen, selected you out of the world, the world hates and detests you."

You, as a Christian, is in the wrong place when the world accepts you, sing your praises and look up to you and is willing to wash your feet, when they try to persuade you to accept them as your neighbor.

### **9.18 It is finished**

Of the most significant words spoken by Jesus when he fulfilled His mission on earth is the following, found in John 19: 28:

"I thirst"

He, the Creator, God himself, agreed to come to this lowest place He could be; begging for water. He placed Himself in the place of the victim in our story. Although He still was the Almighty who could have come from the cross at that moment, wiped out all men from earth and start all over with creation if he choose to, He willingly submitted to His fate to become the humblest person on earth in order to save the most gross sinner who tried to push Him from His throne. The only provision was that the sinner who wished to be saved should also crucify himself, die to self, carry his cross, and accept Jesus` offer on his behalf without trying to supplement the complete redemption of Christ. The moment Jesus asked for a drink of water He became the neighbour of all the millions of sinner who would thirst after the Living Water in future, people on the brink of the flames of everlasting hell.

Then Jesus spoke the sweetest words a sinner can hear:

"It is finished"

So Jesus endured till the completion of His mission; He did not give up before everything was completed and He had suffered to the full for our redemption. The penance was paid in full for our sins. God can now welcome us into His kingdom, we need not be punished anymore.

**Thank You Jesus.**

## Part 4

### A modern story of being and becoming a neighbor

#### Chapter1

"I am pregnant!"

Joss is sure he will never forget those words. He can still see his girlfriend, tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Are you sure?"

"I spoke to my friends and they said I must be pregnant if I skipped one of my periods. What are we going to do?"

"Not so fast, girl. What do you mean, what are we going to do? You were supposed to keep yourself safe. Why didn't you take your tablets? Why are you pulling me into this thing? How do I know this is my child?"

He called her girl and never used her name. To him she was a plaything, somebody to use for his own pleasure, a person without identity. He hardly knew her background, who her parents were, what her likes and dislikes were, if she was religious, if she had brothers and sister, no, nothing. He only knew she was deep in love with him and would do anything to keep him, yes, even sleep with him and satisfy his selfish sexual needs. Looking back now 30 years later he felt shame rising in him and he even despises the way he treated her. At that stage of his life he was a selfish brat. He grew up in a rich family. His parents spoiled him. There were always other people or circumstances to blame for the many mistakes he made. His parents regularly went to a big church where his father was one of the deacons. He went through the regular religious ceremonies and in his grade 11 year was confirmed as a member of the church. He was then responsible for his own moral choices and his parents seldom commented on his lifestyle. Being a nominal Christian meant

nothing. It was convenient to be a member of the prestigious church, and to use the parson`s testimony to open doors for him. They were so young, inexperienced, they had so much to learn. He was only interested in his own life, his own passions, his own importance, and his own needs. Girl was so much in love with him, she could not think straight. To solve this serious problem was beyond their abilities. Never the less they had to try as they had no other option.

"Why don't you get rid of it?"

"Do you mean an abortion, killing our baby?"

He grew uncomfortable. It was as if the thing was getting a life of its own, an identity, a person, a living person with flesh and blood and feelings. Girl was already getting attached to the baby. Next she would be calling him by name. Please don't let it be his name. The whole thing must stop now.

"Let me think about it. I will come back to you"

He did not realise the predicament he was putting Girl into. She was so uncertain. What is going to happen to her? How would she be able to support herself and her child? She was working in the bank as a junior clerk. He father was a working as a bus driver and her mother was a housewife. She had two younger sisters and it would be impossible for her father to supply for another child. She was so proud when Joss got interested in her. He was the boy from the affluent suburb, a student at the university becoming a chartered accountant. He drove a nice car and although her friends warned her against Joss she was sure he was a nice boy and he would not treat her badly. Now she was not so sure. What if her friends were right and he was only interested in her for the sex she could provide him? She had so little choices in the matter. She decided to confide in her mother. She could always depend on her for wise advice.

"Mother, please help me. I have a big problem"

Her mother did not have much education but she was wise. She loved this first born child of hers very much. She noticed that her child was not the same. It seemed as if she was wrestling with something. She would do anything for Girl, anything she could.

"Tell me about it my child."

"It's about Joss." Then she was silent for a long time while her mother waited for her to continue.

"I am pregnant mother."

She did not know what she expected from her mother but her mother did not disappoint her. She took her eldest in her arms as if she was the small baby she caressed 20 years ago for the first time. No blame, no shame, nothing, only caring love. How could her mother know that was what she needed most in those moments. She clung to her mother and at that moment she knew only God could be nearer than this caring human being hugging her. For the first time she felt peace and a measure of security returned to her. It was as if God was speaking to her and telling her that all will eventually turn out for the good. At that moment she knew God would never forsake her, she will always be His child and He is holding her now just as her mother is doing. At that moment she knew she would never give up her child to be butchered in her womb. A friend showed her a video about an abortion. She cried for days for the tiny baby whose head had been crushed and whose tiny body had been dissected before it was sucked out of the woman's womb. It was done by a person who used to care for human life before he became a robot, with no feelings. Then she heard her mother's comforting words:

"We will make a plan my child."

