

A bouquet of orange and white flowers is the central focus, resting on a newspaper. In the foreground, several keys are scattered on the newspaper. The text 'THE KEY TO LIFE' is overlaid in white, with 'KEY' being the largest word.

THE
KEY
TO LIFE

JOASHATAH

The Key

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Dedication:

To my wife,

the Jenny of my life.

“Thank you, dearest thing,

from God to me you bring,

the blessings of my life”

INTRODUCTION

The Key and the Lock

Many people discover on their death beds they made a terrible mistake during their lives by trying to unlock the wrong lock of life. Sometimes people spend a whole lifetime trying to unlock the mystery of how to get rich or how to attain power or how to become an important person or how to be happy or how to excel in life. Sometimes they even find the key to this lock but as I have said only to discover it was the wrong lock and minutes before they die they discover they still have that empty longing emptiness of dissatisfaction inside their hearts.

This book will help you to discover the right lock to unlock in life. It will also help you to discover the key to unlocking this lock. The book will not offer an easy recipe to solve the complexities of life. If you proceed with an open mind and a willingness to discover you may find the right lock as well as the right key.

Happy seeking!

February 1, 2022

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Part 1: Mai**Chapter 1****How it all started**

“Father, why did they leave us? They had everything anyone could desire. Look at the view. At the back, we have this wonderful mountain range. In front we have this slight hill rolling down to the sea. Look at all the vineyards, the crops, the animals, the nice houses, the good shops, the industries, and the happiness. We have no stealing, and no rape. Why did they leave us?”

Mai, short for Immanuel, cuddled into the leather-covered recliner. He was thinking about the recent conversation with his father. He can still hear the urgency in his father’s voice:

“Mai, I need your help! You remember those people I told you about, those breakaway relatives, now living in the valley on the other side of the mountain? Those people did not want to respect me and thought they could do without my help. I still care about them and would like them to be reconciled to me, to come and live with us. The problem is they won’t listen to me even when I begged them to come back. This is where you can help me. You may be able to persuade them to come back. You will be accepted by them if you are willing to fit into their lifestyles. You will have to become poor, dependent and humble. I don’t mean you must become like them in all their bad ways but they must be able to identify with you. You are a wise, loving and kind person. I am sure you will be able to persuade them to come back to us. Will you do this for me?”

The question bothering him was not so much his ability to perform what his father was asking but more about his willingness to give up his affluent lifestyle. Will, he be able to live without his Porsche, the helicopter, the boat, the nice clothes, all the servants around him, the prestige, the security his father was providing, and the easy life of a very wealthy son of

a very important person? How will it feel if these ordinary people reject him, fail to respond to his efforts to bring them back? He could feel the reluctance creeping into his mind. But his father`s wish was like a command to him. He loved his father and respected him. He knew there was only one right response:

“I will, my father”

His father still owed him an explanation on the reason why the people left. Such was his trust and confidence in his father`s wishes that the reason did not bother him that much. He knew his father was doing the right thing and he had to comply.

Things started to move fast for Mai. His father suggested that he move in with a poor couple who lived amongst the breakaway people. They were not yet married but would soon be wedded. It did not bother him but he felt a slight unease at the thought of what his family and friends would think about his decision. Would they still respect him, would they be willing to associate with him when he returns one day? These thoughts cropped up regularly. There was no time to nurse these thoughts for his father was already making arrangements for him to move to his new home.

He would go as a poor person, fully dependent on his new guardians. Although Mai was a very competent person he had to prepare for manual training and to be submissive to whatever his guardians would require of him to gain their confidence and to be accepted in the broader community. Will he be able to do it?

He knew what it looked like on the other side of the mountain. It was not nice; flat and uninviting, barren land, few trees, high poverty and a very high crime rate. Soon Mai found himself living with the couple.

It was a shock to Mai when he discovered that his stay with the couple would be much longer than what he anticipated. Days became months and months became years. He was trained in construction and did much of the menial labour himself. His new father took

the training of Mai on himself. Because of Mai`s sunny disposition, his willingness to be submissive, his love for people and his willingness to help out, he was soon accepted by a section of the estranged family. A group of the family however detested him. There was one very nasty person, who always tried to persuade him to do bad things. His name was Natas. Natas was wise in the ways of the world. One day he tried to persuade Mai to go to a party:

“There will be many willing girls. We are going to smoke pot and drink a lot. What else do you need to make life worth living? You go to church too much. You must have a balanced life. This is your chance to get a taste of real life. Come with us”

Nates`s words kept ringing in his ears. Natas was always partying, smoking pot, drinking, going around with the girls of low morals. Mai felt tempted. Eventually, Natas left him out of his party-planning but he did not give up on Mai. If he could not demoralize Mai he was going to set a trap for him and he is sure he is going to bring holy Mai down. Good riddance, even if Mai get killed in the process. Part of Natas`s plan was to use his buddy, Luas. Natas knew Mai was wary of him and the influence he might get on him. Luas would be the perfect person to harm Mai`s endeavours to bring people back to his father. Luas was a fanatic. He believed in the traditional ways and he would fight Mai all the way.

Mai kept in contact with his father. The conversations usually went like this:

“Good day, father. How are you?”

“I am fine Mai, how is it on your side? Did you persuade someone to come back to us? We miss you, my son.

“Not yet, father but I keep on trying”

Mai could detect the longing in his father`s voice to have him back with him. Sometimes it felt as if his father was getting impatient with the stubbornness of his lost family. Mai was now almost 30 years old and was living with his guardians in the valley. He was skilled in construction and he won the love and trust of many people. The time was

approaching for him to become more involved in acts of persuasion to get some of the family back to where he and his father lived. Perhaps he had to give the construction business a rest and concentrate full time on ways to get the family interested in his father and what his father can offer them. He can talk to them; tell them about how wonderful it is to live with his father. He can tell them about the richness, the beauty of the place where his father lived. He can also tell them how they can have peace and didn't had to slave away every day to make a living. With his father, they won't be in a constant struggle against the bullying and harassment of the gangs and the constant opposition when they try to live a clean decent life. He made up his mind and phoned his father:

“Father, I think the time is right. I am now going to work full-time on influencing our family to come back to us. Will you provide for me? Thanks for equipping me with knowledge and special skills.”

“Go for it my son, you have my blessings.”

Chapter 2

Beginning of the problems

The next chapter of Mai`s life started at a wedding party. Mai invited his special friends to go with him. The party started with shouting and greetings. They danced, ate and drank. Although the food and wine seemed enough to last till the end of the party it was soon clear to Mai that it was not going to be the case. A woman urged him, to do something about the problem. He phoned his father:

“Father, I am at a party. I am afraid the host made a mistake in his calculations and the food and wine are not going to last. Is it possible to send us some food and a few bottles of the nice wine you keep? Please send it by helicopter.”

Half an hour later the helicopter arrived with an abundance of what was needed. The people were jubilant. The party goes opened up to Mai and many were willing to listen to him:

“At my father's house, you will not be subjected to the constant worry about your livelihood. My father is rich and he longs for you to come back to him. He will give you special jobs, something you will enjoy. With my father, you will have peace. That is something you did not have for a long time. Think how nice it would be not to worry about burglars and bad people like Natas. My father even promised to house you.”

Although some of the people were listening to him the friends of Natas mocked him and tried to make fun of him. Especially one of Nata's friends Luas was trying to cause Mai to fall into bad repute with the people.

“Mai is a spoiled, rich man`s child. He is not the good guy he seems to be. I am sure he has a bad plan for you luring you back to his father`s house. You will have to give up the good life you are having with us; partying, running around and enjoying yourselves.

Remember you will have to live decent lives when you go back. Think about it: it was exactly

for this reason you ran away and came to this valley. Are you willing to give up the freedom you are enjoying here?”

Luas would cause Mai much trouble in future. For now, he was like a snake lying in wait. He was also sometimes very bold in his dislike of what Mai was trying to do. Mai also had a real friend, a trusted supporter. His name was Pete. Mai did not know at this stage what important role Pete would play when life became hard for Mai later on.

Mai one day overheard two of the townspeople talking:

“I like Mai because he is genuinely caring about us. Look at the way he solved the problem when the supplies ran low at the party. In no time he arranged for the helicopter to bring the stuff from his father.”

“True, and did you see he did not ask money from the organizers? Did you see how he enjoyed it when the people enjoyed the good food and wine coming from his father? But what about what Natas said? It is not true we left our dwellings at Mai`s father because we wanted to be free from rules?”

It felt to Mai like a breakthrough when he heard this conversation. Perhaps the people will now start trusting him more. He felt the need to speak to his father about the way forward and arranged for a meeting. In his father`s company, he experienced peace, security and love. While discussing Mai`s experience at the party they decided that he will make more use of the vast resources at his father`s disposal. Not only was his father very rich but he also had a laboratory where the newest medicines were developed and produced. Mai decided to test his father`s ideas in this regard.

“Father, I am encountering many sick, fragile and cripple people. I wish I could do more to lessen their pain and suffering. What must I do?”

“Don`t suppress your feelings of compassion. Your feelings are genuine and people will pick it up. If you are to make a breakthrough with these people it will be because of your

genuine love for them. Keep your interest and compassion going. Do what you can, like at the party. As far as a person`s health is concerned I can help you with the newest medicine and orthopaedic apparatus. Just speak the word and what I have will be at your disposal. I think you must be selective in your initial supply of help. Do not overdo it. Otherwise, the people will use you and they will use your healing aids only for their benefit without you accomplishing your main aim.”

When he left his father he took a substantial supply of medicine with him. In the selection of the medicine, he was guided by the needs of the people he encountered. One day he was walking together with his friends through a crowd of people. A man came up to him and asked him if he could help him:

“Sir, I was at the party where you supplied the extra food and wine. I heard from a friend that you are also helping sick people with medicine supplied by your father. Please help me.”

“What seems to be the trouble? “

“Sir, it is not for me but for my son I am asking a favour. His balance is not good and he tends to fall easily. In this way, he harmed himself and almost lost his life.

Suddenly Natas and Luas arrived and tried to discourage the father and the son.

“Why are you bothering this imposter with your requests? He cannot help you. The medicine of his father is of no use in a case like this. Be on your way and do not let us catch you again near this man”

Mai saw the doubt coming into the father`s and child`s attitude. Natas and his friends smiled. They started to walk away but Mai was not so easily discouraged and he spoke to the father:

“Do not listen to Natas and his friends. They hate my father and do not want you to be healed. Especially Luas does not understand what I am doing. They are trying their utmost to stop me and my father from helping you. I can assure you we can help you.”

By this time a crowd had gathered around them. Everyone was trying to see what was going on. The child was shy and tried to hide behind his father who protectively was shielding him from all the curious eyes. Mai felt the compassion rising in him when he saw the love of the father for his son, the way he was protecting his son and the trust that the Mai`s will be able to cure his child. Usually when the child gets upset the symptoms of imbalance and falling set in. The father knew that the next attack was now imminent. At this moment Mai stepped forward. He produced a red pill

“Come, dear child, you are going to get healed today. Don`t be afraid. I am not going to hurt you. I want you to swallow this pill now!”

The child believed what Mai told him. The moment he took the pill the onset of the imbalance receded and he kept his posture. The father was amazed because he knew his son was healed. When the problem started it never receded like now. He kept on thanking Mai and praised Mai`s father for providing the medicine. A cheer went up from the crowd and Natas and his gang slipped away. Luas was thinking to himself, ‘this Mai fellow sure has power. It must be from the devil. Perhaps he is working with the demons.’

Natas and his friends knew that Mai`s influence amongst the people was growing and they had to do something drastic to stop him. At this stage, there already were too many people becoming interested in what Mai had to say.

Chapter 3

The plot thickens

Natas gathered his friends around him. It was time to get rid of Mai. What could they do to prevent him from gathering more influence amongst the people? They tried spreading bad rumours about Mai but it was difficult to discredit such a nice and friendly man. They had to try something else. Natas was the ringleader of the people wishing Mai to go away:

“Time to do something about this guy, Mai. Any ideas from you guys? “

Luas had ideas but he knew it was too drastic at this stage.’ Why not kill the bugger?’ For a short while after Mai’s death, the people would be upset but it would soon blow over. He and his friends would be able to carry on with their old lifestyle and do what they like without the constant reminder about something better at Mai’s father. For now, he knew his suggestions had to be moderate to be accepted by his group. Natas was thinking on the same lines:

“Let us spread a rumour, a real bad rumour about Mai. He is constantly using his father’s image and what his father can do for the people to convince them to go back to his father. We can try to bring the father into disrepute but that will be hard seeing the good he is doing in the community by supplying medicine and other necessities. Who has ever seen Mai communicate with his father? Let us sow doubt into the people’s minds about the relationship between Mai and his father. Let it appear that Mai has a good relationship with Natas and that he is lying about the role his father is playing in his endeavours. We can even tell the people that Mai is secretly involved in many of the illegal activities of Natas. If we can create doubt in the people’s minds about the Mai’s integrity they will not be willing to listen to him anymore.”

One of the other gang leaders had something else to suggest:

“Let’s make use of the influence of the church leaders. They have much to lose if the community decides to go back to Mai’s father. We know our church leaders won’t be accepted by Mai’s father. He does not trust them and even blames them for the fact that the people moved away. The things our church leaders believe are very different from those of Mai’s father.”

So it was decided that for the near future they would concentrate on creating suspicion about Mai’s relation with his father and his relation with Natas. Natas would make an appointment with the church leaders and try to convince them about the urgency of the situation and how their position as leaders was threatened. Luas kept to himself. He had his own plans.

Natas was using people. Not even his close friends knew about his evil plans. If they knew they would most probably leave him. In his mind, a grand scheme had developed. He had his eyes on the enterprise of Mai’s father. He was longing for the riches of the old man and he would like to expand his influence from these stupid people to the other side of the mountain range. He was still working on the details of his plan but this Mai chap was upsetting the apple cart as far as his plans are concerned. This must stop now. He would go and see the head of the church as soon as possible.

Their church was called Valley church. This church originated from the church on the other side of the mountain, called Mountain Church. The head of Valley church was called Prophet. Prophet disliked the head of Mountain church, called Minister. The reason for the discord was the problem with doctrine. You may call the Valley church the enlightened church. The congregation was much more liberal in their views than their brothers on the other side of the mountain. The two churches never met and grew through the years further apart. Valley church was not a large congregation and was very protective of its members. Anything that threatened to reduce their numbers was fiercely opposed. It came as a shock to

Prophet when Natas asked for an interview and mentioned something about a threat to his church. He immediately set up an appointment for the next day at 9 am. Both Natas and Prophet needed each other although for different reasons. Both came well prepared for the meeting. Prophet had six of his senior members and Natas asked some of his friends to assist him.

Natas arrived on time and was warmly welcomed by Prophet and his following. It was evident that Prophet wanted the meeting to start as soon as possible.

“What news do you have?” he asked.

Natas was playing his cards close to his chest and he gave a careful general remark, just to entice Prophet’s curiosity:

“The valley lately changed. I suppose you have noticed”

Prophet had no idea what Natas was talking about but dared not show his ignorance of what was going on under his nose in the company of his followers.

“Yes, it is a pity. What do you think about it?”

Natas played along and made as if he and Prophet were on the same wavelength.

“I am worried about the growing influence of Mai amongst the people of the Valley. You know he aims to take as much of the people he can back to his father on the other side of the mountain.”

Prophet turned pale. It came as a tremendous shock to him that something so important escaped his attention. Why did his informants not tell him about this threat to his church? At present, he already suffers to make ends meet. He knows his lifestyle became a bit excessive but he thought he would be able to afford it by bringing new members into his church.

“What would you suggest? What can we do to keep the people in the Valley?”

“Prophet, you have a lot of influence. People trust you and they listen to you. I suggest you make it your mission to discredit Mai and his efforts to influence the people to go back to the other side of the mountain. Sometimes a direct approach will work. Sometimes you will have to be more subtle especially with the members of your congregation that have come under the influence of Mai. A good way will be to attack Mai`s character. I know it will be hard because he is sincere, loving and has genuine caring for the people. We know he is very religious and believe in God and trust God. Perhaps it will be a good idea to make his relationship with God suspicious. You know the people of the Valley are very superstitious. They believe in demons and all that nonsense. Try to convince the people that Mai is demon-possessed, that he is playing a double role and that he is trying to influence people to give up their traditional beliefs and to trust more in his father and what he can do for the people. Make it sound as if Mai is serving the devil and not God.”

This sounded like a good plan to Prophet. He immediately started by gathering all the elders of the church for an urgent meeting. Nothing of late was urgent so the elders knew something important happened. The urgency of the news almost overwhelmed them. Most of the elders were businessmen and the prospect of losing clients was overwhelming bad. Many of them already were struggling financially. Something like this is going to break them and the prospect of having to move away from the valley was appalling to most of them. They were fired up and ready to set Prophet`s plan to work. Prophet explained the plan to them:

“We must get rid of Mai. I have a good plan. He is pretending to serve God but I believe he is demon-possessed. The people of the Valley must be protected against such evil forces. From now on I am going to preach against Satan and I am going to warn the people against people going around and pretend they serve God and show kind deeds to the people. I am not going to openly mention Mai but I am going to set a trap for him. I am going to disclose his evil nature in front of the people. You, my friends, will have to do your part. You

mingle with the people of the Valley daily. You have influence and you can easily let Mai's name slip into your conversations portraying him as a manipulator of people behind the false mask of caring for people. Especially those people who owe you money. They will be more susceptible to influence and they will be willing to comply with your requests to let others know about this imposter.”

The elders were fired up. Their interests motivated them. It was imperative to get rid of Mai before he could do more harm. Just thinking of what will happen to their investments in the Valley and their lost income were driving some of the elders mad. The head elder's name was Phar. His daughter was in matric this year. He planned a really big display for the matric party at the end of the year. His business was not doing so well now but he just had to scrape the money together for the biggest show-off this town has ever seen. He already spread the rumour that his daughter, Angelina, will be arriving with unexpected transport. He had the helicopter of his friend, Harry, in mind. He also made arrangements with the designer on the other side of the mountain for an exceptionally nice dress. It will be something these common people will be talking about for many years. But, it all costs money. This Mai will have to go before he could do more harm. For a fleeting moment, he thought a terrible thought. It was such a bad thought he was reluctant to admit it to himself. He was thinking if Mai did not willingly go away something might be arranged to get rid of him permanently. Why not kill the bastard?

The scene was set. Natas and his friends were proud of their plans to get rid of Mai. Mai was the innocent self and did not expect anything of this kind. It was a big shock to him to suddenly encounter people giving him a cold shoulder. People he previously regarded as his friends suddenly chose to look the other way when he walked past them. He was sure he did nothing to deserve such rejection. Pete, his big friend, carefully broached the subject

because he knew from a friend who was also an elder about the plan to oust Mai from the Valley.

“Mai, may I speak openly with you?”

“For sure go ahead.” They were in a secluded spot next to the dam. Nobody could overhear them.

“I care a lot about you Mai. I do not want you to get hurt. That is the only reason I am speaking so frankly with you. Mai, they are trying to get you out of the way. By them, I mean the people from Valley church, especially the elders. They are going to make your name bad amongst the people in the hope that the people will oust you. They are also going to spread rumours about your integrity as if you are demon-possessed and do not care about God. The main instigator is Natas. Also watch out for Luas. He is the real threat to your work. From his side, you may also expect lies about your person. I am afraid for you. A lot is at stake. I believe they might even try to kill you.”

There was a long moment of silence. Mai bent over and looked into the water. He was softly speaking into his cell phone, connected to his father, just audible for Pete:

“Father you know everything. You warned me against the opposition. I am here for you. You know about my predicament. You know I love you and want to do what you expect from me. Show me the way forward. “

Pete knew Mai was talking to his father and he knew Mai`s father could hear him although he was on the other side of the mountain. To his amazement Mai got up and said:

“Father said I must carry on. He will help me and make my problems bearable. He said no harm will come to me. Later he will speak again to me in this regard. Let us go from this place and do what we must do. Time is getting short for our mission to bring the townspeople back to father on the other side.”

They got up and it was as if a new urgency, a new motivation was noticeable when Mai walked deliberately back to town where he knew he had new challenges to face.

Chapter 4

Beginning of the suffering

Natas came with the idea:

“Let`s create a riot. Everywhere else in the world it is working. Stir up the masses. Remind them about something they are irritated about; enlarge it into a real big grievance. Incite them to burn, shoot, and loot and create chaos. Amidst the chaos, it will be easier to harm Mai. We can even blame Mai and make him the cause of all the problems. Perhaps the mob will then harm him or ban him from town. Then all our problems will be solved.”

Prophet, the elders and Natas`s friends supported the idea. The big question now was, how and when?

First, they had to identify a general irritation to the community. Prophet suggested that the people must be reminded that Mai is trying to take as many people as possible to the other side of the mountain. The people must be made aware of the fact that if their numbers decrease some of the convenience stores will be closed. The money will follow the people. The schools will be degraded. Some of the schools might even close. Fewer taxpayers will mean less money for the city council and that will have a negative influence on service delivery. The people will suffer because of Mai`s ideals. Prophet chose not to disclose his fear of a smaller church congregation and a less affluent lifestyle for himself.

The date was set for 15 October. It will give them a full month to stir up the grievances and to influence the people. Mia will be made the scapegoat and bad rumours will be spread about him. The leaders will do the same as for the previous efforts to harm Mai`s image. It proved to be successful in the past and it will work in the future. One single, final incident had to be created for the day before the planned riot. They will think about it and at the next meeting, they will decide on the particulars. They set the date for the final meeting for 10 October. That will give them 4 days to get everything organized. In the meantime, they

will gradually incite people to violent protest against Mai`s plans. Pete was very worried about Mai`s safety. He told him everything he heard about Natas` and Prophet`s plans.

“What are you going to do, Mai?”

“What do you mean? I am going on as usual. I came with a mission and I am not going to give up on what I promised my father.” He knew his father would support him and help him. But he also knew that he would have to suffer to accomplish his task. Nobody would be able to take this burden from him. In his heart, he wished it was not necessary to suffer but his father`s will be paramount to him and he knew his father` will must be done. He was so devoted to his father that he knew he would even give his life for his father`s wishes.

When Mai needed to talk to his father he would go up the mountain separating the Valley from his father`s property. He had a nice secluded place where the cell phone`s reception was very good and he could hear his father. He found it necessary to speak on a more regular basis to his father as the threat from Natas and the church people increased. There were trees at this place, very old trees and he experienced a calm feeling and security amongst the old trees. There was certainly a feeling of continuity as if life will go on as witnessed by the old trees even if men`s fortunes were at risk. He felt the calm and accepted as he leaned against one of the old trees. He preferred to come alone to this place. It was easier for him to talk to his father about his intimate feeling when he was alone with his father.

“Father, I must confess I am worried about the riot against me. I know you can intervene on my behalf and even call me back. I accepted your request and I am going through with what I came to do. Do you have any guidelines for me?”

“Mai, always keep your mission in mind. Forget about yourself. Concentrate on the people of the Valley. They do not know it but you are their only hope. Even if they reject you

now, the time will come when they will realise that their only hope is moving from the Valley to me. I know you also love them. Let your love for them guide you. Keep up the good work. I am sure you will get through the riot.”

As planned on 15 October Natas set the whole plan to work; the previous week he gathered a hundred old car tyres. He planned for 20 active sites and had 20 of his trusted friends selected to start the fires. Every one of the 20 leaders arranged for 10 helpers. They had to organise the stones and barriers to be placed on the main roads to disrupt the traffic. If they could only create panic amongst the people their aim was almost accomplished. Prophet and his church leaders were in charge of the placards and banners. Previously he and the elders organized for a competition to see who could make the most riotous placard against Mai. The 20 best placards were chosen and multiplied for the whole congregation. The people understood what was at stake; not only the survival of their church but also the survival of their businesses, their schools, their way of life, yes, everything dear to them. Placards expressed their feelings:

Away with Mai

We want our peace back, - without Mai.

Rather a dead town than a town on the other side.

Kill M. now,

Rather burn our town than let M destroy it.

Even the women and children were to take part. They were organized into groups of ten each. They would start at different strategic points in town. Megaphones would be used to attract attention. People would be invited to join the protestors. People not willing to protest against Mai will be taken note of and they will be branded in future as being not loyal to their town. It would be best if they could also leave with Mai. All groups had to move to the centre

of town where they will gather at the open grounds next to the casino. The group aimed to convene at noon at the chosen place. Here Natas and Prophet will address the people.

Mai got up early on the morning of 20 October knowing this is going to be a long and hard day. He first went to his mountain retreat and spoke to his father. His father`s encouragement meant a lot to him. He arranged with some of his trusted followers to meet him at the open grounds next to the casino at half past noon. They knew this could become a life-threatening situation. They believed in Mai and what he was doing. They were willing to take this risk for what they believed was the right thing to do.

So the scene was set for the riot on 20 October. During all this Luas was keeping a low profile. He did not engage in much of the activity but he was watching and planning.

Chapter 5**The Riot**

20 October

This was the day Natas waited so long for. He got up early, drank a double whiskey and went through his plans for the day: First he must contact all his helpers. He got their names and particulars on his cell phone. Then he must make sure that the tyres are on their way to be delivered at 11 am. at the different assigned places. He must remind the leaders, especially the non-smokers, to remember the matches and the petrol. Today he is going to teach that Mai-fellow a lesson he will never forget. He went for the hundredth time through his notes for his speech. He must concentrate on all the bad things he can ascribe to Mai and his followers. What more could he do to incite violence and to blame the violence on Mai and his father. He had no problem including some lies in his speech as long as he can stir up maximum trouble. Perhaps he can include some rude and degrading remarks of Mai even if he did not say it. It will be better if he left his car way back from the open field. When crowds get excited they are not going to ask who's car is this? He made special arrangements for fire extinguishers at his office and his business. The staff knew exactly what to do, which security doors to close and where to keep themselves safe. One never knows what can come forth from this riot.

Prophet was nervous. He was uncertain about asking God to help him. What if Mai was an honest and well-meaning person and someone who cared about the people of the Valley? The problem was that he, Prophet, invested all his savings in the building of the church. He even borrowed money to complete the luxury trimmings like the carpets and soft cushions for the chairs. If some of the congregation moved to the other side of the mountain he will lose everything. The riot needed to get rid of Mai. Prophet arranged everything. The placards were ready, the people were eager to go. They seemed to look forward to this day as

if this day was a picnic or a celebration. If he had to say something he would have to concentrate on saying something nice about God and how God provides. Perhaps he could put in something about loving your neighbour but also fighting the devil. Perhaps Mai was the devil trying to destroy his congregation. So perhaps he can even ask God to help him today with the riot.

Mai also got up early. He heard about Natas` plans and knew it was all directed at him and to get him expelled from the town. However, he did not realise how serious the hate of Natas was. If he had he might have prepared himself better for the day. He decided to carry on as usual and see what the day brings. He decided to speak to his father before venturing off into town.

“Morning father, how are you today?”

“Perfect my son. Wish you were here today. The sea is an emerald blue and as calm as you can wish. We had a nice rain last night. God is good. When may we expect to see you again?”

“I wish I knew, father. Things are becoming hectic. I did not want to tell you but perhaps it is better if you know what is going on this side of the mountain. Natas organised the town against us. I think he feels threatened by the fact that certain people of the Valley are listening to my message. Some are becoming so interested that it seems as if they are considering our offers. Even Prophet of the new Valley church is supporting Natas. Today is D day. They organised a rally against me and I think they are going to try and drive me out. Do you have any suggestions on how I should handle it?”

“My son I am so proud of you. Thanks for standing up for what you believe are the right things to do. I do not think they will so easily get rid of you. Stick it out. If you get into trouble I can be with you in a moment. Just let me know. I will arrange to put the helicopter on alert for take-off in a very short time. I will be thinking of you.”

Mai felt more confident knowing that his father will always be ready to support anything good he intended to do.

He phoned some of his friends and arranged to meet them at their special place on the mountain. From there they have a nice view of the town and could see all that was going on. They arranged to meet at 11 am.

At the back of his mind, Mai was thinking that it was high time he showed some of the strengths his father taught him. He decided not to tell his friends but he had a plan.

Everyone was a bit jittery and they gathered well in advance of the arranged time. They sat down and watched the activities going on in town. People were scurrying around. There was urgency in their movements. If one did not know something about what was planned it would have been hard to make sense of all the movement. Mai felt sad when thinking about all the effort he put into changing the people's attitude, how hard the people were, how seduced they were by the lies of Natas. He felt like crying but then he thought about the encouraging words of his father and he stood up:

“It is time my friends. Let's go down and see what we can salvage from this catastrophe” They all got up, some a bit reluctant, but willing to follow their leader whom they learned to trust.

The first people they met looked at them with surprise.

“What are you doing here? You bastards, it is because of you that we have all these problems in town.”

In their haste to go and tell Natas about the new development, they pushed Mai out of the way. They were mad and it would have been easy for them to smash him in the face. Their hate was obvious and they were stewing inside looking for a reason to do Mai harm. Mai's friends gently took him by the arm and directed him away from the mob that was

forming. They steadily were moving to the open ground where the meeting was planned for noon.

You could smell the burning tyres. As they entered the open ground they could see the placards. It was disturbing to discover the people the placards agitated against were themselves. Some of Mai's followers started lagging. The fear could be seen on the faces of the remaining followers. They could hear the megaphones, the shouting of the crowd. Above the din they could hear the voice of Natas:

“Today it must stop. Mai must be ousted. Force him to go. Why not kill the bugger. He does not care about us. He is only looking after his father's interests”

The crowd was getting excited. They shouted so loud you could hardly hear Natas' voice anymore. The placard bearers were shouting and dancing. In their excitement they burned more tyres and when there were no more tyres to burn they started looking for other stuff. Someone shouted:

“Burn his car! Burn his car! Burn his car! The crowd picked up this line and the shouting grew louder. The riot became a frenzy of smoke, shouting, flames – an inferno. Some of the crowd only heard: “Burn car.” All that was necessary were at hand: petrol, matches, and cars. The crowd went wild. They became like animals without a will of their own, just bent on destruction, the letting out of their hate. No self-control anymore. Some people were trying to save their cars. Others were hell-bent on arson and destroying as much as they can.

In this chaos, a new voice arose. Suddenly the crowd realised the culprit, the cause of all their frustration was speaking. Mai had a megaphone:

“Friends, please listen to me. I am the cause of all your frustrations. Do not harm other people's property. You know where my car is parked next to Dulcie's Guesthouse. Rather burn my car.”

Instead of calming the crowd, it infuriated them more. Who is this fellow to tell them what to do? They shouted as loud as they could. It drowned all the other noise:

“Shut up you pipsqueak! who are you to tell us what to do? We are not only going to burn your car! We are going to burn you!” with this they started moving forward, forming a circle around Mai. Now there was no escape. Some of the people had been drinking and they did not know what they were doing. They got hold of a tyre. Someone had the matches and the petrol. They were moving in on Mai.

Then something amazing happened. Mai looked at them with love and compassion. He blessed them. He smiled at them and he talked with love and compassion.

“No my friends, this is not the end of Mai. This is the beginning. I am going away but will return sometime in future. There are other people I am going to now. They will listen to me and they will respond to my father's invitations,” The crowd was stunned. This is not what they expected. Mai was not afraid. He was not intimidated by their threats. Even Natas and Prophet were quiet.

Mai and his friends started walking and the crowd made a way for them. No one dared to touch Mai. All the while he had a friendly smile on his face and a glint in his eye as if he knew something they did not know.

Chapter 6

Airamas

Mai had to make other plans. The Airamas people lived some distance from the Valley and Mai decided, after deliberating with his father, that he will make them his target group for now.

Airamas was very different from the Valley people who were family of his father. Airamas was a very distant remnant of the family of his father. Contact was lost with these people because they were regarded as inferior people. Mai's family were proud of their heritage and could tell you who their grandparents and the grandparents' grandparents were. Not so with Airamas. If they could they would rather not speak about where they came from. The outcasts of the family of Mai's father long ago decided to break away. They intermarried with foreign people. They looked different from the blood family of Mai. They were poor and uneducated. They even had a different religion. Although they were not rich, educated or well-bred they were sincere.

Mai's father welcomed the idea of bringing them to him if they were willing to come. The blending in of Airamas with the people staying with his father was the big problem for Mai. He decided to give it a try and see how they would react to his message.

The mayor of Airamas was a guy called Ycrem. Mai made an appointment with Ycrem for Wednesday at 11 am. He was early for his appointment and the secretary directed him to a chair and said she will call him when Ycrem became available. While paging through the news something caught his eye:

“Riot in Valley.

On 20 October Valley almost burned down. The people of Valley were most upset about a guy who for some time now was pestering them about leaving the valley and moving to an adjacent town on the other side of the mountain. They chased him away and are

warning other towns to be on the lookout for a guy named Mai. He is described as a dangerous fanatic promoting the town on the other side of the mountain range where his father has some interests.' Please report any activity of this person to the police,' they said.

In the light of this reporting, Mai decided to cancel his appointment as this was not the right time to go public in Airmas. He took the newspaper with him because there was another interesting story he wanted to read.

"Sorry lady, something urgent came up. I cannot keep my appointment with the mayor. I must be on my way."

The same mountain ridge at Valley separated Airmas from the plain on the other side of the mountain, stretching to the sea. Mai was hopeful to find a retreat in these mountains as he did at Valley. So he and his friends, immediately moved to the mountainside and started looking for a shelter. They were lucky and soon found a place even better than the one at Valley. Something urged Mai to read the article that interested him:

"Citizen of Airmas makes us proud. One of our townspeople, mister Goodheart, found a person hijacked on the mountain pass. The hijackers took the person`s vehicle and assaulted him. He was seriously injured and needed urgent medical attention. Mr Goodheart immediately stopped his bleeding and took him to a hospital on the other side of the mountain. The last we heard about the victim he was recovering and he was very grateful for the help he received. Thank you mister Goodheart. You make us proud for living in Ramas."

Mai decided to discuss their future with his friends:

"What do you say? Must we stay in Airmas or must we try some other place? Father does not care who we bring in to him. So it is not necessary to try Airmas at this stage. Seeing that Airmas is so close to Valley it is perhaps better if we move on and later try to bring people of Airmas to my father."

His friends agreed and they decided to move the next day.

Chapter 7

Roaming the country

“My son, if people do not appreciate you it is time to move on. You know I am not particular about the people you invite to come and stay with us. As long as they are prepared to live a decent life and to be subject to my authority, they are welcome. You know the vastness of my properties. I would like to fill it with decent people. I am also not particular about the race of the person coming to us. They must be professed Christians. They must love our God Jehovah and believe that Jesus died for their sins. They must accept Jesus as their Saviour and must be willing to subject to the Holy Spirit’s will in their lives. Please carry on. I am going to give you some time. But time will run out. So go about your business of telling people about this wonderful opportunity and remind them that it is all free, subject to the provisions I stated. We are getting inquiries from people interested in our offer. So keep up the good work. I do not want to discourage you but you can expect stiff opposition from now on. You know the devil is going around like a roaring lion looking for prey.”

Mai thought a lot about what his father told him. He knew he will need more than his natural abilities. During his stay with his father, he acquired exceptional knowledge about many things. He was qualified as a doctor, preacher and was very knowledgeable about the law. On his father’s insistence, a medical laboratory better than anything in any other place was built. They were conducting advanced experiments and achieved remarkable results. Mai knew he will have to make extensive use of the results obtained in the laboratories to make a way for himself with the people and to expand his influence. He knew he also needed some close friends willing to make the sacrifice to travel with him in his campaigns to further his father’s influence amongst the people.

Thus the scene was set for the new way Mai was going to operate. He asked his father for a camper to facilitate his travelling. For now, only a few of his very dear friends will be

travelling with him. They thought it better to go to the smaller outlying places first and practice what they had in mind. They will be going as a team to assist people with especially medical issues. Anything else coming their way was an opportunity to get their message out.

Their first test came sooner than they had anticipated. One of Mai`s close friends had a family member living close by in a small village. The family heard about the success Mai had with the new medicine and techniques he practised. They sent a message to Mai`s friend and requested him to intervene on behalf of his aunt and see if Mai will come and help them with the sick patient.

When Mai arrived he found the woman in bed. She was seriously ill and on the brink of going into a coma. He discussed the illness with the family and then bent over to take a closer look at the symptoms of the sickness. The sickness required urgent intervention as she was about to die. Mai took out one of the new wonder pills they had developed in his father`s medical laboratory. He placed it into her mouth and the pill had an almost immediate effect. After 5 minutes she opened her eyes and was fully conscious. A short while later she said she wanted to get dressed. After thanking Mai for the help and what he had done for her she proceeded with her daily chores. The people of the small town were amazed and before Mai could leave more sick persons started arriving. After short consultations, he distributed the necessary medicines and wondrous miraculous recoveries occurred. The people wanted to know more about the medication and where it came from. This was the opportunity Mai was waiting for and told them all about his father and how his father longed for them to come and stay with him. Some of the people were very interested and he had to explain a lot about the offer of his father. The fact that all the good things at his father`s place were free amazed them. He phoned his father and made practical arrangements for the people who wanted to relocate to his father.

While attending to the people's sickness a peculiar case was discovered. It seemed as if nothing physical was the cause of the person's ailments. At first, Mai thought it might be a psychosomatic problem. He spoke to the person and soon discovered the real problem: the person was demon-possessed. Mai chased the demon out by the power of the Holy Spirit residing in him. This led to further amazement and even more, people arrived. Mai and his friends were kept busy till late at night. Then they left for their camper. Mai followed the old trusted routine of phoning his father and telling him about what happened while thanking him for all the assistance he provided.

It was time for serious deliberation with his friends. Mai thought a lot about them. He knew that his life was in danger and that these dear friends of him might be required to take the message about his father's invitation to all the other people whom they did not reach. The next day he gathered all his friends around him. They were the only people in the caravan park.

“Dear friends, thanks for staying with me. I know many of you have other responsibilities, and family matters to attend to. In your hearts, you are good people not only thinking about yourselves but also about my father's interest. Thank you for staying close to me and for helping me with the sick people. Know I appreciate it. You know about my father but you do not know him as I know him. He is full of love. He loves all people and especially those who were so close to him before they decided they did not want to stay with him anymore. Because he loves people he wants the best for them. He knows what is going on in the world. He also knows that the best place people can be is with him. I do not think you know how vast his influence is or how big his property is. I can assure you it is bigger than anything you can imagine. My father is extremely rich, powerful and has immense influence. He can do anything he wants to. This mission I am on to bring as many people to him as possible is motivated out of his loving-kindness. You know I can talk to my father any time I

like. Many times I do not know what to do and first has to consult with him. I want to share this ability to speak to my father because I trust you and know you will honour, love and obey him. Please take one of the cell phones with your name on it. You will see that there is only one contact number on the phone. You may speak directly to my father whenever you choose. Perhaps I can guide you in the best way to speak to him. When speaking to him remember all the good things he is doing for us and mention them to him with your gratitude. He always appreciates a thankful and appreciative attitude. Always remember his greatness and do not try to use him to fulfil your wishes. Always remember he knows best and acknowledge his wishes. Do not speak too much and too lengthy. He is quite busy. Always remember he loves you and he wants the best for you. When you ask him something and you know that is something he also wants, trust him to do it. He likes it when people trust him.