She kept on resting against her mother enjoying the security of her mother's soft bosom. It was as if the tiny thing inside her also came to rest knowing he did not have to fear for his life. She longed for more security:

"But what mother? I won't be able to support myself and the child. Father is not earning enough to look after an extra child. I just can't do this to you."

"Let me speak to father first and then we can discuss our further planning. For now it is best to make an appointment with our doctor to confirm your suspicion. Try not to get too upset. Remember you are two now and you have a responsibility also to the little one inside you."

Her mother`s caring attitude of her grandchild supported Girl a lot. The child was part of her family and she knew her mother will stand with her no matter what.

Josh was still thinking about the best way to approach his parents. One day the opportunity presents itself when he and his parents were alone at home.

"Father, Mother, I have something to discuss with you. Perhaps you can give me some advice."

He immediately had their attention. This was an adult approach they did not expect from their child. Hence they were more than willing to listen.

"Speak up, my son we will surely try. I and your mother know a lot about life and will give you sound advice."

"You know I have been seeing this girl. Nothing serious, just passing the time. I think she saw in me a prospective husband, which definitely was not the case. We played around a bit and now she is telling me she is pregnant and it is my baby."

"The little bitch, she will pay for this. How dare she drag our good name through the mud? Does she know with whom she is dealing? We will sue her and make sure DNA tests are done to prove your innocence. She is a real treasure hunter. We will fight her in court and see how long her father`s money will last before she give up her claim on you."

The mother`s response was more subdued but sharper at the core:

"The fact that she is not going for an abortion explains it all. The problem can easily be solved, if there is a problem. She knows with an abortion it is not going to be easy to prove it is your child and bring charges against you. Bring her here and we will arrange for the abortion to be done on our costs even if we know you are not the guilty one. We can even compensate her financially. I am sure when she hears about the money she will easily go with our recommendations."

"You know son, my name is on the list to become the leader elder in our church. Gossip like this can do our good name harm. I think we must settle this problem as soon as we can. Do not worry, we will take care of everything. Just arrange for a meeting with her. She may even bring her parents with if she likes."

Josh made the arrangements with Girl and she said she will try to get her parents to bring her to their home.

The meeting was arranged and they gathered in the sitting room of Josh's parents. Josh's father took the lead and then they all contributed: Girl sat between her parents and Josh sat as far as possible from her. He avoided eye contact and Girl was very near to tears.



## Chapter 2

"Thank you for coming. Let us not waste time. Our position is the following: We think your daughter is trying to take advantage of our son by trying to force him to take responsibility for the child which he sure is not his. However, we are willing to pay for the abortion as a friendship offering from Josh to Girl. We are even willing to pay R10,000 to help her to recover and go and see a psychologist . I must say we have discussed the matter thoroughly and this is the best offer we can make you."

Girls' father responded. He was uncomfortable in the rich man's setup. Clearly Josh`s father was influential and well educated. He was used to giving orders and having his way. Girl`s father was an ordinary middle class worker but he had character. He replied as follows:

"Sir, I know my daughter. I trust her to tell me the truth. She confided to us her love for Josh. She consented to sex because of her love for him and because she thought he was also in love with her and wanted to marry her. She obviously was wrong and made a mistake in her judgement. We as Christians do not believe in killing the unborn baby. We will never go that way and would rather face hardship than agree to an abortion. We stand with our daughter and I will never willingly allow my grandchild to be killed. You, sir, are a leader in your church. Don`t you care for a human life? The baby you want killed is your own flesh and blood. Don`t you have any feeling for the helpless creature?"

Girl`s t ears were now flowing over her cheeks and dripping onto her lap. She felt bewildered and rejected especially about Josh`s attitude. He was so nice to her. He even made promises to her on how he would look after her and that he only wanted to complete his studies before he married her. How could he have been so cruel? He knew she was faithful to him and would never sleep with another person while she loved him so much. In this company she could not speak but she was so proud about her father and how he came up for her. His willingness to suffer

financially to save the life of his grandchild made her especially proud of him. Her mother held her hand. As far as she was concerned nobody is going to touch her grandchild and her daughter. She was here to protect them and to look after them. Girl looked at her mother and she knew at that moment this is the mother she would like to be to her child.

Girl's father stood up. He put his arm protected around Girl's shoulder. He did not have to say anything. This was his family and he would not allow them to be bullied by money, power, social standing or education. When they got into their car it was as if a heavy burden was cast from Girl's shoulders. She now was certain no doctor would be allowed to kill her child. She leaned over and whispered in her father's ear:

"Thank you, thank you, Daddy"

He could not help it but this was the closest moment he had with his daughter and he picked a tear away.

There was a letter waiting for Josh from the university.

"Dear sir,

Regrettably I must inform you that due to your poor semester results you are not allowed to continue with your course this year. If you want to continue you will have to come back and repeat the course next year.