I spoke to him and he likes what we are doing. He said we must carry on in the way we are doing. I do not want to scare you but he again warned me about the dangers he believes I am going to encounter. You too are going to suffer. I might even lose my life. He, therefore, urged me to train you to carry on with the work even if I am not with you anymore. But for now, we have work to do. Let us be on our way. There are many sick and needy people in the next village.”

Every day was an opportunity to heal people and to teach them about Mai`s father and the wonderful opportunities waiting for them on the other side of the mountain. A sense of urgency was manifesting in May`s friends after he spoke to them about his father and the fact that he may not be with them for much longer. They all knew about the dangers that confronted Mai because of all the rumours and lies Natas spread about Mai. Any time now Natas might try the same trick in the next town.

In the next village, Mai felt compelled to teach the people more about the character of his father. It was just fair that the people willing to throw in their future with his father should

know more about his father, what he likes and what he dislikes. So he taught them about love and especially the need to forgive others who wronged you if you expect forgiveness for yourself

A shocked silence hung over the listeners. These were hard words. To some of the people, it made sense and they immediately started to forgive people who wronged them. To others, it made no sense at all and they thought that only the very weak person with no backbone would do something like that. Some were uncertain and they preferred to think it over before making a decision. Mai placed them in a difficult position. On the one hand, they longed to enjoy all the good stuff promised by Mai at his father's place. They also would like to be healed and to listen to the nice way Mai was speaking. It was nice to hear about love, forgiveness and the good life promised but to some the price was too high. Never will they forgive people who wronged them. They will hate them till they go to their grave. Amazingly those who chose to do what Mai suggested experienced peace and love.

As many times in the past, Mai felt very lonely. Sometimes he thought the message of love and forgiveness was just too hard for the ordinary person. These were the moments he needed special intimacy with his father. He got up, excused himself and went up the mountain where the cell phone reception always was better.

Chapter 8

Still travelling the country

It now became a pattern. Some days Mai would tell the people more about what their life with his father would be like, what his father was like and what the people may expect when they chose to stay with his father. Some days he did a lot of healing and some days he just enjoyed the company of the people, moving around and listening to them as they expressed their fears, joys and problems. It was devastating to him to find some people not honest about their inward feelings. That was people thinking too much about themselves, their abilities and the high premium they placed on being independent, their love of money and the many false gods in their lives. Mai was living in a time when science was very important. If you could not provide empirical evidence many people were not willing to accept what you were saying. To trust someone like God without understanding and explaining everything about God was for many people impossible. One day Mai was confronted by a group of people who made it their mission to destroy his influence on the people. They decided to reason with him and test his intellectual abilities. They chose beforehand two very knowledgeable persons, one a professor in theology and one a professor in the origin of the creation as explained by the theory of evolution. Both were without any trust in God and only wanted to make a fool of Mai and his childlike trust in God. They chose their time and venue well. There were many people present and the people could hear them well as the acoustic of the place was excellent. The believer in evolution would go first.

“Sir, do you expect us to believe that God created everything out of nothing? We, scientists, know everything came from the Big Bang when life started and from where all life, developed by way of evolution till we got to the human level. We also know that the process is not completed and that we as humans have unlimited potential. We are going to improve on the physical person and will soon be extending his possibilities using computers and

genetic manipulation. We already improved his vision ten folded for military purposes. Someday soon we will have conquered sickness and disease and by cloning and trans-humanism will be able to extend the human lifespan indefinitely.”

Now it was the turn of the professor in Theology. "You, Mai, are posing as a person, knowledgeable about God and His Son Jesus Christ. I must tell you, you are very much behind modern teachings about God and Jesus. We, theologians, know that the birth of a Christ as proclaimed for many years is a myth. Jesus was not the Son of God and there is no such thing as a virgin birth. We discard the Old Testament and think there are many wrong teachings in the so-called “New Testament”. We also do not believe the teachings about morality, as proclaimed in the Bible, are relevant for the time we are living in. We believe in the modern concept of relative morality where everyone may choose what morality he or she prefers as long as it works for the person. There is also no scientific evidence about an afterlife. We think it is silly to believe in a God full of compassion for people and at the same time believe this God will condemn people to everlasting hell. The teachings about homosexuality are also not relevant if you compare it to the newest findings in science about the sexuality of man and woman. Most of your teaching are out-dated and are not relevant for the time we are living in.”

The crowd went wild. This is the language they could understand. This was contemporary, modern and to their liking. They cheered and clapped their hands.

Mai knew the truth he is speaking is not going to be popular. He did not have a choice. He could only speak what his father taught him.

When all the noise subsided it was Mai`s turn to address the crowd. Some of the people were not interested in what he had to say and started going home. Then Mai replied:

“Dear friends, I beg you, have some patience with me. To address the attacks, criticisms and questions I need to go back to the very origin of man and morality. It all started

in the Garden of Eden with the first people God created, Adam and Eve. They were created perfect in the image of God. Satan who before their creation was cast out of heaven because he wanted to be God himself, decided to lead man into sin. He used a carefully planned strategy. He engaged Eve in a discussion. He did this by posing a question to her, 'Is it true that God said you may not eat from the trees in the garden?' this was very deceitful. Satan made himself appear humble and not knowing anything. He engaged Eve in an argument by the half-truths he was asking her. She eagerly responded and tried to help him by telling him the truth. She was so flattered that intelligent satan came to her for an answer. In the meantime he was playing her and setting her up by letting her feel good about herself. She was now more open to what he had to say.

"You won't die if you eat from the tree of all knowledge. God knows you will become like Him if you eat from that tree. You will then be like Him by knowing everything."

Eve fell for Satan's lies and took the forbidden fruit and also gave some of it to Adam. So they fell into sin. The first emotions they experienced were guilt and fear. They tried to cover themselves with leaves and to hide away from God.

Man's original sin was trying to be god, to be independent of the living God, Jehovah. The history of mankind centres on this sin. Nothing changed and it is today still the number one cause of man's downfall. In the light of this ancient history let us look at the arguments of my friends here today.

To my scientist friend I just want to say if you reject the word of God, we have nothing to say to each other. My life, my teachings, my whole being is centred on what God says to us in His Word. If you reject the Bible you reject me and all I have to say to you. All I can do for you is to pray that God's Holy Spirit will enlighten your soul to look away from your idol, science, and to see the Light of redemption coming from God alone. Perhaps you

would like to engage me in an intellectual argument like satan did with Eve. Sorry I am not willing to go that way. For me, all the proof I need is the proof of faith, that is my trust in God. If He says He created heaven and earth then I know it is true.

My pastor-brother, I am deeply worried about your soul. You are one of the people God warned us about in Revelation. You know those people who are not hot or cold but lukewarm, the people whom He will spit out of His mouth. You may choose to believe the Bible to be true or not. Either you accept it as it is or you reject it. How come you discard all God`s moral laws and then be so arrogant as to replace them with your degrading ideas? God says homosexuality is wrong and He proved His disgust by destroying Sodom, the origin of sodomy. Where in the Bible is it found that relative morality is the acceptable norm for God`s people? How can something be right only because a human person found it working for him, like prostitution, theft, murder, hate, gambling, swearing and the many more you will be able to think of? How can you rip the heart of salvation out of the Bible by contesting the virgin birth of our Lord? You are a much bigger danger to Christians than our friend, the scientist. We know exactly where we stand with him. Not so with you because you come as the snake in the Garden of Eden; to confuse, to intellectualize, to mislead.”

By now the crowd was restless. They shouted their disappointment and were taking a threatening attitude. Mai thought about his father's warning and knew it was time to leave. He delivered his message and now it was time to shake the dust of this town from his feet.

Chapter 9**Airamas again**

Mai and his friends were crisscrossing the countryside. One day they had to travel through Airamas again on their way to a neighbouring town.

One thing a preacher guarded with his life was his good name. Mai was no exception. On their trip through Airamas, Mai`s integrity would be severely tested. At noon as they passed through Rama's country Mai felt tired. They did a lot of walking apart from travelling with the camper. It was the only way to get in touch with ordinary people. In the heat of the day, very few people were on the streets and most rested. The streets were deserted and Mai found a nice looking coffee shop with an open porch. He sat down in a secluded spot while his friends went looking for a shop where they could stock up on their supplies. Mai was not the only customer. At first, he did not see her but after making himself comfortable he noticed her not far from him. There were no waiters to be found this time of day so they were the only two persons on the porch. When Mai saw the cool drink the lady was sipping he became aware of the fact that she had a spare cool drink unopened standing next to her. Suddenly he became aware of his thirst. He leaned over and asked the lady if he could buy the cold drink from her. This is when the true colours of the lady became apparent. She was a lady with low morals and cheeky to go with it. She knew how easy it was to twist a man's mind with her charm. So she started to play a game with Mai.

“Poor thing, you look tired and it seems to me you do not even have enough money to buy yourself a drink. Tell me how come you, a member of the tribe living on the other side of the mountain speaks to me, a person you snobs despise? I can detect from your speech you are not one of us.”

“My father owns the whole village on the other side of the mountain. I may seem poor but that is not the case. If you would ask me I would be able to supply you with ten boxes of drinks.”

The lady of the night was enjoying this game. It felt to her she was getting Mai in her power. She played these games many times in the past and she knew exactly what to do to get this poor creature entangled in her web of seduction. This was her playground and she knew how to move around. The knowledge made her bold and arrogant. She decided to tease him and see if he was able to withstand her charm “Tell me something about myself so I will know you are sincere and not just trying to pick me up.”

This was the opening Mai was waiting for, for he knew from the first moment he set eyes on her what her game was and she was looking for a customer, when all the other women were out of the way.

“I know you are a woman of low morals trying to seduce me to pick you up”

She was stunned. For a few seconds, she was not so sure about herself anymore.

“How come you know?”

“It is easy, my dear lady. My father is not only very rich but he is also very wise and this is one of the first things he taught me when I started to grow up. That is to spot a hooker and not only to spot her but to avoid her.”

It seemed as if she was longing for something better but not sure how to get out of her old lifestyle. Mai was reading her thoughts and told her about his father`s wish to gather as many people as possible to him on the other side of the mountain. “My father is a loving and kind man. You will be welcome at his place. He will give you a place to stay and something worthwhile to do, something you won't be ashamed of. You will be able to start a new life.”

The woman was stunned.

“Do you mean it? Knowing me, will he be able not to keep what I did against me? Will he give me a decent job and allow me to start a new life?”

Instead of answering the poor thing, Mai took out his cell phone and in seconds was in contact with his father. He put the sound on the speakerphone so that she could hear every word spoken.

“Father, I have good news. I am in Airmas and a friend of mine, a lady, would like to come and stay permanently with you. This lady deserves a chance to set her life straight as she is ashamed of her present life and believe you will show her mercy and not talk again about her past.”

“My son I know a taxi service in Airmas. Ask her to stay where she is. Just give me the address and in a few minutes, the taxi will collect her and take her to her home to collect her stuff. Thanks for sending her. All your referrals are excellently adapting here. Keep up the good work.”

At this stage, Mai`s friends came back. They got the groceries and were astonished to see him talking to the lady. He introduced her to his friends. He was waiting for the taxi when she asked him a favour. Would it be possible to ask the taxi driver to allow her to say goodbye to her friends and to tell them about the wonderful thing that happened to her? Mai agreed and she was soon on her way. The coffee shop opened after the noon siesta and people were pouring into the streets. Before Mai and his friends could leave some of the ladies` old friends were arriving. They wanted to see this person who helped their friend to start a new life.

Mai couldn't leave. The people wanted to know all about this place of his father and what was needed to qualify to be admitted. They were astonished when they heard that nothing special was required of them. They did not have to pay a lot of money, they did not have to be very good people. They only must have a longing for a new and better life and

must be willing to accept that Mai`s father is willing to give them a chance to this life with him.

Since Mai`s efforts started to bring people to his father he never experienced so much goodwill, love and joy amongst people hearing about his father. Tears rolled down his cheeks and he had to go to a quiet place to speak to his father and thank him for the wonderful work he was called to do.

Chapter 10

Working in the Jail

One day while Mai was walking past a prison he suddenly thought about all the inmates, what they were doing, why they were in jail, how they felt, their longings and their fears. He tried to enter. He first had to obtain permission from the head prison warden to enter and to state the reason for his application. He decided to state his true reason for applying for entrance:

“Sir I wish to speak to any inmate who is willing to listen to me. I think I might be able to help an inmate when getting released to find a job and find a new beginning in life. My father has a huge business and can accommodate almost anyone”

Anyone who could help with the rehabilitation of inmates was welcome at the correctional facility and Mai was granted entrance. At first, the inmates were reluctant to see yet another preacher to tell them what they did was wrong. Why would this one be an exception? There was a person to be released within a week. Mai decided to talk to him first if he was willing to speak to Mai. At first, Mr X was reluctant to open up but he sensed sincerity in Mai and opened up.

“Sir, I did a terrible thing. I do not want to talk about it but my problem is I do not know what to do when I am released in a week. My family rejected me; the only friends I used to have will surely convince me to go back to my old lifestyle. I paid for what I did wrong. I want to start fresh and live a decent life. Do you have any suggestions in this regard?”

“For sure, I have suggestions. My father has a big business. At present, he is expanding and he is looking for workers. What kind of work are you interested in?”

“Any work will do. I used to be a carpenter but I am willing to do any kind of work”

With this Mai could relate. “Carpentry will be fine. I am sure my father can arrange something for you. Will it be alright if I make arrangements for you after your release to go and see my father? I will speak to the warden and arrange for a person to meet you at noon on the day of your release”

This arrangement opened the way to the inmate's heart and he was so thankful he almost cried. Not only did this inmate trust Mai but more inmates accepted him as a genuine person interested in them. This started Mai's prison work. The prisoners were eager to see him and he decided to see them in groups.

This opened up new possibilities like group discussions, training in the Word of God and promises of God. The support some of the inmates got from fellow inmates strengthened their faith and willingness to change their lives. Mai soon adapted to the way the inmates spoke and he gave them hope for a better life. He related to their needs. The following is an example of what he spoke about:

“The company had hundreds of employees. A massive amount of money changed hands. Employees had to be trusted for it was easy to let money flow into the wrong pockets. Checks and balances were introduced but even so embezzlement was in the order of the day. One of the employees gave himself personal loans with the intention of paying them back. This went on for years till his unpaid debt went into millions. Eventually, he was caught when a bright auditor brought the numbers to the owner's attention. Only one thing remained to be done. The employee had to be reported so that criminal charges could be brought against him. But first, the owner would like a word with the employee alone. ‘Mister X you have been working for this firm for 15 years. I see you have a good record. You are bright and you are a hard worker. You earn a good salary but even so, I find it hard to believe you could afford to drive the luxury Mercedes you own at present. Your wife is not working and

as far as I could find out your relatives are alive so a sudden inheritance was not possible.

Can you explain your financial affairs? Remember all you say can be verified.’

The employee turned pale. He knew his game was up and he would be required to pay back his debt. He also realized that paying back all he owed was impossible. He squandered a lot of the money on holidays abroad and treating his wife and three children. The luxury home cost a lot to keep and his lifestyle did not leave room for savings. Tears started to roll down his cheeks. Why, why did he do it?

“Sir I confess. I made personal loans to myself with company money. This runs into millions of dollars. I intended to pay it back but it soon escalated to such an amount that I lost control. I am very sorry. I will sell all I own and pay it into your account. But even so, it will take more than a lifetime to pay back the rest. Have mercy on me. Please. “

Because the employee was truthful and regretted what he did the owner felt compassion for him. He was also thinking about the rest of the family. What use will it be to have the employee put in prison for many years? It won't bring the money back. The losses to the firm were already paid for and the firm survived. He felt compassion for the man and decided to let him go as long as he was willing to sell all and go for a modest living.

“I am cancelling your debt. You may continue to work for this company as long as you pay back what you can and live within your means.”

He wept and thanked the owner from his heart.

‘This is a nice story but this is not the end of the story. I hope you have learned something from this story. Now let me complete the story and see if you can learn more.’The employee was elated. He smiled and made jokes. Not in years did he feel so light. He suddenly realised how depressed he became because of his debt and the fact that he stole the money from his employer. His joy did not last for long. The same day he encountered one of his fellow employees who owed him ten dollars. This chap had it rough. His wife was very

sick with cancer and the medical bills were piling up. If he did not lend him the ten dollars his two children would have had nothing to eat. When he saw this fellow employer owing him ten dollars something in him snapped. He went to the debtor and in full view of other employees and within hearing distance he confronted the man: 'When are you going to pay me back the ten dollars you owe me?' he shouted.

The other person went red because of the humiliation in front of the other employees and said: "Have mercy, next week is the end of the month. I will pay you back."

"No, I want my money now. If you don't give it back before the end of the day I am giving you over."

The rest of the colleagues were very disappointed and one went to the owner and told him about the incident. He called the person he set free from the millions he owned.

"You are useless. Because you were not prepared to discard the little your fellow employee owed you I am demanding my money back. Otherwise, you are going to jail."

Most of the inmates understood the message of the story and regretted their own inability to forgive others.

Chapter 11

Another prison story

The story of the unforgiving debtor created a stir amongst the prison inmates. At the next meeting, there were questions about how one must forgive. Many of the inmates suffered terrible experiences in their lives. Many of these experiences led to their downfall and their serving time. An old man stood up and posed his problem with forgiveness:

“Easy for you to talk. Let me tell you my story and then you tell me how to forgive: I never knew my biological father. The bugger just got my mother pregnant and then he left us. My mother did not have anyone to turn to for help with her baby. To survive she went to the streets to earn a living for herself and me. Many times she was abused, discarded as rubbish and robbed of the little we had. When I was six my mother died of an overdose of drugs and I was placed in a foster home. At first, my new parents were very nice to me. But remember, I had no upbringing to speak of. I knew no discipline, almost no love, never learned to trust, always ducking and diving to survive. At an early stage, I was a compulsive liar. I stole to survive. I cheated to get money to stop the hunger pangs. I learned to hate and distrust everybody. No wonder my foster parents soon rejected me and I was sent to an orphanage. Here I soon learned how to survive in a world where the fittest and meanest reigned. Because I was young I had to associate with a group where others were willing to look after me. This came at a high price. I was sexually abused by the bigger boys. To me, it was painful but not wrong. The only distinction for the right or wrong way was the result of what you did; was it helping you to survive or not? I was set up for crime by circumstances out of my control. I hated everyone and a friend to me was a person who could help me to enrich and safeguard myself.

In short, at age 16, I earned my place in a ruthless gang by stabbing another person of a rival gang with a knife. For this, I was placed in a place for delinquent youth. Now my

training in criminal activities got underway. Because of my ruthless conduct in the past, my gang members respected me. That was the best feeling I ever had. I intended to make this my sole purpose in life. People respect you when you are rude, hateful, cruel and violent. With this life motto, I soon became the leader of my gang. We raped when we got a chance, broke into homes, stole cars and occasionally killed. Some of our gang members did not live long before they were killed. Many others of our gang were caught and put into jail. Eventually, the police got such a strong case against me that they succeeded in putting me away for life. I am near the end of my prison sentence and will be released next year. My questions to you are:

1. Who must I forgive?
2. What must I forgive?
3. Why must I forgive?
4. How can I forgive these bastards that made my life hell?"

Mai had a problem on hand. The inmates were expectantly looking at him as if to say: "These are our questions also. Please help us".

It was clear to Mai that to answer their questions he must meet them where most of the inmates were as babies in their walk with Jesus. Many of them as this old man had not committed their lives to Jesus. They were just beginning to understand something about the way of salvation. He decided to speak to the old man and let the rest of the inmates follow along. Perhaps most of their questions could be answered in this way.

"My friend thanks for being sincere and for sharing your life story with us. I can see you had a difficult life and most of the bad things you encountered you were not responsible for. Many people wronged you during your upbringing and they contributed to the mistakes you made. I suppose many of those people are dead and it would not be possible to try and forgive them. You still have the scars in your soul and you are seeking relief. Otherwise, you

would not be partaking in this discussion. Let's look at your first question: 'Who must I forgive?'

Many people wronged you. Ideally, you must forgive everyone if you want complete peace in your soul. That is humanly speaking not possible. Apart from the fact that many of those people already died, deep in your inner being, you want to avenge yourself on those that wronged you. You may feel they deserve punishment for what they did to you. To solve the problem we have to look from another angle at the injustices you encountered.

Let us move for a while away from your problem and later we will come back to your problem. We already spoke a lot about God, God's Son Jesus and the working of the Holy Spirit. You know how mankind fell into sin by the workings of the devil and how he deceived Eve and Adam. You know about the result of their sin and how the world is in a broken state today because of sin. Even the little children are contaminated. They say you do not teach a child to sin as it comes naturally to him to be selfish, to lie, to steal and to harm others. We have to live each day in this broken world, amongst other sinners. Not many people accepted Christ as their Saviour and were freed from the slavery of sin. Even those who accepted Christ as their Saviour still have to fight against their natural need to sin. In essence, we are all in this predicament. We have God's Holy Spirit in us when we confess our sins and give our lives over to God to do His will with us. Constantly the devil is trying to lure us back to our old ways. So we must constantly give over to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and let Him control our thoughts, deeds and what we say. That is the only way. Even now you may feel in your heart no urge to surrender your feelings about those that wronged you. Instead of loving your enemies as Jesus told us, you rather would like to kill some of those people.

The next question was: "What must I forgive?" The easy answer is everything seeming unfair, unjust, degrading, harmful, and hurtful that was setting you up for a life of crime. If you put all these actions together they will be overwhelming and you will only get

more bitter and resentful making it even more difficult to forgive. To give you some hope and to teach you how it can be accomplished I am going to answer your third and fourth questions together namely: 'Why and how must I forgive? to do this I must first tell you a true story:

'A very wealthy, upright, good, just, fair and loving-kind father had one son. He loved this son above all else. There were also other people staying with him but these people were bad. They drank a lot, seduced other people's wives, broke into homes, stole, murdered, raped and was much doing the same things you did in your life. As unlikely as it may sound the father also loved these people. He loved them so much that he felt he had to do something to save them from the consequences of what they were doing. If he left them without doing something he knew they were condemned to everlasting hell. He knew no one amongst them was without sin or wrongdoing. All were bad. The father was a very just and fair man. He knew the wrongdoings of the people could not go without punishment. If he did nothing to help them they would be punished in hell forever. If he could only find someone without sin or wrongdoing he could vent his anger on over their sins, the people could go free. But this person had to be good and without any sin. He went through all likely candidates but could find no one among the people that were without sin. This only meant one thing. Every one of the people had to carry his punishment when he or she died, that is everlasting torment in hell. Every time the father went past one of the condemned people this thought bothered him. He was just and knew sin must be punished but he also loved every one of the people. He had to find a solution.

While meditating on this problem he discussed it with his son. The son was also wise and loving-kind. He also loved the people and would hate to see them all condemned. It dawned on the son that he might be the only one to carry the blame and shame of all the sinners. He was the only one without any wrongdoing. If he could be punished in their place, they could go free. But then he must be punished as they would have been punished, by dying

and suffering hellish pain. He loved the people so much and he could not bear to see his father's sorrow. In love for his father and the people he went to his father and declared himself willing to suffer and die in the place of the people. The father was very sad. This was a solution, a perfect solution but this was his only son. How could he give him up for punishment for what he did not do wrong? This would be the greatest injustice ever committed giving the just to save the unjust. He loved his son dearly and knew that he would suffer as much as his son if he gave him up for the sins of the people. But there was no other way to save the people. He had to give up his only son to be punished as the worst sinner who ever lived. Father and son decided to go through with the plan and save the people.

Indescribable pain and suffering waited for the son. The son suffered so much that he sweat blood. The father could not endure seeing the suffering of his son any longer when the son cried out: 'O Father, why have you forsaken Me.?' ' the father ordered darkness to cover his sons suffering.'

Silence fell on the group

"I am sure most of you recognized in the story God as Father and Jesus as the Son of God and we as the sinners, the people Jesus in His great love, died for. That was the only way God could set the sinners free and not punish them for all the sins they did. Jesus had already been punished. That is what love looks like. If you believe this story and are willing to confess that you know you are a sinner who did a lot of wrong things in this life and bring these sins to God and accept that Jesus paid for your sins, you are exempt from punishment. You will then receive the love of God through the Holy Spirit. The love of God, living in your heart will make it possible to set other people free. That is the people who sinned against you. Dear friends this is the only way you will be set free from your hate, injustices done against you, and your sins. In this true story you get the answers to your question:

"Why and how must I forgive?"

Chapter 12

Last of the prison stories

Mai's friends were becoming restless. It was time to move on. Mai decided to visit the prison for the last time. So many good things happened at this prison. Many of the inmates could not wait to be released in order to move to Mai's father. As usual, he phoned his father and asked for guidance for this very important last session. Full of wisdom his father said:

“Show them love and compassion. What you show is much more important than what you say.” With this in mind, Mai approached his last visit to the jail. He left his Bible at home. He took a bucket of water, some soap and a towel. He also took bread and some grape juice. He would have liked to take wine but he was not allowed to take wine into prison.

“This will be my last visit for some time. I spoke to my father about this visit and he gave me some suggestions. Today I am not going to preach to you. I want to show you, my father. I know he is not with us but in what I am going to do you will learn what my father is like. “He seated them in a circle around him. He asked them to take their prison boots off. Some of the feet were not clean. Some of the feet were full of blisters. Some feet did not smell very nice. Mai started with the person seated next to him. He took the bucket with water, knelt before the inmate and started washing the dirty feet. The inmate was amazed. He kept still but while he was washed, he started weeping.

“Mai, this is the nicest thing anybody did to me for as long as I can remember. Why are you doing it? Why are you kneeling in front of me? Why are you washing me?”

With dearness and love in his eyes he said:

“Because I love you. Please show your love in the same way in future and look for opportunities to serve others.”

The inmates were getting the message and not a dry eye was to be seen. Amongst sniffing and tears all the inmates' feet were washed. When Mai got to the old man who told

his life story, the old man rested his hands on Mai's shoulders, looked him in the eye and while tears rolled over his cheeks kissed Mai on the forehead.

"Mai, now I understand something about forgiveness. Thank you. I will remember it the rest of my life."

He asked Mai to switch places with him, bent over and softly prayed while he was washing Mai's feet: "Father please forgive my mother for abandoning me, forgive the father I never knew, forgive the foster parents that rejected me..."

He went on till he forgave all he could remember. By this time all were crying.

Mai and the inmates went back to their seats and he took the bread and grape juice.

"I want you to remember me and what I taught you. Whenever in future you eat bread and drink wine think about me. One day soon you will understand what I did today. Always remember bread is like a body and wine is like blood. With this, I leave you now."

Mai got up. He greeted his dear friends personally with a hug and when he had gone they knew life could never be the same in future. Today they saw practical love and everyone felt compassion for their brother inmates. They decided to meet regularly and to continue their sessions after their release at Mai's father till they were all united.

The chief warden wanted to have a word with Mai before he left.

"Sir, first of all, I would like to thank you for what you did for our inmates. Since your visits started there was a marked change in the attitude of the inmates who attended your meetings. They became more open, they fought less, many stopped swearing, they were more tolerant towards each other. Something we rarely see in prisons is love between inmates and a caring attitude. For the first time, I noticed love amongst prison inmates. I am now not speaking of sexual attraction but real caring love where one put the interest of another above self-interest. Thank you very much. It is with sadness that we part with you. As you might have noticed many wardens listened in to your discussions with the inmates. Some of them

even form groups they attend regularly. It is a pity there are no prisons at your father`s place because I think many of our personnel would have applied for a transfer. There is however a slight problem I would like to discuss with you. Previously a person by the name of Natas used to visit the inmates. For some time now he did not visit us. I must say I did not welcome his visits. After each visit, the inmates seemed restless. More fights broke out, problems with drugs increased and more attempts to break the rules became evident. All of these have subsided since your visits. The problem is he contacted me and requested permission to visit the inmates. The board decided not to let him in again. What is bothering me is the fact that he was inquiring about you. He wanted to know what you were doing here and why you were visiting the inmates. Then he asked a strange question about your father and if you were promoting living with your father. It sounded as if he knew about you and what you were doing. He then warned me about you saying that you were bad news and that I must protect the inmates against your lies. What worried me is the threats that he made against you. He said he will catch up with you and then you will be sorry. Perhaps you should be on your guard against this man.”

This was not a problem for Mai. He expected Natas to surface again some other place because his last effort to discredit Mai was not very successful. But perhaps he should be on his guard because he knew the type of person Natas was: very vindictive, always trying to bring him into discredit and a liar, not to be trusted, ruthless and a killer by nature.

“Thank you for warning me. I know this character. He is mean and likes to cause trouble. Thanks for having me and giving me ample time to teach the inmates about the good things in life. Perhaps one day we will come by and visit again. At present, there are so many more places to visit. First I am going to concentrate on my friends for a while and teach them to go out and tell people about my father. Good luck to you and may your work of rehabilitation be a big success.”

Back with his friends, Mai explained the way forward.

“My friends, I spent a lot of time with the inmates but we got wonderful results. Many of the inmates are interested in father`s place and would like to go there when they get released. I also got a warning about Natas. We must watch out for him. For now, I am going to concentrate on preparing you to go out on your own and to spread the good news about my father. I am going to discuss different topics with you, things of importance that influence the lives of people. Topics to be discussed will be amongst others the moral issues people are battling with, especially relative morally that is sweeping over the world. The next very important topic will be the signs of the end times. Remember that the first big indicator of the nearing of the end times will be deception. Liars like Natas is going to mislead many people and the people must be warned to be on the lookout for deception especially through social media. The many forms of idol worship is another deception people must be warned about.

Do you know about this new pandemic sweeping over the world and killing many people, Covid-19? Well, we will be starting with this devilish thing and try to find out more about it. I would like it if you could prepare yourself by visiting as many internet sites as possible about this virus. There is disinformation about it and we will have to make sure of our facts before we communicate anything to the people.

I rented a guest house for us high up in the mountains where nobody can disturb us. Tomorrow at 7 am. I will collect you. Remember to take all your stuff with you. We will not be coming back.”

The teaching of his friends took some time but Mai knew they needed the knowledge as they would encounter many obstacles in the years ahead.

Chapter 13

The friends are moving out

Mia knew his father's will and this became his passion. Deep inside him he was pondering questions. "What if? "was the start of most of his doubts? As long as he could remain in his fathers will he knew everything was going to work out. What about his preparation of his friends for their task? Was it sufficient? Was it what his father required from him? What if Natas overwhelms them with his cunning wisdom and his ability to mislead? Will his friends be able to stand their ground? And when the going gets tough and they will have to suffer to complete their mission, will they be able to keep up the good work? At this moment when he felt overwhelmed by his doubt, he remembered a wise saying of a man who went through much suffering. When he also felt overwhelmed by his circumstances he said: "When I am weak, I am strong because God`s power is given to those who trust in Him and not in themselves." This wisdom calmed Mai and he phoned his father. He now was ready to take leave of his friends and send them on their way. They were already arriving carrying nothing but a walking stick and the book he gave them. He also saw some of them paging through the notes they made when he taught them. Some of them seem worried while others had calm and eager expressions on their faces. They believed God called them for this work and that He will provide for all their needs. When all were assembled he gave his last encouragements.

"I am going to help you by praying with you before you leave: 'Dear Father we love You and we would like to do Your will by expanding Your kingdom. Let Your will be done. We place every one of these dear friends in Your hands. Make them instruments in Your hands for Your will. Lead every pair to where You need them. Provide for them. Guard and protect them. I pray that You will give your

special powers to them to convince the people that they are doing Your will. I place them in Your hands. Help them to give over to You and to trust You. Thank You for specially selecting us to bring honour to You in this way. Amen.”

With bowed heads and raised hands, this small group of friends felt the holy presence of God. The unspoken wish of everyone was to remain in this blissful, peaceful Presence. But there was work to be done first.

Pair for pair knelt before Mai. He put his hands on every ones` heads and blessed them. Then they rose and went out of the door to only God knows where. It was a wonderful experience to them not to worry but to trust and to know they must follow where God leads them and speak what God will tell them to say.

Chapter 14

Alone but not alone

Mai knew the time would soon come he would have to face trials and that none of his friends would be able to give him support. His father said:

“A very hard time awaits you and you will pay the ultimate price. You will be the kingpin in bringing people to my kingdom. What you will do will set them free to enter my kingdom.”

The importance of bringing people into his father's kingdom became more and more evident. In his father's kingdom they would be happy. There would be no more murders, stealing, rapes or people thinking they are better than others, no more misleading of people, no more fighting or evil deeds. They would be in his and his father's presence and enjoy peace. Everyone would love everyone. There would not be hate and self-seeking. All people would have all they need. It would be like the picture of heaven parents paint for their children. While pondering on these things he grew restless and wished all the suffering was behind him, knowing it was now the beginning of all these terrible things that awaits him. It made him wonder if he would be able to endure it all. He longed for his friends' company. How were they getting on? It was too soon to communicate with them. He must wait and trust they will stand up to Natas' tricks. In the meantime, he had to concentrate on getting some rest. He would have to endure terrible trials in future.

Soon his friends came back from their 3 months trial. It was hard for Mai to contain his joy. His eyes were moist as he embraced each one of his friends. They stuck close to him as if they could not get enough of him. Some were holding his hands; others were holding onto his garment, most were crying out of pure joy. They never knew how much they loved Mai before they had to endure the time away from him. Everyone wanted to speak to Mai and they were so excited about all the experiences they had. First Mai spoke:

“Everyone will get a chance to tell his story. Do you remember I warned you before I send you out about hardship you would go through? Do you remember I warned you about the evil plans of Natas and his followers? I am eager to hear about it all. I would also like to hear about your joys when people decided to come to my father. Did you experience the healing of people? Let us give one of the pair a chance to tell us about highlights they encountered in the last three months. It is also necessary to hear about your suffering and disappointments. Let us start with Pete and his companion and then follow the sequence in which you are seated.” Pete got up and spoke:

“First of all let us give thanks to God for what He did for us: ‘God, You are good. Thank You for choosing us for this wonderful work. Thank You for equipping us for this work with what Your servant Mai taught us. Thank You for the Power You gave us to do wonders in front of people to show them you are God. Thank You for protecting us and for blessing us. Use us as You would like to use us for Your honour, for Your kingdom and to do Your will.’ Friends, we did not know what to expect when we got to the first town. We only knew God took us to this small village. We were welcomed as celebrities. The people almost fought between them to give us lodging. The people were poor and we were reluctant to share the little they had. It was such a joy to them to give to us. I believe God blessed them for sharing with us. The people inquired about our origin but they were more interested in the reason for our visit. The fact that we appeared poor and dependent helped a lot to be accepted. We spoke on their level without using difficult words or concepts. They were so open, sincere and welcoming. I am sure God directed us there to give us hope for the task He entrusted to us. Even in this sincere, loving community, we found that sin also had taken hold of some of them. One particular person caught our attention. He was wild.

He had a wild look in his eyes. He was dirty and seemed not cared for. He also had scars on his face. He smelt of liquor and was aggressive. We experienced his hate. He was looking to find something against us. Some of the people confided in us and told us he was always like that and that he once murdered another man. Because they were afraid of his bad temper they did nothing about it. By now we knew we had to watch our steps. Mai taught us that some persons were demon-possessed and that only God can cast demons out. We trusted God and confronted the man. I wish you could see his eyes, full of hate and wickedness. This one could easily kill us. But we were not confronting him in our powers. No, God in his Almighty power alone could cast the demon out. It was with shock this man reacted to our love for him. He did not know love or kind words. He was only used to abuse and people chasing him away or shying away from him because they were afraid of him. When I put my hand on his shoulder and looked him into the eye I could feel the trembling under my hand. Something was happening, something I had never encountered before. I could feel the power flowing through me to this poor creature in front of me. I felt love and compassion for him. Somewhere out of my inner being, I was speaking to him with words I never knew before. I spoke with an authority I never had before. While my hand was on his shoulder I cried out: ‘Demon, I demand you in the Name of God Almighty to come out of this man and never to return.’ I thought I killed the poor guy. He fell to the ground and started wriggling like a snake, making noises I did not hear previously. An evil smell came out of the man and he shouted profanities. Then he relaxed and I thought he died. I turned him over and a new man, with a new face lay before me. He opened his eyes and all the evil and hate were gone. He had a serene smile on his face and all he could say was:

‘Thank you, thank you, and thank you. ‘

I took his hand and helped him up. The people were amazed and eager to hear what we had to say. We told them about God and many of the people present wanted to hear more. They were very interested in this God we were speaking about as they did not know Him previously. The God that could cast a demon out of a person was a God they all wanted to know. We had a wonderful time with them and told them all we know about God and His longing for them to be part of His kingdom. We stayed a few days and then we moved on. There were many tears when we left them with the promise that one day we will be coming back to them. In the meantime, they had to keep on telling other people about this wonderful God we introduced to them.

Of all the negative encounters we had, we will tell you later. For now, this is our account. We are eager to hear from our other friends about their experiences.”

They eagerly absorbed the stories about their friends’ encounters and learned a lot from the experiences they were told about.

Chapter 15

More healings and wonders

“Mai, we are coming from your friend, Surazal. He is sick and on the brink of dying. If you come quickly you may be able to see him before he passes on.”

To Mai`s friends, gathered with him, it was a shock. They were all very fond of Surazal. What could have gone wrong? He was healthy when they last saw him. To think of him on the brink of death was almost unbelievable.

“Mai, if we leave now we may see him before he dies,” Pete said.

“Not now my friend. I have an important thing to do and to teach you. Perhaps you do not understand it now but later on, you will. Just trust me.”

Mai`s friends learned to trust him. It was as if Mai knew things they did not. So they just followed Mai in his decision to go to Surazal later. It was not as if they did not care about Surazal. It was only that they trusted Mai in whatever he decided knowing it will be the best for them all.

All were shocked to hear the bad news of Surazel`s passing on. Only Mai seemed not perturbed. He then spoke to his friends these words:

“Our friend is only sleeping. Let us not be upset. We still have some other chores to complete here. Then we will go to him.” Knowing his friends would not understand he continued:

“Our friend is dead. But his death will teach you something and it will glorify God.”