Regards,

Signed: Registrar."

Josh felt his legs folding under him. He had to sit down. He knew his academic results were not good but he did not believe them to be so bad. As usual his parents had to correct his mistakes and he wordlessly handed the letter over to his father. For once his father saw Josh for what he had become. It was hard for him to accept his role played in the upbringing of Josh. The successful businessman in him surfaced. He became the manager objectively looking at the problem and

solving it with the skills he acquired through the years. While Josh`s mother looked at the letter with indignation she reacted in her usual way blaming others for the mistakes Josh made:

"Don`t worry my child. I am sure Daddy will work something out. He knows many people at the university."

This time she was wrong. The efficient, successful, businessman was not going to be pushed in a direction he knew it is not going to work.

"Josh, we always protected you from the results of your own follies. But it is ending now. We gave you all the opportunities we could; a flat to stay in, a nice car, ample spending money, free education, liberties and our trust. You failed us and it is time for you to grow up and face life`s challenges. I do not know what you are going to do but as from next month I am giving the flat up and you will have to find your own lodgings. I am taking the car back. Luckily it is still registered in my name. As far as your university training is concerned we are willing to pay for the academic classes conducted extramural during the evening. Many chartered accountants qualified in this way doing evening classes or taking correspondence courses while doing their practical internships with a big firm."

Luckily Josh was seated this time. He was growing up in a few minutes and would be responsible for his own life from now on. He looked at his mother for help but she was looking at the flower arrangement as if it was the first time she saw it. She knew from past experiences that this was not a good time to intervene. Josh did not say anything. He got up and went to his room. He needed time to get over this shock. His life would never be the same. He now had to face the music himself. It was not convenient but actually it was nice to know that you are now responsible yourself and cannot depend on your parents to make life easy.

Josh`s father felt a sense of relief. Suddenly it dawned on him that his release of his son should have been done long ago. Josh was almost 21 and he had to accept responsibilities for his

own life now. If he made a mistake he had to deal with the consequences. They won't always be there to make life easy for their child. When he thought back about the interview earlier he felt respect for Girl's parents. If this was a job interview for one of his employees he certainly would have employed Girl's father. He must keep him in mind for later, one never knows. He could see that his wife was not happy. He knew it would take some time but eventually her logic would overtake her emotions and she will accept his decisions. He was glad it was over and he could get on with what he had to do.

### Chapter 3

Now the hard planning had to start at Girl's home. They had decided to keep Girl's baby and to raise the child themselves. Girl was financially self-supportive, but won't be able to pay for the child's day care. Here her mother came in. She was more than willing to look after her first grandchild. With some budget planning and Girl moving into the house to stay with her parents they will be able to manage. Girl's sister was in grade 11 and in little more than a year would be able to look after herself. If necessary, Girl's father was willing to work a little overtime. Girl would give up her flat and move in with her parents the end of next month. She would get maternity leave from the bank and would be able to relax and give her unborn child the necessary security and peace for optimal development. Although Josh was not part of their plan they had to keep in mind that his paternal instincts may surface. They did not speak a lot about this possibility but decided to handle it if and when it will surface in future.

Josh was the one in real trouble. He, the spoiled rich man's kid, had to do a lot of planning if he was to survive. The first time in his life he found the joy of accepting responsibility for his own life. Religion was to Josh a game. He never really had to depend on God for anything. A nagging thought or two crept into his mind:

"What if he cannot find an auditing firm willing to take him in for his internship? Where is he going to find a place near enough to the university so he can walk to it and at the same time near enough to his work at his employer. It seems impossible and he decided he would rather go for a non-residential university offering correspondence courses. That will mean he can look at rural areas for his internship where the problem of transport won't be that big of an issue. He already completed his first year's studies and that might be a help to get an appointment. But now he must get practical and approach possible employers. It would be nice to be not that far from his parents.

For the first time he was honest with himself and allowed himself to think of the child as his own. After all it was not such a bad thought he anticipated it should be."

The first thing he had to do was to find an auditing firm willing to take him in. He concentrated on the big well-known firms and selected 10. Then he started phoning them. He never got past the receptionist. With all it was the same answer:

"We do not take in interns during the year. Apply at the end of the year."

Then he tried the lesser known firms with the same result. He became uncomfortable and started to worry. Initially he was full of confidence but now he started considering the possibility that he might not get an appointment. This went on for a week and then he knew he had to look at smaller towns away from the big metros. All to no avail. He realised what a wonderful opportunity slipped through his fingers when he could study full time with an almost guaranteed acceptance at one of the bigger firms after he got his degree. Time was running out and he had another week before he had to move out of his flat with nowhere to go and very little money to tide him over. He was always so independent and he needed nobody's advice and help. Now he felt the need of a friend, somebody to speak to, and somebody to give him some advice. He did not really have friends. He was not a nice person; always full of himself and looking down on others. For the first time in his life he felt the need for help from God. Previously God was not a priority. He was his own god and did what he liked. If necessary he would use other people for his own pleasure like he did with Girl. He felt himself blushing when he thought about her and the predicament she was in, all because of his selfishness. He did not even know a person he could speak to. Then he remembered a boy that went with him to school. All the boys looked down on him. He was not the regular guy, who played rugby, chasing after the girls, boasting, fighting, drinking and refusing discipline. Eventually Johnny chose to become a pastor and at present was helping a pastor in a small church on the outskirts of town. He wondered if Johnny would still remember him. He was so

desperate that he was even willing to visit Johnny. It was humiliating but he had no transport and had to keep that in mind when he made arrangements to see Johnny. To get over this problem he decided to ask Johnny to meet him at a nearby diner for a cup of coffee. To his amazement Johnny not only remembered him but was eager to meet with him. They made an arrangement for the next day.