Then a most amazing thing happened. Mai went on with what he was doing without being upset or in a haste to go to Surazal`s home. His friends did not prompt him to go or to do otherwise. They trusted his judgement in every situation. Then 2 days after Surazal passed away Mai told his friends it was time to go and visit Surazal and his family. Now the friends

of Mai were really upset. What will Surazal`s family think of them if they are now going to arrive days after Surazal passed away? They followed Mai and were astonished about his calmness and that he did not show any sign of distress. One of Surazal`s sisters met them and told Mai she was certain Mai could have prevented her brother from dying. Mai wanted to go to the grave. The sister was reluctant to took him there:

“Mai, he died 4 days ago. He is decomposing and he does not smell nice.”

Mai just kept on walking to the gravesite. Many people were now gathering with them and they all went to the gravesite. People were crying. Mai cared a lot about Surazal and he also started crying. He asked the people to roll the stone in front of the grave away. Mai started praying:

“My God, You are almighty. You can do anything. I thank you for what you are doing to help the people to trust in me and You”

Then Mai cried in a loud voice:

“Surazal, come out.”

Surazal came out of the grave. He was alive and in perfect health. He was still tied with burial cloths and Mai asked the people to release him so that he could go home.

After this incident many people trusted Mai and they were willing to listen to his message about his father's kingdom.

Later when Mai and his friends were alone, it was all they could talk about. How was it possible to raise a person 4 days dead and decomposing?. Mai reminded them about what he told them when they learned of Surazal`s illness. I decided to wait 2 days before we started on our way to our sick friend for a specific reason. I know many people believe the spirit of a dead person only departs 4 days after his death. To rule out any possibility that Surazal was not dead I decided to raise him on the fourth day. You remember that his sister said his decomposing body smelled. I must help you to understand that it was God who raised Surazal

and not me. If you keep this in mind you will also in future be able to ask God and trust Him to perform a wonder. God will answer your prayers if it is according to His will. I can teach you many things but I think I will rather show you another wonder of God to help you to trust Him. Let`s go further on our journey.”

On their way, Mai noticed a man blind from his birth. Mai`s friends wanted to know who sinned, was it the man or his parents who caused the blindness? It was not a wise question. What sin could he have committed before his birth? So they were asking if his parent`s sin was the cause of his blindness. Mai denied this possibility and opened his friend's eyes to a bigger possibility namely that God was in charge of what happened to the man`s eyes.

“He was born blind so that the workings of God could be displayed and illustrated in him.”

While Mai`s friends were closely watching he made mud of soil and saliva. While the man was astonished about the discussion of his problem without even talking to him he sensed something strange was happening because everyone grew quiet and he could hear something was happening near to him. Then he felt a soft touch on his shoulder. He could feel the love in that touch so he was not upset or afraid of what was happening. Then he felt wet stuff applied to his eyes. It was a strange feeling and he did not know what was happening. Then he heard Mai`s voice.

“Go wash your face in the pool.”

He still did not know what was happening but his guide who usually helped him along, took him by the hand and guided him to the pool. Here he washed his face and his eyes. The most amazing thing happened. For the first time, he became aware of light. Previously he lived in darkness. Now the darkness gave way to something white. Then forms took shape. He knew from touching a leaf and a tree previously about what a tree looked like

but the amazing beauty to behold a tree was overwhelming to him. He could only wipe the tears from his eyes in wonder. For the first time, he became aware of colours. He could not get enough of the colours. Then he detected movement, the trees were gently swaying and he suspected the wind he knew from previous encounters with nature must be causing the movement. For the first time, he could see what his mother looked like. There was so much crying that not a dry eye was in sight. When he looked into his mother's eyes he knew he was seeing love.

The first thought that came to his mind was to thank Mia for what he did but he could not find him as Mai quietly slipped away.

This was not the end of the blind man's troubles. The elders of the church and other leaders had a strong influence on society. They felt threatened by the influence Mai obtained by the wonders he was doing. He was someone to reckon with. No wonder they tried to discredit the blind man's healing. First, they cross-examined the blind man:

“How did you receive your sight? You know Mai is a bad man, working for devils. Explain how it all happened.”

“He put mud on my eyes and told me to wash my eyes. Miraculously my eyes opened and I could see.”

“Go, call your parents. Somebody is lying and we must find out who it is.”

The parents arrived and confirmed everything about the wonderful healing except they could not give a logical answer for the miracle. The management of the church was not satisfied and decided to expel the previously blind man from church. The blind man gained on that day his vision but lost his church.

Mai felt sorry for the blind man and said to him:

“Do you believe God healed you? Do you trust in Him?”

“Yes I believe”, he said.

Mai showed his friend two ways in which God healed. In future, they would learn much more about healing.

But first Mai had to reveal to his followers who he really was.

Chapter 16

Starting the last lap.

On His way to Jerusalem May asked His followers:

“Who am I, according to the people?”

This was and will always be the big question; who is this Man to humankind? He knew people intimately and usually had a plan with what He was teaching them. In this case, he was leading them to a more intimate knowledge of Himself. He started way off but He was busy teaching them a fundamental truth that would guide them on their way when He had left them.

“John, the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah”, His friends said.

Then Jesus asked them:

“Who am I to you?”

Peter, as the leader, volunteered an answer. For he knew who this Friend of him really was

“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

This was what Jesus wanted them to remember. He praised Peter for his insight but put his answer in context when he told him that this answer was an insight from God. On the foundation of this knowledge that he, the Mai they knew, was Jesus the Son of God, He would build his church. **Actually Mai was the reverse of " I AM"**, the name of God. In Hebrew you read from right to left and that also explains the names used up to now like Surazal meaning Lazarus.

The groundwork for the last chapter of Jesus` life on earth was now laid. He started to prepare his friends for what would soon happen. He told them that they were on their way to Jerusalem where He would suffer, be killed and would rise on the third day from death. He gave them also the key to following Him:

“If anyone desires to be my disciple, let him deny himself (disregard, lose sight of, and forget himself and his own interests) and take up his cross and follow Me (cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying also).

For whoever is bent on saving his temporal life, his comfort and security shall lose eternal life; and whoever loses this comfort and security here for My sake shall find everlasting life.”

This was the first time Jesus openly spoke about His death and resurrection. It came as a shock to His followers. They still hoped for release from the Roman oppression and that Jesus would set themselves free from their suffering under the Romans. Now He was speaking about dying. They still had a lot to learn. It was important for the followers of Jesus to learn the art of discarding the self. Travelling around with Jesus and identifying with what He did caused them to overrate themselves. Instead of being humble and depending on Jesus, they began to think highly of themselves. They even argued about their importance. When Jesus saw their attitude about being important He taught them a lesson by calling a little child to Him and put the child in the midst of them. He then burst their bubble of self-importance with the following words:

“Truly I say to you unless you change, turn around and become like little children, trusting, lowly, loving, forgiving, you can never enter the kingdom of heaven at all.

One trait of a child of special importance to Jesus was the ease with which a child forgives

To illustrate what He meant by being forgiving Jesus told the following story:

“A certain king took inventory of all his possessions. He discovered that one of his workers owed him 10 million dollars. The servant could not pay it back. Then the king ordered that the man and his whole family must be sold as slaves to try and cover his debt. The debtor begged the king to give him a chance to pay him back. When the king saw the

terrible plight of the debtor he felt pity for him and decided to give him a chance. He set him free and said he need not pay anything back. When this servant went away from the king he encountered another servant who owed him 20 dollars. He grabbed him and demanded payment. The man begged him for mercy and promised to pay him back. He felt nothing for the pleading man and ordered that he be thrown in jail till he paid him back. Some of the other servants saw what happened and told the king about it. The king was furious. He ordered the first servant to be brought back to him and scolded him. 'You contemptible and wicked attendant, I forgave and cancelled all that great debt of yours because you begged me to. And should you not have had pity and mercy on your fellow attendant, as I had pity and mercy on you?' And in wrath, his master turned him over to the torturers till he should pay all that he owed. "

"So also shall My heavenly Father will deal with every one of you if you not freely forgive your brother from your heart his offences."

Wonderful things were given to Jesus`s followers in baptism; under the water, when baptized they could not breathe, they were like in their mother's womb before being born. They had to die to self and had to become dependent on the One who were giving them life, Jesus Christ. When they came out of the water of baptism they drew a big breath. They were born again like babies who started breathing for the first time. The air, the Ruach, the Holy Spirit, was drawn into their lungs. The life-giving, Holy Spirit, the Power of God became part of them

The new life could only be born if the old life ceased to exist, was lost under the water of baptism.

Sometime later a follower of Jesus would say of this:

"I have been crucified with Christ (in Him I have shared His crucifixion); it is no longer I that live, but Christ (the Messiah) lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I

live by faith in (by adherence to reliance on and complete trust in) the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” Gal. 2:20.

Strange that these words were later written by the same Paul, or Luas, who tried to do the followers of Jesus so much harm before his conversion on the road to Damascus.

Only the acceptance of God`s total forgiveness for the millions of times people transgressed against Him can equip them with enough love and forgiveness to follow in His footsteps.

Chapter 17

The suffering of Jesus

Jesus was nearing His last suffering on earth. His time had almost come to bring the final offering for the sins of the world. He would be the Offering. This is why He came to this world. He came to suffer in the place of the sinner so that the guilty sinner could be redeemed. He was to pay the price for the crimes of the sinners, He, the sinless, holy Son of God.

Jesus suffered on many levels to redeem mankind.

The physical suffering

Before His death on the cross, Jesus endured much hardship. As a baby, he had to travel a lot in trying circumstances. It was not easy on a donkey even before He was born when His mother was about to give birth. When He lay in the manger it was not the softest bed. When He had to work hard in a carpenter's shop and had to help with constructing buildings. Almost always He had to walk. The sun was hot, the winters were cold. When he started his public appearances he seldom slept in a house as He said:

“Foxes have holes but the Son of God has not a place to lay his head”

He did not always have enough to eat. At one time he went without food or water for 40 days. On top of that at the end of the 40 days when Jesus was only skin and bone satan tempted Him with the temptation to make bread.

Jesus in the form of a human being got tired and he had to rest like when He met the woman at the watering-place in Samaria. Even at night when his followers slept He got up and spent time praying to God. Even after a night spent in prayer, He continued His mission the next day with preaching and helping sick people. He travelled by boat on the Sea of Galilee so tired that he slept amidst a storm that almost filled the boat with water. He walked on the water of the same sea. He did not float through the air but he walked on the uneven

surface of the water, tossed around for the benefit of His followers to strengthen their trust in Him.

All this physical suffering was nothing compared to His physical suffering the last 24 hours of His life on this earth.

His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane was so intense that he sweat blood. This is a medical condition occurring during intense emotional trauma.

When He later was arrested he was treated like a criminal when they pushed and shoved Him. Jesus treated His enemy with compassion like when He healed the ear of the servant Peter chopped off with his sword.

Later they hit Jesus in the face with their fists. I believe they broke some of His teeth in the process.

Do you still remember what a prick of a thorn felt like? It is as if the burning sensation will never stop. Imagine making a crown out of thorns, placing it on a person's head and then just to make certain it won't fall off give it a nice hard shove so that the multiple thorns can penetrate the flesh on the head. The blood running down your face will get into your eyes, blinding you and burning like hell, the hell He was going through on our behalf.

Jesus lost a lot of blood. He must have suffered severe thirst.

Eventually, he was whipped and chastised. Many convicted people were killed during such a whipping as the whip ripped pieces of flesh from the victim's body and even exposed the internal organs. Jesus was in a terrible state and bled profusely. He had to carry His cross with this ruined body. No wonder He collapsed under the cross and help was provided from a bystander. This was not the end. The most terrible death anybody can suffer still awaited Jesus. He had to be crucified. Of the most sensitive nerve parts in the human body are the nerves in the hand and on the top of the feet. The devil himself must have given it into man's

mind to conceive something so cruel to drive nails through these parts. Long before crucifixion was invented by the Romans it was described and predicted in the Psalms.

Even this was not the end of the physical suffering Jesus went through to save our souls. Once the cross was erected Jesus hung suspended on the nails through his hands. To take the weight from the hands the feet were also nailed to the cross. When you hang with the weight of your body on the two nails driven through your hands the weight of the body makes it impossible to breathe. To get some air into your lungs you had to push up from your feet. Remember the nails driven through the sensitive feet nerves. The pain must have been indescribable. In this position, Jesus suffered for three hours before He died. Thank you, Jesus, for suffering so much for my sins!

The emotional suffering

Jesus's emotional suffering was at least as painful as His physical suffering. Many times Jesus was disappointed in his followers and fellow Jews. Many times He was belittled, He was tested, insulted, chased away, distrusted and blasphemed. Jude, one of His 12 disciples, betrayed Him and delivered Him to the people who wanted to kill Him. In Gethsemane, the night before His crucifixion, Jesus showed grief and experienced distress of mind and was deeply depressed, to such an extent that He sweated blood. When He needed his friends most they slept. Jesus knew what suffering was awaiting Him. The suffering was so severe He asked God if it was possible to take this cup of suffering away from Him. True to His nature he submitted to God's will. It was God's will that He should suffer on behalf of the people's sins.

Let us bring suffering closer to home; think about the worst suffering you went through. Maybe it was the loss of somebody close to you like your child, a wife, a husband, a parent. Maybe it was a financial setback, perhaps an injustice like a person swindling your business away from you. Maybe it was because of a mistake you made that caused you to

land in jail. Perhaps it was a sin you committed that caused someone much harm and tears. Remember how you felt deep inside. Some people could not live with that feeling and killed themselves. Perhaps you are still suffering and you still weep about that incident. Jesus felt all those feelings. He anticipated the pain; he felt the pain in advance. If you multiply your worst pain 10 billion times you might get close to the pain Jesus suffered for the sin of 10 billion people living on this earth. All the guilt you felt because of your sin He felt 10 billion times and much more because every person commits sins millions of times during his lifetime. We cannot imagine what Jesus suffered in our place. Eternity is too short to thank Him for what He did for us. Rejection is one of the worst emotional feelings one can go through. Jesus suffered his whole life on earth rejection especially when he was rejected by the Jews as the Messiah. He was rejected by the church leaders, the authority, His followers and most of all rejected by God when He cried out:

“My God, why have You rejected me?”

Jesus did not deserve the shame; He deserved praise, prayer, exaltation and honour. Instead, His bruised naked body was nailed to a cross next to a highway in Jerusalem.

Never in the history of the world was such injustice done to a person. This Person was the best, most holy, sinless Person whoever came to this earth. The injustice done to Him was to make us, the unjust, just before God.

The crucifixion of Jesus cannot be objectively shared with another person.

On the third day after His crucifixion, He was raised from death and He presented Himself to over 500 persons on different occasions before He ascended to His Father in Heaven.

His mission was completed. He sent His Spirit, the Holy Spirit to be with His followers till He would return on the clouds to take them, who accepted Him as our Saviour, to Him.

Part 2: Paul.**Chapter 18**

(Luas or Sual or Paul occasionally figured in the story of Mai, or I Am, or Jesus.

Although he was an instrument in the hands of Natas, or Satan, during the life time of Jesus on this earth no mention in the Bible was made about an encounter between Jesus and Paul. It was only after the resurrection of Jesus and His ascension to heaven that Paul's encounters between himself and the followers of Jesus are mentioned till he had a personal encounter with Jesus.)

Paul's father speaking:

“I, the father of Paul moved with my wife from Galilee to Tarsus. I used to be a slave to a Roman master but he set me free and I received Roman citizenship. In Tarsus my son Paul, was born and thus he had dual citizenship; Roman and Jew. I studied and became a Pharisee. I am proud of my lineage seeing that I am from the tribe of Benjamin.

As we were living in the city of Tarsus where a university was situated my son, Paul had opportunities to further his education. He got well versed in Greek and knew Greek literature well. We are traditional Jews and Paul was brought up in the traditions of Judaism. He had a special interest in religion and I, being a Pharisee, was well trained in the Holy Scriptures.

My son's birth was in the same time as the famous Jew, Jesus, about 3 BC. He did not know it but he had to play a big part in the history of the followers of this Jesus after Jesus departed to heaven.”

Paul speaking:

“I have 2 names: In Greek it is Saul and in Roman it is Paul. Both names have the same meaning; small. I suppose I was small at birth. I lived with my parents in Tarsus but when I grew up I moved to Jerusalem to stay with family. Here my education really got

going. The teaching of my father was extended when I was taught by Gamaliel who had a strong influence on my education. I suppose you could call me gifted. Study, came easily to me. I had an excellent memory and used 4 languages, Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The Tora and other scrolls especially the teachings of the prophets intrigued me. I became a fanatic in defending the teachings with which I grew up.

When another fanatic Jew, by the name of Jesus, started teaching concepts about God, unfamiliar to us Pharisees, it really upset me and I made it my mission to crush this heresy. I did not have a personal confrontation with Jesus while he was on this earth but I confronted many of his followers after Jesus left. I can remember one incident very well when Stephen, one of the followers of Jesus was stoned to death while I looked on. My zeal to crush the teachings of Jesus became obsessive after the death of Stephen and we chased most of the followers of Jesus, later called Christians, out of Jerusalem. My interest in harming the Christians outside of Jerusalem increased. I got permission to go to Damascus to harass the Christians there. On my way a miraculous thing happened to me; a bright light shone on me. I was knocked from my donkey and a loud voice spoke to me:

‘Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me?’

I said:

“Who are you, Lord?”

He said:

“I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting. It is dangerous and it will turn out badly for you to offer more resistance.”

From that moment on it felt as if my previous life was cancelled. All I previously believed about Jesus was shown to be false. The Living Son of God spoke to me. All I could say was:

“Lord, what do You desire me to do?”

To diminish my inflated self-image I was blinded. I was no longer the leader but had to follow while another led me. Later Jesus opened my eyes through the intervention of Ananias. I had to learn a lot about the way of salvation, where Jesus fitted in and that He was the Son of God, my Redeemer. Everything started to make sense. I discovered Jesus in the writings of the old scrolls as God opened my eyes of understanding. After I was baptized I received the indwelling Holy Spirit of God Who became my Advocate, Comforter, Counsellor, Helper and Standby.

My big question even to this day is:

“Why Lord, why me? I deserved Your everlasting punishment for what I did to Your followers but You blessed me by making me Your servant. You used me to write two-thirds of the New Testament Books as Your Spirit guided me. When You departed to heaven we were both 33 years old. You took 3 years to do what God sent You to do on this earth, to teach the Jews the way to salvation. You granted me ten times as long to show the gentiles the way to salvation. O how can I thank you, dear God for this privilege?”

At age 66 Paul was beheaded while still furthering the work Jesus started on this earth. Two thousand years later we are still benefitting from his life and the wonderful writings Jesus gave us through his servant, Paul.

Part 3: Joe

(Let us look in conclusion at a modern story of how the grace of God can benefit His chosen child. I am going to tell you the story of Joe, incorporating the way Jesus draws people to Himself and how He equip the humble and average person with qualities necessary for the saving of souls. If you are still looking for the Key to unlock the mystery of life I am sure you will find it in this last story.)

Chapter 19**Introduction**

Joe was sipping his coffee. It was 5 am. and he was thinking about this wonderful day in his life. For 20 years he was an ordinary clerk in the Department of Finance and then last week his boss called him in with the wonderful news that he had been promoted. Now the other 5 guys working with him will be his responsibility to lead, to guide and to control. A better life with more money will be possible. He is not a Bible-bashing Christian. His whole life he believed in moderation, nothing extreme, always balanced. To Joe, this meant that he went to church on special occasions like weddings and funerals. Religion was to him a private matter and he did not intend to change it. But Joe was not a true believer in Jesus Christ. He did not have a personal relationship with God. He grew up in a house where his parents occasionally went to church, where the Bible was honoured but seldom read. He went through the motions of the traditional church but he lacked the power of the infilling of the Holy Spirit. His thoughts drifted back to his promotion. More money meant more to be saved for Stephan, his son of 16, who wants to become a teacher and for Betty, 13, who wants to become a nurse. More money meant He can increase the budget for his wife Jenny for the groceries. Life was a song and he could hardly wait to get to the office where he now will be seated apart from the other guys.