A rare thing happened. Josh was not only on time but waited half an hour in advance for Johnny to come. He could not believe his eyes when Johnny stepped in and immediately walked over to him as if they were old friends, greeting him warmly.

"Thanks for meeting with me. I did not expect you to remember me."

"No, Josh, I must be the one to be amazed that you remembered me. You were so well known, popular with the girls, playing in the first rugby team, driving that nice car, always challenging the discipline of the teachers. You were our hero and we looked up to you. I then knew you were on your way up and one day would become an important person. It is a mystery to me that you called me and invited me for a cuppa. I suppose you want to talk to me about something important. But it is impossible for me to guess how I can be of assistance to you."

Josh went quiet, not knowing how to relate to the humble person in front of him. He instantly liked him and felt he could confide in him. He so much needed someone to speak to that he even asked God this morning to bless the meeting.

"Johnny, you don't know me. I am a bad person. I used a girl for my pleasure while she was deeply in love me. I made her pregnant and when she was on her most vulnerable I deserted her, left her to fend for herself. I even tried to persuade her to go for an abortion. From that moment on everything in my life turned out bad. I failed my courses at university and cannot proceed till next year. My father is fed up with me, took my car away and is not willing to carry on paying for my studies. I tried to get a job at an auditing firm to do my internship while studying correspondence

courses. Nobody wants me. I must move out of my flat in a week`s time. I feel like a bum, no work, having nothing, not able to provide for myself, nothing to be proud of. For the first time in my life a feel totally dependent, down and out. From here to becoming a beggar and a drunkard is a short way. For the first time in my life I asked God for something, really meaning it. I asked Him to bless this interview. I am so down and out I even trust Him as my only resort. That is the reason I thought about you because I knew you were a genuine child of God. There, I now blurted my whole story out. If you walk out on me now I will understand and I won't blame you."



## Chapter 4

Johnny watched his new friend in silence. He did not lose eye contact. He was as friendly as the first time he walked into the diner. He felt compassion for this person, only a shadow now of the one he knew at school. In his short time as pastor's assistant this is the story he mostly heard from people independent, self-relying with no thought about God till the moment came when they lost their earthly securities and had no other place to turn to but to God. Every time he stood amazed at the love of God putting in so much effort to bring a lost soul into His kingdom.

"My friend, I have good news for you. God loves you. He cares about you and he is reaching out to you. This is the only way he could get your attention. You are on the brink of releasing the omnipotent power of God in your life. God said: 'Come to me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Learn of Me. My yoke is light and My burden is bearable.' He also said: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you.' Are you willing to trust Him, to give your old sinful life over to Him? Are you willing to trust that what He did on the cross to release you from you sins and sinful nature is enough to save your soul? Do you believe that He came back to life after His crucifixion and that you are born again if you accept His sin offering for you personally? Are you willing to make a commitment to God to trust Him completely as your Saviour and not for what He can do for you now to get you out of your problems? Yes, so many important questions to think about. Will it be in order if I visit you at your flat tomorrow same time to answer any questions you may have?"

Josh felt relieve surging through him. He wanted to cry out: Yes, Yes, Yes, but obviously Johnny wanted him to think the questions over before committing himself. He was in a hurry to get to his flat in order to read some of the old messages they used to hear in church. He was uncertain if he still had a Bible. He must look in the box with the old books.

Arriving home he did not even eat, he immediately started scratching in the box with long discarded books. To his relief he found a Bible, almost new with the inscription of 10 year earlier:

"To Josh. May you find wisdom in this Book. Love. Mommy and Daddy."

Unfortunately then he was just going into his teens and the testosterone levels overtook the longing for wisdom. But now he had another chance to make a wiser decision. But where must he start reading. He learned a valuable lesson when he contacted Johnny namely that God was dependable and you can trust Him to answer you. So he took the Bible on his lap and closed his eyes:

"God, I need You. Johnny told me that I must desire You and not try to use You. God, it seems to me You made a special effort to speak to me, to bring me to You. I am stripped of all that made sense to me. I believe You want to show me the way to the things that really matter in life. I know so little about Your Word, Lord. I am sorry. Please speak to me. I trust You to guide me in what I must read. Amen."

As it was impossible for him to use his knowledge of the Bible to decide on a passage to read, he trusted God and opened the Bible somewhere in the middle. He was prepared for heavy, difficult to understand, theological stuff. To his amazement he found the following words written:

"Proverbs 3: 1:

"My son, Never forget the things I`ve taught you. If you want a long and satisfying life, follow my instructions closely. Never forget to be truthful and kind. Hold these virtues tightly. Write them deep within your heart. If you want favour with both God and man, and a reputation for good judgement and common sense, then trust the Lord completely; don`t ever trust yourself. In everything you do put God first and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success. Don`t be conceited, sure of your own wisdom. Instead trust and reverence the Lord, and turn your back on evil; when you do that, then you will be given renewed health and vitality. Honour the Lord by

giving Him the first part of your income and He will fill your barns with wheat and barley and overflow your wine vats with the finest wines.

Young man, do not resent it when God chastens and correct you, for His punishment is proof of His love. Just as a father punishes a son he delights in to make him better, so the Lord corrects you."

Josh was amazed. Now he knew God is a living God, that God heard him when he prayed. God answered all his questions. Not only his questions but God gave him directions on how he must live his life. These words will be the way he is going to live in future. He knew that this God, is the God he is going to follow, love and obey. He could hardly wait for his new friend, Johnny, to tell him about God.

In his eagerness to assist his new friend in his seeking for God, Johnny was early for his appointment with Josh.

"Johnny, come in. I have things I must tell you. God is alive. He is faithful, He answered my prayers. I asked Him to give me answers about the way I must go and then I took the Bible and as I did not know where to seek for answers I asked Him to speak to me. I trusted Him and opened the Bible somewhere in the middle. As I read through the verses I realised God was answering my prayers and He was giving me instructions for the rest of my life. Every major aspect of my life was covered; my finances, my health, how to conduct business, how to find favour in my social interactions and how to be happy and wise. God is faithful. I suspect you know to which part of the Bible I am referring to."

"Yes, my friend I know the part in Proverbs 3 by heart. Many times in my life I had to go back to these wise words for encouragement. I believe, as you do, that God is answering our prayers and first He had to help you to trust Him because I am bringing you a message even more wondrous than the one you received, but you must be able to trust God to receive it for yourself. It

must be about 1000 years after Solomon wrote the words you read that one of the followers of Jesus, one of His disciples, wrote a letter to a congregation. I want you to read it for us and then we can talk about it. You will find it at the back of your Bible. The last book of the Bible Revelation and just before that book is a short book, Jude. Just before Jude you will find the three letters of John written to congregations. Let us look at the first of those three letters. You will see there are different chapters, highlighted, then verses numbered in smaller numbers in the chapter. See if you can find John, Chapter 1, verse 8."

Johnny explained well and soon Josh found the place:

"If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves, and refusing to accept the truth. But if we confess our sins to Him (to God), He can be depended on to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong. And it is perfectly proper for God to do this for us because Christ died to wash away our sins. "

Johnny interrupted Josh`s reading as he wanted to make sure Josh was understanding what was meant by these words.

"Josh, you told me you were worried about the bad way you were living, for the way you treated Girl, your selfishness, your love for worldly pleasures and the way you looked down on less fortunate persons. In that way you were agreeing to what you just read. You know you are a sinner. The next step is to confess your sins to God. That means you must take your sins, all you can remember, and bring them to God and confess that you did wrong, even more than that, you must confess to God that you have a bad nature and that you are dependent on His forgiveness. Then we get to the core of your forgiveness; you must believe that Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth to suffer in your place for the sins you did. He suffered in full for everything you did wrong. He paid the full penalty for your release, your redemption, when He suffered naked on the cross next to a busy highway where He was ridiculed and blasphemed, even spit on, till He gave over and died in

your place for the sins you did. You can even make his forgiveness more real in your life by going through the water of baptism. In this way you fully identify with Jesus. When you are submersed under the water, you cannot breath. This is symbolic of how the old man with a sinner`s nature died with the death of Christ. When you come up out of the water of baptism it symbolizes your new life you start living the moment you take your first breath, like a baby being born. Another word for Holy Spirit is Ruach meaning wind or air. So the Holy Spirit becomes your new life."

Then Johnny helped Josh to pray the sinner's prayer along the lines he explained to Josh. There was silence in the room. Then Josh spontaneously prayed the following words:

"Jesus, Son of God, thank you for what You did to save me from hell. Thank you for your love. You paid dearly for me. I know I now belong to You. Do with me in this life as You please. Thank you my Lord, my God, thank You that You gave your precious Son to pay for all my sins. Amen.

Again there was a long moment of holy silence.

Then Josh asked:

"When can you baptize me?"

Tears welled up in Johnny`s eyes. The saving of a soul will always remain to him the most precious thing one can witness on this earth.

"Sunday morning at 9: 30. Be early so we can discuss all the proceedings. Please bring someone with you to share your joy." With these words he left Josh to enjoy his new Friend for all eternity.

## Chapter 5

Josh had a problem. He did not know of any born again Christian that went through the water of baptism, who would be able to understand the wonder of what is happening. Who is he going to ask? He turned to his New Friend and asked Jesus to show him the person.