He must be on his way. He expected heavy traffic this Monday morning. People tend to be reckless and he must make time for robots not working. Perhaps he was a bit distracted, perhaps he was in a hurry, perhaps he was not concentrating as he should but when the taxi swerved in front of him he just moved to the left-hand lane not seeing the high speed 14 wheeler coming from the back. The big truck ran over his car. He was pinned in the wreckage. He heard a bystander speaking to another person:

“Poor chap is not going to make it. Let’s hope the car does not ignite because they will need special equipment to cut him loose from this wreckage and it will take time. He is bleeding heavily and if we do not stop the bleeding he will be dead in another 10 minutes.”

They immediately went to work on him as he was still pinned inside the car with wreckage all around him. He did not feel any pain but when he looked at his leg pinned beneath what used to be the dashboard it was twisted at an unusual angle and he knew this leg will never be as it used to be. He was still worrying about his wounds when he slipped into a coma.

He was travelling through a long passage. In front, there was a bright light. It felt as if he was born again and travelling through the birth canal. He knew he was dying to this earthly life. He knew he was standing just outside the entrance to heaven. Everywhere he looked he saw huge gold pillars of white marble. In front of him, a winding road went up to the gates of heaven. People were on their way to the entrance of heaven. All were wearing white clothes. They looked so happy and then they disappeared through the gates and he could see them no more. He wished he could be amongst those people

Then he saw 2 horrible creatures near to him wearing black clothing. He became aware of himself and discovered that he too was wearing black clothing. He could still see the bright light far off, but he was in the darkness in the company of the horrible creatures. He tried to get away from the creatures and tried to walk on the road to the gates of heaven. The

two creatures would not allow him and pulled him deeper into the darkness. He kicked and tried to get away. He was in agony and fear gripped him. He experienced loneliness he never felt in his life before. He realised he was without God. While he was being pulled deeper into the darkness he realised he was on his way to hell. The next moment he felt the scorching heat and knew he was on the brink of hell. A terrible realization came over him that he will be in this place forever. A terrible stench was coming from the fire where the souls of lost persons were burning. Many lost souls were crying out. There was a lot of swearing going on. Some begged for mercy while others cursed God.

He struggled with the 2 creatures and cried out to God to save him. The next moment he felt he was being pulled into the direction of the brilliant light. Then he again slipped into his coma. Fourteen days later he regained consciousness. He was in a bad state. For another 2 weeks, his life hung in a balance but he pulled through. He never discussed his near-death experience with anyone. He was ashamed of what he had to reveal knowing that other people will challenge him about his previous convictions about religion.

He experienced an intense longing to be sure he is going to the place of the brilliant light. It was not so much the light he was longing to see but the feeling of peace of security and love that went with the light. This was something he never felt before. He knew his life could never be the same. He longed to speak to someone who could help him as he knew he was on his way to hell. If anything happened to him now he would not get a second chance. He became depressed and experienced intense fear. He considered suicide but realised that he would permanently lose his only chance to be saved from hell. The experience of hell was something he did not wish on his worst enemies. (Real-life story of Burger Harmse, recorded by Dr. Isak Burger in his book: Die laaste 5 minute voor die dood).

Joe slowly recovered. For the first 3 months of sick leave, he got full pay but for the next three months, he would only receive half-pay. He was still a long way from going back

to work. The family`s budget was in a bad way. The children needed stuff the family could not afford. Their medical aid was almost drained and the medical accounts were coming in. Some of the doctors were already threatening legal action for outstanding accounts. When Jenny visited him he discussed the problem with her.

“My wife, what are we going to do. You know our savings are almost depleted. It will be months before I will be able to go back to work. There is also the possibility that my leg will be permanently stiff because of the severe injury. I might even still lose the leg. Tell me about the children. What do they say? How are you managing?”

Tears were running down his cheeks. He felt so helpless, so worthless. Why did he not watch out for the traffic? Why was he so absorbed with his promotion? Why, why, why? He needed help but did not know where to turn for help. He never learned to trust God in trying times as these.

Jenny watched him. She was also crying. She was desperate. Joe was too sick to burden him with the whole truth. The family were slipping deeper and deeper into financial problems. She got a reminder for the monthly instalments of the car as they were 2 months in arrears. They did not get the car back from the panel beaters. She had to choose between buying food for the children and paying for the car. She chose to buy food. In desperation, she went to her parents and asked them for a small loan to guide them over. They were not unwilling but their budget was only covering their expenses and they would have to give up on their lifestyle to help their child. They would do this willingly. They felt so sorry for their grandchildren and would do anything to save them from humiliation at school. Jenny did not tell them but she already spoke to the principal and he promised to put the family`s plight before the committee for financial assistance at the next board meeting. She was doing all she could but it was not enough. They needed extra income. With Joe`s salary being halved for the next three months disaster looms for the family. She could not get it over her heart to tell

Joe but she was looking for a job, any job just to tide them over. It felt as if she was torn into different directions as if something would just give in and she would collapse. She wished she went to church regularly because the church people supported each other. She could hardly go now and ask for help. What would the people think of her? She could in the past get along without their help. Now she wanted to use them and when things would improve in future she would discard the church again. She can only hope someone reading her CV would have mercy on her. She did not have much to offer a future employer as she had limited work experience and only passed grade 12. Luckily she had training in basic skills like typing and routine computer work. She was so desperate she even considered praying. But how could you ask God to help you if you were not sure that He existed? She s wished she had someone to talk to, someone to give her guidance. What could she do?

Joe was watching her. Never in his life, had he felt so helpless. He loved Jenny dearly and he hated what he did to his family. Deep in his heart, he knew they were on the very edge of a financial precipice. What must he do?

Chapter 20**Light in the tunnel?**

The thing uppermost in his mind was the encounter with satanic forces he had in his near-death experience. The thing that bothered most was the stench, the horrible smell of burning flesh. When he closed his eyes he could still see the cruel faces of the two demons who tried to pull him into hell. Even if he covered his ears with his hands he could still hear the anguished cries of the people in hell, the terrible swearing, the begging for mercy. But he knew there was still a chance to get saved. He wished there was someone he could tell about the encounter he had. As if he was the answer to Joe`s wish, his parson stepped into his room. To his shame, Joe could not remember the pastor's name. Luckily he could address him as Pastor.

“I am sorry I did not come earlier, Joe, but I was very busy. We had a lot of funerals lately with this pandemic. But tell me, how you are?”

This was what Joe was hoping for, a person not too close to him but someone trained to listen and someone who could give him some guidance. He knew he could trust the pastor for many people confided in him and he never spoke out about what people told him.

“I am afraid I am not doing so well, Pastor. I have some issues I would like to discuss with you if you don`t mind.”

The pastor looked at him with love and compassion. So many times in the past he was confronted with similar situations. When everything was fine and going well persons seldom needed him but when the problems started they were eager to speak to him. Unfortunately, it also happened that when the problems passed you never saw them again. Will Joe be one of those? He wondered. He had some background on Joe and knew about the car accident. It was not difficult to imagine the financial strain the family must be going through but he was not prepared for what Joe wanted to tell him.

“Pastor, may I speak confidentially with you? I have a heavy burden to bear. “

“Friend, you are welcome. How can I help you?”

“Pastor, I almost died in the crash. I previously heard about people who had a near-death experience but never thought much about it. Now that I had it myself I cannot stop thinking about it. It is haunting me day and night. I cannot find rest. May I tell you what I encountered?”

“Sure, go ahead”

“Pastor, I saw hell. I saw people in hell. I heard their cries, their begging for mercy, the cursing, and the crying out in pain. I smelled hell. It was terrible Pastor, terrible, indescribable terrible. Two demons, evil-looking, clothed in black, were pulling me to hell. I was moving in that direction and the swearing and crying out got louder. I felt terrible fear. I would have given anything to be saved from that place. I never in the past experienced God as real. I never really trusted Him. I never in the past needed Him. I did my own thing. You know I seldom visited the church. At one stage on my journey to hell, I saw a very bright light. I believe it must have been the presence of God. I felt peace and contentment and joy and wanted to stay with that bright Light. But as I have said I was being pulled in the opposite direction and soon the Light faded away. I know God is real. I know He is merciful and kind, full of joy, peace and love. I want to be with Him when I die. Now I know my old life was worthless. I am full of sin. I need a Redeemer as you had told us when you spoke about Jesus and what He did for our redemption. But I do not know what I must do. How do I get into a personal relationship with God?”

Pastor was silent for a long time. Very seldom if ever had he heard such a confession. He knew he had been blessed with a picture of the choice of mankind, heaven or hell. He understood that God was also talking to him to encourage him to keep on with his work of saving people, of bringing souls into God’s kingdom. He felt a feeling of peace. He came this

morning to encourage this poor soul in front of him but God brought him here to be encouraged through the testimony of this man. He was so grateful for God`s kindness. Perhaps God found it necessary to encourage him seeing how emotionally discouraged he was after he buried so many people the last year. This testimony was precious for the furthering of God`s kingdom and he knew this testimony would travel around the world to save many souls. But first, this poor soul`s agony had to be put to rest.

“My dear friend, do not worry about getting into a personal relationship with God. When you had your near-death experience God was knocking on your door to be let into your life. He selected you to be His witness on this earth in a time like this. You already opened the door for God`s mercy in your life when you believed He is alive and full of mercy. He wants to save your soul because he gave you a second chance to live and to work for him. You already know that you cannot enter in to him because of all your sins. You know you need His mercy. The only reason God can forgive your sins is that Jesus, His son, already was punished on your behalf when they crucified Him. He suffered the agony of Hell on your behalf. He was punished in your place for all you did wrong. Jesus defeated satan when He died in your place and was raised from death. Satan cannot do anything to you if you accept that what I told you about Jesus. If you accept it as truth and you welcome Jesus into your heart you are saved. Give your whole life over to Him and trust His offering on the cross of Calvary as full payment for your everlasting redemption. I beg you do not delay. You had your one chance, do not let it pass. Next time there won`t be a coming back. God needs you to tell other people about what He did for you. Are you willing to accept Jesus as your Saviour?”

“Yes Pastor, yes, yes thousand times yes. Please help me to give my life over to Him.”

“Pray with me, please.”

“Dear God. I am a sinner. I need your forgiveness. Thank you for giving your Son to be my personal Saviour when you allowed Him to be punished on my behalf. Thank You, Jesus, Son of God, for dying in my place, for carrying my sins, for taking my punishment on yourself. Thank You for conquering death and hell and satan. You paid dearly for my soul. My life belongs to You. I accept You and trust you with my whole life. I am yours. Do with me as You please. Come in Holy Spirit. Fill me and use me as you please. Amen! Amen! Amen!”

The same peace and joy Joe experienced when he saw the Light took hold of him. He just wanted to cry because of the overwhelming joy he was experiencing. Now he knew the purpose of the accident. God is good. He just wanted to thank God for the rest of his life and to tell other people about this loving, faithful God, his God and Jesus, his Saviour.

Pastor seldom had seen such joy, such conviction, such release of doubt and worry, such purposefulness, such commitment to God. He knew again that there is nothing more rewarding in this life than to bring a lost soul to Jesus. He felt a need to pray with this new brother and to thank God for saving his soul.

“Dear God, thank You for saving the soul of this brother of mine. Thank You for opening heavens doors to him. I know You are going to use him wonderfully for Your kingdom. I pray that You will guide him and show him what he must do. Bless him and use him for Your kingdom. Thank You for letting me share in this wonderful experience and for strengthening me with Your presence. I pray Holy Spirit that you will be his Advocate, Comforter, Counsellor, Helper, Intercessor, Strengthener and Standby as promised. Help him to go with conviction through baptism and strengthen his dependence and love and use him as You please. Thank You, Father. Amen!”

Chapter 21**Jenny`s story**

After visiting Joe, Jenny went home. She still did not know what to do. All the responsibilities were too much for her to carry. She could see no solution to their problems. They were stuck, nowhere to turn, nobody to help them, no outcome for her and the children. Soon they would be welfare cases on the street, begging. She found it hard to give meaning to her situation as it was becoming catastrophic. She was diving deep into depression. She grew thinner and thinner, smiled seldom and was on the brink of taking her own life. Her situation was desperate. She could not take the chance to visit Joe for fear of upsetting him. So she fabricated excuses for not visiting him. She could not postpone forever and on this day soon after Pastor left she went to see Joe. Joe felt sorry for his wife. He could see she was not well. He was full of jubilation after his encounter with God and could not wait to share his new love with her. She was barely seated before he started telling her about Pastor`s visit. First, he had to tell her about his near-death experience. While he was relating his experience she was captivated. A new world was opening to her. For the first time in her life God, hell and heaven became a reality to her. Just to get the insight that this life is not all that is important, gave her some hope. She felt such deep love for her husband who was willing to share this intimate experience with her. She trusted him and knew she was not alone as satan would like her to believe. Now that she knew God was a reality she found something to hang on to. She could see in her husband's attitude and his strength that something changed in him for the better. Their circumstances did not change but they were getting a new way of looking at what was happening. It was so nice to know that God is good, that He is a reality that He is looking after her husband and in doing so He is looking after her and her children, their finances and everything else. She could not believe the improvement she saw in her husband`s health. He was lively, overflowing with enthusiasm, eager to speak to her and to

encourage her. It was giving her hope. But mainly it was her new view of God and what and who He is that was giving her hope. She felt a need to have what her husband was beaming; his love, his hope, his trust in God, the new power shining through him. Never did she know her husband to be so strong. He was a new person and because of her love for her husband and her oneness with him, she was experiencing some of the hope he was beaming. Suddenly she knew she could go on but she needed some of what he had. Thus she asked him an unusual question.

“Will you help me to get God into my life?”

Tears were streaming down his cheeks. He was so choked up he could not speak but he eagerly nodded his head. Then he said:

“I will, my dear”

He explained the gospel to her as Pastor explained it. She was so conscious of her inadequacies and sins, so tired of all her endeavours to fix things that it was a tremendous relief to give herself over to God and His mercy. She experienced something about her parent's unconditional love and willingness to help in the presence of God helping her. The best thing to know was that God was not thinking about her mistakes, the wasted years, and the wrong upbringing of her children, her inadequacies, and her distrust of church people, her discard of God and her poor knowledge of what Jesus did for her on Calvary. She was overwhelmed by emotion and by relief. She just took her husband`s head in her hands, looked into his eyes with wonder and said:

“I love you, my husband”

Suddenly she was eager to get home, to be alone with God, to speak to Him, to get to know Him better. Most of all she was in a hurry to get to her children and start repairing what she neglected in the previous years. She felt security about their future she did not have previous. She just knew that God loved her, her husband and their children. She knew as a

mother you would never neglect those you care about so much. God is going to provide for them. She greeted Joe and was on her way to do what she had to do.

At home, the children were busy with schoolwork. She tried to act normal but the joy inside her was not to be contained. She asked the children to come to her and she put her arms around them. She was so overwhelmed by emotion she could not speak. Somehow the children felt the tears were not an indication of something bad that had happened but they were a bit confused. All the mother could get out was:

“I love you. I will explain later.”

She went to her room and knelt next to her bed:

“Father God, thank You. Thank You for being a Father to me. Thank You for touching me with Your love. Thank You for protecting me, for supplying in all our needs, for my children, for Joe and for what you did for him. I am new to this new life. Have patience with me. Teach me what I must know to have an intimate relationship with you. Help my husband to get well. Please be with my children and help me to introduce them to You. I love You. Amen.”

Why was she so calm? Why was she experiencing so much peace and security? Why is it she is not lonely anymore? Why is God so good to her?

First, she must get some rest before she burns out. Tomorrow she will start working with the children and tell them about God.

That night Jenny slept the soundest sleep she ever slept. She was so calm and hopeful. She did not wake up once but slept through to get up the next morning fully aware that her life will never be the same. She sent the children to school with the promise that she will explain today after school what was going on.

The children were eager to get home after school. They did not know what to expect but believed something good happened to their mother. Lately, they worried a lot about her.

Their father already was sick in hospital and the fear of losing their mother was too much to bear.

“Children, today I want to apologize to you. You know I love you very much and I want the best for you. We believed that we had to teach you to live a balanced life. To live in moderation is good but you cannot apply this rule to everything in life. This is where we made a mistake for which I would like to apologize. We taught you that you must not go overboard with religion. We occasionally took you to church and now and then read out of the Bible. This was wrong. If you want to live for Jesus you must do it with your whole heart. You cannot stand with one foot in the world and try and stand with the other in God`s kingdom. Either you live for Jesus or you live for the world. We did not know it and made a mistake not only in what we taught you but also in how we tried to live our lives. We recently discovered that if you want to live for Jesus you must do it with all you have. You may wonder why the sudden switch. I wish your Daddy could explain it to you. He is sick and he asked me to speak to you about this matter.

It has to do with your father`s accident. He almost died in the crash and even now he is recovering slowly. He told me what happened after the crash and I want to tell you something about it. I am sure Daddy will fill in the rest for you. He kept this near-death experience to himself but he became so worried and afraid that he might not be given another chance to really get to an intimate relationship with God that he spoke to Pastor about what happened. Pastor helped him to accept Jesus as his Saviour. He could not keep it longer to himself and told me about the joy and peace he was experiencing since he gave his life to Jesus. Yesterday I also gave my life to God and accepted that Jesus paid for all my sins when he died on the cross at Calvary. I know He was resurrected on the third day. He ascended to heaven where He now resides with God our Father.

We, as your parents, are now living for God.

We cannot force you to choose to accept that Jesus paid for all your sins and surrender your lives to Christ. When the time is right and you feel in your heart you are ready you may tell us.

Let us thank Jesus for all He did for us.

Afterwards the children were quiet. They were not certain what to make of what their mother told them. What was positive to them was the joy in their mother, the fact that she was hopeful, and the assurance that beamed from her. She inspired confidence in them. They did not know much about Jesus but if this was a foretaste of what life can be if you give it over to Jesus, they were interested in getting to know Jesus better.

Chapter 22

The struggle continues

Joe was getting better. His strength was returning. He started walking again albeit with support but he was hopeful for the return of the full use of his leg. He was still experiencing the joy of knowing that his future was secure and that he did not need to worry about going to hell if he was to step over into eternity. Gradually he started thinking about his future in this life. It was now clear to him that something had to be done about their financial situation. He asked Jenny to go and see the bank manager and to explain to him about their situation. They needed an overdraft to guide them over. At all costs, they had to try and save their house before the bank foreclose. Teamwork was now needed. Most of all they needed God as the Leader of the team. He and Jenny made a pact to pray every day for guidance and for provision. Pastor became a close friend during these trying times. He regularly visited with Joe and was eager to learn more about Joe`s near-death experience. He wanted to know if Joe could recognise persons he knew when he got a glimpse into hell. Joe recognised a few people but decided not to disclose their names. What astonished him was that some of the people he thought were committed Christians were also there. One person, in particular, was a surprise. He always thought highly about this person because he was a regular churchgoer, a prominent person in society, rich and always friendly. He thought this person deserved to be in heaven. Then the Holy Spirit reminded him that you are saved not because of all the good things you did but because of what Jesus did for you when He was punished in your place. You received grace from God because you accepted what Jesus did for you. So it became clear to Joe that some persons were not in heaven because they trusted in themselves to do good deeds and to earn entrance into heaven because of their good deeds. He told Pastor about what he saw and what he thought about it. Pastor was long silent. Then a tear rolled down his cheek and he said to Joe:

“Joe, God is speaking to me through what He showed you. I am guilty; I am part of the problem. I got so caught up in improving my position, improving the finances of the church, drawing people to my church, not to offend anyone, that I missed my main purpose. I am supposed to bring people into the kingdom of God. God had to be my focus but I let myself and my church become the focal point. In this way, I neglected the souls and the destiny of souls. I am also to blame for lost souls suffering in hell. I brought the people nice-sounding messages. I tried not to offend them, to lure them into the comfort of the church with soft seated chairs, nice singing, not mentioning their sins, always preaching love and grace without mentioning the responsibility of the individual. May God have mercy on me. I want you to come and speak to the congregation and tell them what you saw and what you experienced. Just tell them what God showed you. I am sure the message God gave you will have an immense impact on the congregation.”