That night, he woke up, suddenly wide awake and as if in a dream he saw an angel- like creature, but he could not discern the face. Then the person turned to his full view. He was amazed. Girl was staring back at him. Then the image disappeared but he had his answer. He went to his computer and sent Girl the following message. This was the first contact after the disastrous meeting at his parent's home:

"Dear Girl,

Please listen to what I have to say. A lot happened in my life and I am not the same person you used to know. I would like to explain it to you but for now I have a request to make to you. Please think it over before declining. I am getting baptized in Johnny`s church, you know the small church in Border Street, on Sunday at 9: 30. Will you please come? You are welcome to bring your family with you.

Josh."

He did what he believed was the right thing to do. Now he can rest and leave everything in God`s hands.

Soon it was Sunday morning and he dressed as he used to dress for formal church. On his arrival Johnny was waiting for him. He was glad to see his new friend and explained the procedure for the baptism. After the baptism he will give the opportunity to say a few words if he like. Not many people attended the church but the people present were there for the right reasons. They wanted to praise their Lord, bring thanks to Him for all He did for them and to listen to His message. Today they will have the privilege of identifying again with a person coming to Christ for the first time. For

most of the people present, the baptism as Jesus was baptized by submersion in water, was one of the highlights of their Christian life. There were a few guests present as well.

When Josh came out to be baptized it was the first time he had a look at the congregation. When he saw Girl and her parents his tears clouded his vision so much Johnny had to guide him to the baptismal font.

Josh experienced the baptizing as Johnny explained it to him. He felt the cleansing of his sins when he was submerged and he knew that the old man was left in the water which will soon be dispersed and thrown away. He won't be perfect but he will always be under the blood of Jesus cleansing him. He felt so much love for Jesus remembering what He had to go through to save this lost soul from everlasting damnation. When he came up from the water and took his first breath he knew he was a new person and that God was living inside of him in the form of His Holy Spirit. Unexplainable joy filled his being and he was so thankful for the new life God gave him.

Somehow he did not have to explain anything to Girl and her parents. When he opened his mouth he did not know what to say but a new person was speaking through his mouth, words he did not understand but words with the most beautiful sound imaginable. His hands spontaneously rose into the air and the congregation came to their feet and blessed him also with outstretched hands. Johnny had a short message for the congregation. After drying himself and putting on his clothes he was just in time to see the last person leave the church. Girl and her parents were already gone. Johnny asked him for tea and they had a wonderful time together.

When he got home there was a message on his computer. It was from Girl inviting him for tea at her home.

Girl was alone and her parents were nowhere to be seen. She asked him in. He sat in wonder looking at her till it made her uncomfortable and she looked away. All I Josh had to offer her was his sincerity and love. He said:

"Girl, I lost almost everything since our last meeting. I was told that I can't carry on with my studies at university because of my bad semester report. My parents were furious with me and told me I had now to fend for myself. They also took my car away as well as my allowance. I started looking for a firm to take me in for training while I try to complete my studies by correspondence courses. To date I found nothing. In a weeks' time I have to vacate my flat as my father is not willing to pay for it anymore. I said I almost lost everything but I also discovered what I had. I am deeply in love with you, Girl. I cannot live without you. I would very much like to marry you. I know I deserve nothing but what I have received from our Father in heaven I am willing to share with you. I know you now need security now for yourself and our child. I would suggest that you stay on with your parents for now till I find a placement and a job. I am coming for you, my love. That is to say if you still want me. I would also so much like to share in this time while we wait for our son to be born. I know it is a boy. God revealed it to me. That is my story."

While she was crying he took her hands into his own. Through her tears she said:

"Josh, I love you very much. Thank you for giving your life to Christ. It would be my lifelong honour to be your second priority after God. We forgave you long ago and prayed so much for you. God answered our prayers. Will you thank Him please?"

Still keeping her hands he slid to his knees in front of her and prayed:

"God, this is the best day of my life. You welcomed me into Your kingdom. Thank You. You gave me this woman to be my wife. Thank You. You gave us our son. Thank You. You gave us peace and joy. Thank you. We now put our lives into Your hands to do with us as You please. Thank You, Thank You, Thank You. Please bless our son. Keep him and Girl safe in Your care. Amen."

They agreed to carry on for now as God directed their paths.

When Johnny had his first interview with Josh he gave him a verse out of the Bible that came true for Josh:



"So don't worry at all about having enough food and clothing. Why be like the heathen? For they take pride in all these things and are deeply concerned about them. But your heavenly Father already knows perfectly well that you need them. And He will gladly give them to you if you give Him first place in your life. So don't be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time.( Matt. 6:33. Living Bible)

Josh held on to this verse with all the faith God gave him. So it was not a big surprise the next morning when he got a phone call from a rather small town a hundred miles from where he was staying .