Joe was bewildered. He never thought his message would be so highly regarded. But then God showed him that it was not his message but God`s message to the people. He was only the instrument to deliver the message. With this new insight, he also knew that God would give him all that is needed to deliver His message. His imperfections, his inability to perform in front of people, his lack of theological knowledge were his strong points. He read in the Bible how Paul asked God to take the thorn out of his flesh but that God told him the thorn was necessary because God`s power is fulfilled in people that are weak, without power or abilities of their own. He felt a peace come over him and apart from trusting God to do the good work through him he knew God is also providing his healing so that he will be able to work for Him. He loved God for Who He is and for using him and for knowing God will provide for them.

“Pastor, you know me. I am not educated. I am an ordinary person. I only know I survived because of God`s mercy. I owe Him everything. He brought me back to life. This

life I am living now is from Him. I will do what He calls me to do. I trust Him to provide for this life He gave me. I am willing to come. I can walk but only with support. When do you want me to come?"

After he spoke these words it was as if his body was miraculously healed. Every day there was a marked improvement. He and Pastor agreed that if the doctors dismissed him on or before next Friday he will speak to the congregation on the Sunday following. He would speak during the evening service, after Pastor`s message.

Joe decided that he would not prepare anything in advance. He is going to trust God for everything he had to say. God is faithful and provided by letting him experience what he must tell the congregation. Joe believed that the Holy Spirit would also provide the preparation of the hearts of those people who would hear the message. What would happen after he delivered the message from God would be up to God.

Jenny was amazed when Joe told her of the new developments. She could wanted to tell him about a new opportunity that came from God who was looking after them. She went to the bank manager and it was no problem to arrange for bridging capital till the family get onto their feet again. The bank manager asked probing questions about her background and work experience. Then he made her an amazing offer. The bank was outsourcing some of its functions. The aim was to keep a skeleton staff at the bank and let most of the personnel work from home. The main thing was that he was looking for staff that would be dependable and hardworking, people who would not require supervision. Her basic skills in typing and computer literacy would be enough to form the basis of specialist training. The salary would be enough to fill in for the money lost when Joe would receive half of his salary for the next three months. God`s provision was so timely and so complete. He knew they did not have transport at present seeing that their car was a write-off. If she could work from home most of

the transport problems would be solved. When Joe had told his good news she started with hers. Joe was quiet after receiving the wonderful news. All he could say was:

“let us thank Him:”

“Dear God, thank You for providing for us. Thank You for using us and equipping us. Our lives are not our own. We gave it to You to use as You please. We love you, Father. We trust you. May our lives bring honour to your Name. Let Your will be done. Amen!”

They held hands and was silent in God`s presence, just letting His presence fill their souls. They enjoyed His company by giving over to Him and trusting Him for everything in the future.

The children were surprised to hear that their father will be bringing a message in the church to the congregation. They so trusted their parents that there was no hesitation on their side. They were looking forward to Sunday and were counting the days. Like little missionaries they were telling their friends about what was to happen. Their friends told their parents and soon the whole neighbourhood was looking forward to the Sunday evening`s sermon.

As can be expected Joe was released from the hospital on Friday and could go home. The doctors were amazed at the speed of his recovery but even more about his personality change. He became friendly and loving. Timely and untimely many of the hospital staff would look in on him. When they learned about his release many a whet eye were evident. Word spread about Joe going to give a testimony in church on Sunday. Many of the hospital staff decided to go and hear their patient speak without knowing what he would speak about.

Joe`s preparation for his first public speaking on Sunday was to rest on Saturday. He quietly spent most of the day in God`s presence. He read passages of the Bible and spoke to God, mainly thanking Him for the opportunity to witness about His goodness and His wonderful provision. He was not afraid to speak in public, he was calm and composed as if

another Person was in charge. He was only the instrument in the hand of this wonderful Person. He knew this Person was Jesus working in and through him using the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 23

The Testimony

Joe decided not to go to the morning service on Sunday. He saved his strength for the evening service when he would give his testimony.

To his amazement, the church was almost full. Many new faces he never saw before greeted the pastor. He gave a short service and then introduced Joe.

“Brothers and sisters, welcome to this special occasion. As you all know Joe is going to tell us about his accident. A special welcome to the medical staff. My wish is that this will not be the last time we welcome you. Know that you will always be welcome.

I call Joe, my friend. During his stay in the hospital, our friendship deepened and God spoke through him to me.’ Thank you, friend, for your willingness to share your experiences with us. We know you are still recovering and we don’t mind you sitting down while speaking to us. It is a privilege to listen to you.”

Joe took the microphone and looked over the congregation. Many of the listeners he had seen before but there were many persons he did not recognise. He felt a calm coming over him and knew God was with him and God will be speaking.

“Dear friends, I believe you are here to listen to what God wants to tell you. I am nothing, only the messenger. Please look past me, excuse my imperfections and only see my willingness to introduce you to the God I encountered during my accident.

Three months ago I was travelling to my work. I was looking forward to it because I had just been promoted and this was the first day I would move to my own office.

A taxi swerved and cut into my lane. To avoid colliding with him I swerved to the next lane but everything happened so fast I did not see the 14 wheeler truck on high speed overtaking me from that side. The next moment there was a lot of noise, the smell of burning rubber and then all went quiet. I must have lost my consciousness. Sometime later I heard 2

bystanders talking. One was telling the other one he thought I was dead or would be dead soon. He also mentioned a massive amount of blood I was losing and that they would have to stop the bleeding to give me a chance to live. I could see my leg twisted at an awkward angle and pinned under the dashboard. Strangely I felt no pain and no panic. At that moment I was already experiencing God`s loving-kindness and provision. I felt very weak and felt myself slipping away. I knew I was dying. While I was slipping away I became aware of a winding road in front of me. A bright light was shining at the end of the road. The more I watched the light the more I felt indescribable joy and peace. I knew I was in the presence of God. Then I became aware of two horrible creatures next to me. We were in the darkness although we could see the light. The more I became aware of the darkness the more my mood changed. I became anxious and worried. The creatures were wearing black clothes. So was I. I also became aware that the creatures were pulling me in the opposite direction of the light onto a slippery road going down. I became aware of the noise of people screaming for help. First, the noise was faint but as I came nearer the noise became deafening. I could also see the people. They were fighting with each other. They were cursing. Some were trying to pray, others were blaming others. A terrible stench rose out of the pit. I realised the persons were burning. Some tried to get out of the pit but it was impossible. That was a place I did not want to be in. I cried out to God to give me one chance, to save me from the hellish pit. I begged Him to have mercy on me. I remembered something I heard in church about Jesus being the Son of God. That He paid for our sins. So I cried out to Jesus to have mercy on me. I felt the grip of the demons letting go of me and gradually I started moving back. I regained consciousness and was aware that medical personnel were attending to me. Then I slipped into a coma again. I cannot remember anything more but when I opened my eyes again I was in the hospital and my long way to recovery started. I cherished my near-death experience and told nobody about it until one day Pastor visited me. I felt an urge to share this

experience with him. He listened to my story. I also told him that I would very much like to make certain about my everlasting destination as I was sure I was on my way to hell and that God was giving me a chance to get saved. He explained the way to salvation and helped me to give my life over to Jesus. I could not wait to tell my wife, Jenny, about what had happened. She also fell in love with Jesus and in private, at home; she also gave her life over to Him. We are still waiting for our 2 children to make their decisions and would very much like to be baptized as a family.”

There was a long silence in church as if the people wanted to hear more. They were also not sure about their way forward. Pastor sensed their unease and got up.

“Thank you, Joe. Are there any questions?”

Many people asked Joe questions. Somebody asked the same question as Pastor did when he heard Joe`s testimony for the first time. He wanted to know if Joe recognized any person when he had a peek into hell. Joe answered affirmatively but also declined to reveal their names. People started drifting out of church sensing the main event of the evening was over. However a core group did not want to leave. Pastor sensed their longing for more, for certainty about their everlasting future. This was what he was trained to do. How long ago did he make an altar call? This was the ideal time to do it again.

“I know some of you are hungry for certainty about your future. Some of you felt a stir of God`s love for you and would like to know more. Some of the elders will assist you. When you feel you are ready to give your life over to Jesus I am available to help you. If you feel guilty about things you did wrong in the past, know that it is the Holy Spirit speaking to you. He is making you sensitive to the message of the forgiveness of God because Jesus paid for your sins. All you have to do is to accept Jesus`s offer for your sins as full payment and trust in Him as the Son of God, raised from the dead, and that He is now

interceding for you at God's mercy throne. Please feel free to come forward if we can assist you."

Many people came forward. Some were ready to speak to Pastor while others needed more information. Some wanted to speak in private to Joe. All were willing to wait for their turn to get help.

Hours later the last one left. Joe was amazed. For many hours he was busy attending to people's needs but he was not tired. He felt rejuvenated, with the peace he last had when he experienced God's presence during his near-death experience. He knew God was with him and God was using him. This is what life was all about. For the rest of his life, he will cherish the memory of this evening. He would leave everything in God's hands to do with him according to His will.

Pastor was tired. A long time back he last experienced the joy of leading people to Christ. He almost forgot what it felt like to be a real servant to God and to do the main thing God called him to do. He went to Joe and took his hand in both hands. With a bowed head he and closed eye

"Father I love you. Thank you for what you did for Joe. Thank you for his willingness to be used by You. Thank you for opening my eyes to my calling to bring lost souls into Your kingdom. Thank you for everyone who accepted Your redemption of sins. Father I do not know the way forward. I put our lives into Your hands. Guide us and use us as You wish. Provide for us. We are your willing servants. Amen!"

He prayed this prayer not knowing what lay ahead. But he trusted God and he knew with God anything was possible. So a new chapter in his and Joe's lives was starting. It would be lives full of challenges but also lives full of wonderful moments of intimate closeness with God while He provided for their need. But for now, they have to return to their immediate responsibilities and see how God is going to use them.

Chapter 24

Preparing for the outreach

It all started on Monday morning at about 10 am. First, there was the call from the pastor of the neighbouring church. He had heard from a church member in his church about what happened at Pastor's church the night before. He was not familiar with this Joe who gave his testimony. So he wanted more information about him. Where did he study to become a pastor, did he had a master's degree in Theology and in which direction was he qualified? He also wanted to know about Joe's experience in congregational work. As Joe did not fulfil his expectations he was not interested and discarded Joe as a fly by night, someone he need not worry about as Joe was no threat to his position as leader of the church. Many of the pastors who phoned during the week went the same way with their enquiries about Joe. Always their church and their income from the church offerings were their main concern. Only once did a pastor enquired about souls being brought into Gods kingdom. When he heard what happened he was so happy he asked if Pastor and Joe would be willing to come to their church the next Sunday evening. His church was on the outskirts of the neighbouring town. It was small and their income from offerings was not much. He knew Pastor was not from his domination but that did not bother him as long as souls were brought into God's kingdom. As Pastor and Joe would have expenses to cover for the promised visit, the entire offering of the congregation the Sunday night service would be paid over to them. Usually, not more than 20 persons attended. If Pastor and Joe were willing to do it they would be most welcome. Pastor could again do the introductions and Joe would bring his testimony. It was settled but Pastor had to get Joe's consent. Later the day he confirmed after the discussion of the visit with Joe. Joe was so happy. He never thought God would use him twice and he could not wait for the next Sunday to come. It was a long week for Joe but he

did his preparation the same as for the previous sermon. He rested on Saturday in the presence of God and gave everything over to God to use him as God wanted to.

The service was scheduled for 7 pm. So Pastor and Joe decided to leave at 6 pm giving them enough time to get to the church. Pastor knew where the church was so it was not a problem to be on time. But Pastor and Joe had to learn an important lesson namely that they will always be dependent on God for even the small things, things that looked insignificant, things they believed they could do on their own, things like driving for 30 kilometres to a neighbouring town. Everything went well and according to plan. They could see the lights of the small town when it happened. Suddenly there was a loud bang and the car pulled to one side. Pastor knew immediately it was that one wheel bothering him lately, the one with the little threat. The tire burst and he knew he did not check the spare wheel lately. It was as he expected. The spare wheel was flat. All he could do was to phone the pastor of the small church.

“Pastor, we are on our way on the outskirts of town but we encountered a problem. We have a flat tyre and the spare is also flat. Is it possible to help us? Perhaps we can postpone our visit to next Sunday.”

The pastor of the little church was silent for a second or two.

“Impossible Pastor. Our church is filled to capacity. I do not know where all the people are coming from. There are big expectations here and we cannot postpone your visit. I have a mechanic in my church and I am sending him over to you. He can bring you to church and then he can see to your car. Don`'t move he is on his way. “

So it happened that Pastor and Joe were on time with 5 minutes to spare. It was a very relieved local pastor that welcomed them.

This was almost an identical service to the previous Sunday. Joe recognized some of the faces of the week before. The people were eager for the Word. Joe did the same as last

Sunday. The people were responding even more enthusiastically than the previous time. Many came forward when Pastor made the altar call. Something new happened this time. While the people were moving to the front soft singing started. Songs like: *Bring in the harvest, Jesus is mine, Do not postpone, and Now is the time*, rose from the people in the pews. It was evident that many people made their commitments to the Lord and was now encouraging others to do the same. The mechanic slipped the keys of the car into Pastor's hand and did not want any compensation. Later an offering was taken. It was the best offering ever for this small church. Pastor believed in tithing and was willing to give one-tenth of the offering back to the pastor of the small church. Joe felt prompted to intervene and asked Pastor if he would mind if they take a tenth of the offering and give the rest back to the pastor of the small church. Even so Joe and Pastor's part was much more than they expected. Later they learned how welcome the money was to the pastor. They later learned he had to take his wife to the city for an operation that was life-threatening and that the money was enough to tide them over.

Indescribable peace was their reward as they rode in silence back to their town.

The next day the response was even more enthusiastic than the previous Monday. This time 3 pastors were asking them to come to their churches. Pastor told them that he had to speak to Joe about the invitations but more important they had to ask God what His will was because His will was their command.

Chapter 25**The Bigger Plan.**

Joe and Pastor arranged a meeting in their favourite restaurant. Everything was ready for God to lead them. Pastor was speaking first:

“Joe, God is using you. You had a near-death experience. God is using what He disclosed to you to draw the people to hear His message of salvation. We must respect His plan and move as He wants us to move. It feels as if God is taking us on a road where we must follow without really knowing where and how He will be directing our ways. This will require trusting Him. This will be like Abraham when God asked him to leave everything behind and move to the Promised Land, without Abraham knowing where it was and how he will get there. We prayed a lot about God`s leading and now we must listen carefully to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. I think we must move in the direction God is blessing us. There are many people hungry to hear God`s message. We must not disappoint them. At present we have three requests from pastors asking us to visit their churches. I have my church to look after. You are not as strong as you used to be before your accident. From now on we will have to make some sacrifices to follow God. Did you receive any specific answer from God?”

“God told us in His word that we must let peace be the deciding factor in our lives. I have peace about what you are saying. If God wants to use us in this way we can hardly refuse just because we do not have much faith. Our work will be to accommodate the requests coming in and if humanly possible respond to them. The big test will come when *humanly possible* is changed to *God possible*. Then we will be walking in His strength and not our own. So I feel we must respond to all 3 invitations. Let us put it before God and see what His will is. I propose we make 3 occasions available to the three pastors. Let us allow God to arrange our program. Say we make one opportunity for Wednesday night, one for

Sunday morning and one for Sunday evening. Let us give the pastors the freedom to choose and let us trust God to arrange our program as He pleases.”

“I agree. I will contact the pastors and tell everyone that we have three openings and they must indicate which one will suit them best. They need not know that apart from themselves we have two other requests as well. Let`s trust God and see what He arranges. If you agree I will contact the pastors and then we must wait and see what happens.”

The two friends decided to wait till Wednesday morning before they make final arrangements. They will meet again in their favourite coffee shop. In the meantime, they will wait on God for an answer.

Soon Wednesday arrived. Joe was early and waited for Pastor to come. He saw Pastor looked confused as if he did not know where to start. He had hardly sat down before he said:

“Joe, God is at work. It is hard to believe but the three pastors chose individually separate times for our visits. There was no problem. One chose tonight, another chose Sunday morning and the other one chose Sunday Evening. No problem. To me, this is a clear indication that we must go to all three congregations as the pastors requested.”

Joe was elated. God is dependable. Most of all they now knew they were in God`s will. They were so thankful they bowed their heads and thanked God for His loving-kindness and the fact that He led them to trust Him to do His will.

While they had the opportunity they decided to ask God for further guidance as far as arrangements and finances were concerned. Pastor had to be compensated for the use of his car. Other administrative activities like the use of the telephone and work his secretary was doing had also to be covered. Joe was on a shoestring budget and could not add financially. They decided to let God provide for them. They agreed that they would not charge a fixed fee but leave it to the pastor and congregation to give them as God leads them. From what they received they would cover their expenses and if there was any money left one half would be

dedicated to God. They would ask God how He wanted them to spend it. The other half would be divided between Joe and Pastor. This arrangement could anytime be changed. It was so nice to be so dependent on God. Again they felt God's peace and they knew they were acting according to His will.

Another arrangement had to be considered. At present Pastor was giving a short service, then Joe would tell about his near-death experience and afterwards, Pastor would make an altar call which lasted till the end of the meeting. As was the case with the apostles in Jesus' time Pastor and Joe had to consider splitting if the appointments with churches were to increase. Many of the altar calls were handled by Pastor, Joe and helpers from the senior members of the church. As such Joe would be able to handle the testimony and the altar call. Perhaps Joe could lead with a short message about the way to Jesus in which case he would be able to handle a visit to a church on his own. Pastor's church was growing fast after Joe gave his testimony and he was very busy seeing about everything. It might be in the future necessary to focus his attention on his local church. Some of the elders already were considering expanding the church building to cater for more people. God was blessing the church. Pastor and Joe decided that their future were in God's hands to direct them as He chose. For now, they would concentrate on handling the three appointments scheduled for this week. As a practice run Joe would slip in a short message with his testimony. Pastor would be at hand if necessary or if difficult questions were to be asked. They would try it on Sunday evening.