"Please hold the line for Mr. Small from the auditor`s firm Small and Small.:

A very friendly and informal Mr. Small came on the line:

"Morning Josh. I am phoning about an urgent matter. I am afraid I am going to be too late and therefore I am phoning so early. One of the persons working with us told me he went to a small church in your town. He enjoyed the service and atmosphere of the church and do not mind to travel the distance. He told me about your baptism. We are in a process of appointing someone as an intern at our firm and would like to interview you in this regard. We do have a problem because we cannot wait too long before we employ somebody due to work load. Will you be able to come for the interview tomorrow at 10 am.?"

"Thank you sir, I will come. Please give me the directions"

Josh did not know what he is going to use for transport as he did not have a car. He phoned his friend Johnny and told him about God`s provision and the chance to get employed. Before he could ask Johnny volunteered to take him as he was eager to meet the person from the firm who attended his church the previous day.

Josh decided to do his homework about the firm where he might get an appointment. It was a new firm just more than a year in existence. The partners were brothers. One qualified a year before the

other. They were young and their father farms not far from town. Although the town was small they were the only auditing firm and the farmers in the vicinity were well off. They preferred supporting the young men from their own area instead of travelling the hundred miles to the big town. The firm was expanding rapidly.

Johnny and Josh left early and was well in time for Josh`s interview. He was not in the least worried because God was in control and he trusted God for His will. Johnny`s appointment was for 12:00 during the member`s lunch break.

The members were almost Josh`s age and they greeted him heartily. They were in their core farm boys and their integrity stood out. Josh preferred coffee and it was evident the partners did not have much time but that did not keep them back from thoroughness. As Josh they also did their homework and knew much about him. They already decided they would like to take him on board. This interview was not to determine his suitability but it was the last test they want to put to him to test his integrity and see if he wants to present himself better than he is or to see if he is sincere and honest. The more he was willing to disclose about his mistakes and bad judgements in the past the more his integrity would become evident. So they ask him to tell them about his background and why he wanted to start his internship in the middle of the year.

Josh started by telling them about his upbringing in a rich man`s environment and how he became spoiled and enjoyed a life where his parents accepted responsibility for his actions and bad decisions. He went in detail about his relationship with Girl. He could see it shocked them when he told them about his indifference towards his son and his wish for an abortion. Then he came to the part where he lost everything and how hard it was for him to adjust to the new circumstances, especially when he had to give up his car and flat. He told them how hard it was to find employment in his field. But that they already knew. When he was sure they could not be interested in appointing him they asked him to leave the room and wait in the waiting room while

they discussed what he told them. Josh spent this time in prayer and he asked God for His will as He knew best.

Junior Small smiled when Josh left.

"Such integrity is hard to find. I am comfortable with him and I am sure he will be an asset to the firm. We already know what happened at the church and even at his girl's house. He did not tell us about the way he took his responsibilities up with his girlfriend. He is definitely not trying to cover up and he had no wish to present himself better than he is."

Older brother agreed hundred per cent with his younger brother.

"Let`s make him a decent offer with an ultimatum. We are willing to give him a chance but we have 2 provisions: He must start coming Monday and he has to stay in the flat attached to our practice to keep an eye on things, seeing we do not have a security firm in town."

They agreed and called Josh in.

After explaining everything to him they waited for his reaction. To their astonishment he asked them if they would mind to join him in a short prayer. What could they do but to consent? This was the first of many lessons they would in future learn from their learner. In a short prayer Josh thanked God for providing for him and asked God to bless the partners and the firm in future.

"Thank you very much. At what time do we start on Monday?"

Josh`s father had many contacts and people who could keep track on what Josh was doing. So he and his wife were very aware of every move of Josh. They were so proud of their son and they even felt that they can learn from him in the way he handled his difficult situation. In future they will learn much more about the way God works in a person's life when a person is willing to acknowledge his own inability to solve problems and accept the helping hand of God.

Josh did not own much stuff to move to his new abode. What he did own he could easily put onto Johnny`s trailer. Johnny offered his help and the move was planned for Saturday.

After thanking God for His wonderful intervention and provision Josh phoned Girl. He could tell she was jubilant and could not wait to see her future home. He also phoned his parents and asked if it will be alright if he pay them a visit on Thursday. They agreed but did not tell him about the surprise they had for him.

It already was Wednesday. He packed his stuff and started cleaning his flat. Friday is the day he will be spending with his future wife and his son to be. She put in a day`s leave for the special occasion.

When thinking back later years he always was amazed at the way God performed the miracles in his life during that week. But surely it must have been easy for the God Who created everything in one week.

Josh was ready to leave, to start the new life God planned for him. So time was dragging by and eventually it was time to leave for his appointment with his parents. He did not know how they would receive him. The last time they were together was not very cheerful. So he was a bit apprehended but knew they still loved him even if he did make mistakes. Love covers everything and he thinks they will be willing to forgive him.

To his surprise all the stress of the previous meeting was gone. They welcomed him and he could tell they were caring for him and was glad to see him again. He expected them to grill him about what he did since they last saw him but it was not the case, so he relaxed and enjoyed their company. He explained about his plan to move to the firm of Small and Small and his plan to marry Girl as soon as possible. They agreed it was the best way to go. He was sure they were proud about the way he was handling things. He did not forget to tell them about his baptism and the wonderful friend God provided for him. Then it was time for the parents to disclose their surprise for him.

"Josh, you know the car Mother used to drive? Well, we decided, as the car was ten years old, it was time to buy her a new one. The trade in value was so low we decided to keep it. It is

parked in the outside garage. Go and have a look at it and you are welcome to have it if you want it. You need not pay us anything but you must register it in your name and you must accept responsibility for it. It goes for everything; licence, petrol, service etc."

Josh was silent to such a degree his parents were uncertain if they might have offended him with their proposal. Then he got up and gave each of them a hug with tears in his eyes and a 'thank you, thank you' deep out of his heart. He felt deep gratitude deep in his heart towards his Heavenly Father providing in such a way for him.

He was in a hurry. The love of his parents showed further in the small token of a full petrol tank. He could not wait but had to show Girl first their own first car. She was jubilant and together they thanked God for His wonderful provision for them. They went for a short drive, careful not to use too much petrol. He was so used to having a car he never appreciated the wonderful privilege of owning one. Then he went to Johnny and they too thanked God for His wonderful provision. He now was independent from Johnny and they made an arrangement that Josh would take responsibility of moving to his new abode. Driving to his old flat he could not get used to the freedom the wheels were providing. Soon it was Saturday and early he made arrangement for the depositing of the key of the flat. He drove carefully to his new town. Things worked in a different way, away from the city. To his amazement the key of his new flat was in the door and a short note was pinned to the door:

"Sorry Josh, we are away for the weekend. Enjoy your flat. My wife thought like a housewife and supplied some basic foodstuffs. Welcome, and may your stay be blessed.

Small (Snr.)"

Josh opened the cupboards, all well stocked. Even the fridge was stocked with meat and cheese and all a bachelor would not think about. He was overwhelmed and he took his Bible and read again the verse in Matt.6:33, where God promised to provide with all that was necessary for

those who choose to give Him the first place in their lives. He knelt next to his bed, closed his eyes and just enjoyed the wonderful presence of his God and Father. All he good say was:

" Thank You Father, Thank You Jesus, Thank You Holy Spirit.

Then he stayed in God`s presence for he did not know how long.

He got up and inspected his new home. The flat was old but very comfortable. Big rooms discerned it from the newer flats. There were 2 rooms, one for him and Girl and later on a separate bedroom for their son. Suddenly he knew what he would like to call his son. He immediately phoned Girl and asked her if she had an idea of what she would like to call their son. The unity of their relationship was evident when she said:

"Joshua if it is fine with you" He said it is a beautiful name and would like to go with her proposal. Later he would tell her the whole story of how the same name came to his mind and how she confirmed his wish about the name.

He would start working on Monday and the next weekend he would go and fetch Girl, and show her, her new home.

## Chapter 6

The rest is history. That was all 30 years ago. Looking back on the last 30 years he can only say: "Thank You Jesus, thank You Jesus. God was always faithful and did exactly as He promised to 30 years ago. He never forsook Josh and his family. He was with them especially during the hard times. Yes, Josh was wonderfully blessed but he also went through difficult times as Jesus promised in His word to His followers. No man is greater than Jesus and man must expect to suffer because his Lord and Master suffered. But he has the assurance that God will always be with him. He can remember the blessings on his family. Eventually they had 3 children. When the second one was on his way they moved into their present home; a big 4 bedroom house, not new but very comfortable. They were content with what had been provided for them and lived well in their means. In this way Josh was blessed to be able to put away money and to acquire some property. He worked hard and was well remunerated by the partners. When he was 35 they offered him a partnership which he gladly accepted. When he was 45 a big setback befell them; Girl got cancer and one of her breasts had to be removed. She recovered but although she grew in her faith and love for Jesus, she was afterwards not as strong as she used to be. During these trying times Josh learned again the lesson of trusting Jesus with all you have. Josh was involved in a car accident two years ago. Although he was seriously injured he recovered and was back in his office after 3 months. Both his parents passed away the last decade and he had to lean heavily on the support his family provided. God carried him through. It was a big comfort to know that his parents also came to God and was also baptized in the same church he was. Both Girl's parents were still alive and became an intimate part of their family.

Their children were a source of joy and never disappointed them. Joshua always will have a very special place because of the fact that he was almost killed before he even was born. Joshua

followed in his father's footsteps and became a Chartered Accountant at his father's firm. Their daughter married a pastor and they were living their calling. Their youngest child made them so proud when he told them he wanted to work for Jesus and bring people into His kingdom. He now is an assistant pastor but knows he will be working across the world one day gathering souls for Jesus.

So Josh was content. God provided everything he needed and much more. One story in the Bible grabbed his attention for it was so true of his life. That is the story about the victim who was robbed on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho in Luke 10: 30. He can so easily identify with this poor creature lying helpless along the road. Only when he was willing to accept his dependency when the Big Passer-by held out a helping hand, could he be saved. Only when he let the Passer- By become his neighbor was he equipped to become a neighbor himself.

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