Joe had to make decisions about his work. He was getting stronger and soon he had to go back to his old occupation. He knew he could never go back to a life without giving a testimony about what God did for him. He also had to consider his family. They needed him, especially his son who was getting into a difficult developmental stage and soon would have to decide about professional work training. His wife was very happy in her job, working from

home for the bank and handling administrative aspects of Pastor's church. His boss at his work was phoning twice a week about Joe`s progress. They wanted to know if Joe would be coming back. If not, they wanted to make an appointment in his place. The workload was too much for the skeleton staff remaining after Joe`s accident. Joe went to God. He was in God`s service and wanted to do what God willed for his life. One day he was sitting in the garden. It was quiet and peaceful and he was enjoying discovering the wonders of God`s creation. In his inner being, he could detect a voice speaking to him. He knew God was busy with him and he felt a Presence so strong he knew it was the presence of God. He became aware that he felt a strong urge to work exclusively for God. Immediately he thought about his responsibilities toward his family and how he would be able to provide for them. He slipped onto his knees and started speaking to God.

“God, You saved me from certain death. You gave me a testimony. Every time You inspired me when I had to give a testimony. You wonderfully used me and Pastor by bringing souls into your kingdom. I am not certain what to do next. You know about our financial situation and my inability to provide for my family`s needs. I trust You, Lord. You always provided for us. I know You will provide for us if I must work on a full-time basis for You. I must be certain Lord that it is Your will. Forgive me for my weak faith but please give me some sign if it is your will that I must quit my job and lose my earthly securities. You, o Lord, is so much more than what this earthly life can give me. I still remember the wonderful peace and joy I experienced when I came into Your presence when I was dying. You are more worth to me than anything on this earth. Please God show me your will.”

Now he had to prepare his short message for Sunday afternoon when he would do everything as if Pastor would not be present. Why is God so good? He did nothing to deserve this wonderful provision, blessing and guidance.

Chapter 26**Joe and God**

Wednesday midweek service went very well. As expected there were not so many people present but it was such a blessed gathering. Even the offering he and Pastor received was generous. They did as they discussed previously not charging a specific amount of money but leaving it to the church to decide what they wanted to give them. They were so thankful for God's provision. The pastor of the church asked if they could come back the next Wednesday as certainly many more would like to attend. They agreed to the request. Suddenly Joe realised that if he and Pastor split he would not be able to go on with God's work as he had no transport. If God wanted him to work for Him he knew God would provide transport for him.

God knew that this child of Him needed some definite confirmation of his calling. So it was no wonder that Joe received the following letter:

From: Master Scrapyard

Dear Sir, we bought a car for scrap 5 months ago. According to the papers, this car belonged to you. We intended to use it for spare parts but something prompted one of my mechanics to look into the possibility of restoring it. We did the best we could and it is running again. As we did not have any expenses and used spare parts already available and the mechanic was doing his job in the off-time we are glad to make the car available to you for free. You are welcome to collect it whenever the time is convenient for you.

.....

Signed Manager

Joe was speechless. The reality of God and His active involvement in His work gave Joe new hope for the future. He now knew that God was in control, that he was in God`s will and that he may go forward on the path God was taking him.

He went to his quiet place, the closet, where nobody could disturb him. He went on his knees and rested in God`s presence. What could he say? He could only enjoy the presence and provision of his Father. Later he thanked God and made a new commitment to Him to serve Him, to honour Him, to trust Him and to be available to Him in whatever way He may choose.

Now that Joe had transport again he knew he had to use his time to the best of his ability. First, he had to adapt his testimony if he would be going out on his own. He learned from Pastor how to lead people to Jesus and he could incorporate that part into his testimony. His testimony could now also include many of the wonderful provisions God was providing for him and his family. He thought about all the wonders God was doing. He could tell them about the flat tyre when they visited the neighbouring town and how God arranged everything so that they could be on time. He could also tell about the expansion of the service and how more and more congregations were enquiring and booking their attendances. He had now this wonderful testimony of how God provided transport for him. Of utmost importance was God`s financial provision for him and his family. He still was not sure if God was calling him to work full time for Him. He knew God will show him His will in this regard. He just had to wait.

Pastor`s congregation was growing and he was becoming very busy. During one of the coffee-drinking sessions, Joe saw Pastor had something on his heart but was not sure how to approach the issue. They were friends and he gave Pastor the opening to speak his mind.

“What`s bothering you, my friend?”

Pastor was quiet for a while.

“Thank you, Joe. You taught me a lot about trusting God and going back to the essentials of the work of a pastor. Through you, my relation to God again came to life. I learned again to trust Him. He is a living-loving God, interested in his children, guiding them, using them and blessing them. It is such a privilege to work with you. I always feel safe with you, knowing God is in charge and He is directing our footsteps. But, Joe, I find it hard to keep up with the work. With the expansion of the congregation, the new following increasing every day and the new pastor to help, I am afraid I won't be able to go with you in future to other congregations. Will you excuse me?”

Joe went to God with all his decisions. This was not a time to make an exception. He asked Pastor if they may pray about it now. Pastor was eager as he also trusted God's leading. So Joe led them in prayer.

“God, you are faithful. You direct our steps. Our lives are in Your hands. Thank You for guiding us and helping us. Thank you for this wonderful friend You gave me. You know how I will miss him going to churches without him but I know he will be interceding for me and as such he will be with me. Thank you that I am never alone, that You are always with me. Please bless us in the different directions You are taking us. Please, never leave us alone because we can do nothing without Your help, guidance and blessing. We wish to stay in Your will. You are in charge and it seems to us as if You are taking us on different paths. We thank you and give over to You, Holy Spirit, to guide and to lead us and to bear fruit to Your glory, to save souls and to do Your will. Please let I and Pastor remain friends. Bless and keep him. I put him in Your hands. Thanks for this season we had together. Amen!”

Joe knew it was not him speaking but the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The decision had been made for them and it was the peace going with the decision that convinced Joe they were in God's will.

Pastor wanted to stay in touch with Joe and what Joe would be doing. He suggested that Joe`s wife remain on their staff helping him with the administration. She was doing excellent work and they would give her a raise. In future, she will direct all invitations of congregations to Joe to organise and decide which ones to attend. They arranged to attend the coffee sessions once a month on the first Thursday of every month at 10 am. The two friends departed with wet eyes.

So now Joe was on his own but not really alone. He and God were one as God was living inside him through His Holy Spirit. If Joe would allow the Holy Spirit to guide and to lead, to answer and to provide what he needed he would never be alone.

Joe felt in his heart a relief. He now knew he would not be going back to his old job. It was a bit scary knowing that his salary would not be forthcoming in future. The salary would not be his security but God and God`s provision. He could not keep his boss at work in the dark and the next day Joe resigned. So he never enjoyed his private office but he did enjoy his promotion. Now he was promoted to a position far more important than anything the worldly work could provide. Joe did not know it but God was giving him a crash course in trusting Him. Many times in the future Joe would be tested in the same way to grow his trust in God. Every time he would have to go through tribulation. God warned in His Word that if you want to follow Him you must discard yourself, take up your cross and follow Him. He was certain God was in control and God was doing His will. This faith will be tested and if he passed the test he would be better equipped to do what God wanted him to do.

Chapter 27**Testing Time**

Everything was in place. Joe resigned from his job, his car was going well, his wife was waiting for appointments, and his sermon was prepared. He was ready to go. But no appointments came in. No pastor phoned. Even the request for the Wednesday visit was cancelled by the pastor. This was testing time, waiting time, trusting time, and waiting on God according to His timing. This was not easy. Joe was expecting something like this but did not expect it to be so hard. It was as if God wanted Joe for Himself before sharing him with other persons. Joe spent all his time in God's presence. He went to the Bible passages where Jesus was speaking to His disciples teaching them about various things they needed to know. The Sermon on the Mount was very encouraging to him. He learned that there was a special blessing for those people who did not depend on themselves but on God. This was his opportunity to learn about his dependence on God. Now it was not what he wanted, what he thought was good for people to know, how his program must be organized, what he will include in his testimony, where he would like to go. No, now it was what God wanted, what His will was, where He wanted Joe to go, how He wanted to use Joe. Joe relaxed in the Lord. He trusted God for everything. He knew God was in control and like in the case of Lazarus even 4 days after Lazarus's death Jesus was not too late. Total trust in God and in His timing for everything was now important.

Almost a month had passed since He and Pastor parted ways. He enjoyed his time with God and he learned a lot from the Bible. Especially he learned to trust God when things were not going to human expectations. Money was becoming a problem. He received his pension pay-out after he resigned but was reluctant to dig into it. Later he discovered this ugly thing in his reasoning. He was keeping the money as security for times that God is not going to supply in his needs. God wanted him to trust Him fully and not to depend on his nest

egg. He confessed this sin before God and decided to distribute the pension amongst needy people as God brought them to his attention. Strangely after his decision, dependent people crossed his path. An old lady phoned him and asked for financial aid as her only source of income from her son stopped when he passed away in a motor accident. He asked her what she needed. It was basic foodstuff. When his wife got home he shared his conviction about giving away the pension money to depend wholly on God for His provision. He asked her to go with him to buy the foodstuff for the old lady. This was the right thing to do to get her involved and to help him with the buying of groceries which she was much more familiar with. They enjoyed giving their security away. Joe had peace in trusting God to provide for him and his family. They kept up providing for people in need. That was relatively easy as long they had the pension money to depend on. Then the real test came. It was the end of the month. They only had Jenny`s income to take them into the month. The mortgage payment on the house was due. They were low in groceries, the year-end was approaching and the school was asking for fees for the next year. They just did not have enough money. Now they were dependent on God for everything. The children learned a lot about their new lifestyle and learned to pray and trust God for providing. This was a steep learning curve in trusting God. God was testing them and it became especially hard when the bank contacted Joe and asked about the monthly instalment on the house.

Where else could Joe go? He went on his knees. He placed everything into God`s hands.

“Father, all we have left is the house with a big mortgage on it. Do you want us to lose the house? You, Jesus, said when you were on this earth that you did not have a place to rest your head. Many a night you spent on the mountain without rest. You were hungry and even went without food for 40 days. We are no better than You. If You want us to suffer for Your sake we want to be obedient. Show us what you want us to do. You paid a very high

price to save us from everlasting damnation. We belong to You, Lord. We trust You. Do with us as You please. Amen!”

God tested Abraham to see if he was willing to give up his most precious possession namely his son Isaac for whom he waited many years. Then He asked Abraham to offer his son, to kill him, to cut his throat to see if he cherished God above his son. Abraham was willing and just before his hand with the knife came down to cut Isaac`s throat God stopped him and said:

“Now I know you love me above anything else. I am going to bless you.”

Almost the same thing happened to Joe. When he stood the test and God saw his willingness to give everything he valued as security into God`s hand, God stopped the testing and decided to bless him. The main blessing was his turn of heart. He no more trusted in earthly possessions. He no more longed for enough money. He was blessed with the knowledge he owned nothing in this life. His life was secure with God in heaven. All in this life was meant to use and to enjoy. He could take nothing with him when he stepped over into eternity. This knowledge set him free. He knew God would provide what he needed and that he could trust God. He did not know how God was going to do it but he knew that God was going to do it and that was enough for him. For the rest of his life, he would live in complete dependence on God. He needed not to worry about earthly possessions anymore. Peace came over him. His life was in God`s hands and he could now concentrate on doing God`s will without worrying about how God would provide for his family.

God honoured and blessed Joe for his choice and Joe would never go hungry or without clothing. He would, through the years to come, be disciplined and reminded about his dependency but he would never be tested in the way he was tested now.

The next day 2 things happened. The bank manager phoned him and said the bank made a calculation mistake and that he paid too much interest in the past. They were going to

release him from payments on his mortgage for the next 12 months. The other thing was the 2 pastors who phoned Jenny and made requests for Joe to visit them with his testimony. What was nice about these requests was that both were scheduled for the main service event on a Sunday. He had to make arrangements for two different Sundays. What he did not know was that in the week to come another 4 pastors would request visits. Joe made it a God`s appointment and each time a request came in he first consulted with God about whether he should go and when he must go. These meetings were so blessed. It was no problem to give a full-length service. In fact with the altar call and help with people afterwards, time usually was a problem and many times he had to go back later to cater for all the requests for help. Joe was falling into a nice rhythm but he never got complacent. Always it was a wonderful privilege to do God`s work. Never did he get bored with his testimony. It was always new because it was always a new experience to welcome new brothers and sisters into God`s kingdom. He and Pastor kept their appointment. Pastor`s church still expanded as Joe`s engagements grew. He now had to make appointments a month in advance. God blessed Joe. He still kept 25 per cent of the offering for himself and distributed the rest as God guided him. With the many engagements he had to buy a more reliable car but it was no problem because God supplied in an ample way for his needs. God was preparing Joe for a new phase of his life. He stood the test, he gained experience, he was as humble as he used to be and he stuck to this winning recipe of total dependence on God and trust in Him alone.

Chapter 28**Going Bigger**

Joe was now 45. His children completed their tertiary training and were settling into their jobs. Jenny was still working at Pastor's church and everything was going well. She stopped working for the bank. Then one day the call came. The caller wanted to speak to Joe privately. It was Pastor and from his tone of voice, it was evident this was a serious matter. They arranged for an out of normal coffee appointment.

Pastor quickly came to the point.

“Joe, we have been friends for a long time. I trust you and, I need a reliable person to go into a business venture with me. I do not think we are going to make a lot of money but we will be working in God`s garden and will be supporting people in their spiritual growth. Do not worry you will still be able to carry on with the work God called you to do.”

Now Joe was interested. Of late it felt to him as if he was moving onto a plateau. His work was still rewarding and his appointments still grew. But if God had something for him to do he will look into it. He asked Pastor to do some more explaining.

“Joe some of my congregation asked me to arrange a trip for them to Israel. I want you to come with me so that we can explore Israel and broaden our knowledge to see if we will be able to guide them on a tour. You will be my guest and I will pay for your expenses. I think a two-week tour and two weeks exploring will give us a good idea of what to expect. I know you have appointments you do not want to cancel. So let us arrange for our trip starting in a month`s time. This will give us enough time to make all the arrangements. I think we must use the first 10 days to go on a guided tour to see how it is done. The rest of the time we can practice on our own and visit places we would like to know more about. I think we must follow the traditional touring routes before we attempt our own tour program. A month will give us enough time to familiarize ourselves with Israel and what we want to show pilgrims

to support their faith. Speak to Jenny about my proposition and ask God to guide you. If you find you are not spiritually in agreement with my proposal I will try and find someone else.”

Joe needed time with God and Jenny to decide on this proposal. He went to God and asked for some form of confirmation if it was God`s will for him to participate in this new venture.

In the meantime, he would discuss it with Jenny and see if she foresees obstacles to this plan. The children were settled and he need not worry about them. He fasted a day and sought God`s input. He was watching for some confirmation from God. But first, he would speak to Jenny. It would not harm him if he familiarized himself with Israel and what tourist attractions they might include in their tour. He decided he would ask God to show him what He wanted people to experience when they visit Israel.

When Jenny came home she could see that Joe wanted to tell her something. After eating they started talking. Joe told her all about Pastor`s proposition. She was a calm woman and wished to pray about it. Joe got a map of Israel on the internet and asked her if she could choose some places in Israel she would like to see. She immediately knew she would like to walk where Jesus walked wherever that may be. She would have to study the New Testament to see where he spent most of his time. Just to see the Holy Land and to travel around would be enough for her. Suddenly she realised she would very much like to visit Israel.

After he heard his wife`s commentary Joe realised a visit to Israel could be a massive spiritual experience. Is this the way God is answering his request for confirmation to go with the proposition of Pastor? He decided to wait on God and in the meantime further his knowledge of the Holy Land.

He followed his wife`s lead in concentrating on Jesus as the main guide on what to include in a tour of Israel. She covered most of what he also would like to include. Israel was so central to the Bible. Almost any part of Israel could be interesting to the Bible scholar. He

discovered that the Old Testament had also many connections to Israel. The whole of Israel was promised to Abraham by a covenant made by God. The whole history of Sodom and Gomorrah was linked to the history of Abraham and Lot. Historical places linked to Eli and other prophets could still today be visited like Mount Carmel. The city of David just south of the hill on which the Temple was built could be visited. The road to Jericho associated with the parable told by Jesus could be travelled. The river Jordan in which Jesus was baptized was still flowing in the rift valley. Armageddon, the place where the last battle between the evil forces seeking Israel's destruction and God's intervention on behalf of Israel, could be visited. There were so many interesting places to visit that it would be hard to exclude some. One should visit Israel many times to get a clear understanding of what happened here. Apart from the historical biblical importance of Israel, it was also a modern wonder of technology. According to Revelation, the Jews will return to Israel from all the places on the earth they were dispersed to after 70 AD when the temple was demolished. That started in May 1948 when Israel again was recognized as an independent state. The desert started to bloom as it was predicted thousands of years ago. Israel was so blessed that it at present produced 8 times more food than local population needed. Their technologies were exported to many countries. They made water by extracting water from the air. They had more Nobel winners per capita than any other country on earth. For any person no matter what their interests may be, Israel was a treasure house. The more Joe read about Israel the more it became alive to him. He found himself thinking more and more about Israel and he found in himself a longing to see this wonder created by God. The centrality of Israel as a country in the predictions of the end times interested him now more than ever. Just by reading about this land his faith in God increased. He could only imagine what the effect would be if you had the opportunity to visit it and to experience the land handpicked by God for His people.

God works in mysterious ways. Joe learned in the past to trust God and to wait on God. This time God did not confirm His wish for Joe by a single incident. He used the whole virtual experience of getting to know Israel better by the study of the relevant information to convince Joe. God blessed Joe with the near-death experience and used the experience as a basis for Joe`s testimony. It now felt to Joe as if God was using his experience of Israel through his study of Israel to motivate him to go. So it was not a surprise to Joe when he woke one morning and knew he must go to Israel. He phoned Pastor and arranged for a meeting. On meeting with Pastor he could only say:

“Pastor when are we leaving? I can`t wait to go to Israel.”

Pastor only smiled knowingly.

“Soon my friend, soon.”

Chapter 29

Israel

Many preparations had to be done. Time flew and soon they had to board the El-Al flight to Israel. It was a new experience for Joe. He enjoyed the new experience and was relaxed. He knew he was in his Father`s will and Pastor would guide them through all the protocols at the airport. To a certain extent, he felt like a tourist and it gave him an indication of what his guests in future would experience. Such was his life since he accepted Christ as his Saviour. He always had a Guide, a Know All, and Security, Someone who had planned his life trip and was looking after everything to make it as good and purposeful as possible for His pilgrim on his way to heaven. Soon when Jesus comes back on the clouds for the rapture of his children he would fly to Him in the clouds. The clouds beneath the aeroplane reminded him of the soon to come rapture. He would be meeting with the Bridegroom. He was part of the bride of Christ. Now he was on his way to the past history of Israel. It would equip him to introduce new pilgrims to locations the Son of God Himself visited when He was going around in Israel. He was seated next to the window and had a beautiful view, mainly of clouds but occasionally he got a glimpse of the sea. It was a long flight and after the initial excitement subsided Joe went to sleep. It was when they were nearing the shores of Israel he heard the voice of the captain.

“In 5 minutes you will see the outline of the Promised Land. We will soon land at Ben Gurion airport. I hope you enjoyed your flight.”

Joe felt a tightening of his stomach. For a moment he remembered how dangerous an aeroplane landing can be but then he relaxed in the security of the safeness of God`s will. The landing was as smooth as only a professional pilot could do it. When Joe`s feet touched the ground he felt a curious sensation. This was the Holy Land, the real thing, not the virtual. He thought about the many Jews returning from all over the world to their promised land after a

2000 year exile from over the whole world. He now understood why some of them bent down and kissed the ground when they set foot on the ground for the first time. Why was God so good to him? What did he do to be honoured in such a way? He felt immense gratitude and knew that this experience would always be new to him, no matter how many times he would experience it in future.

They already met other members of the tour group and soon they gathered with the tour leader. As they only had ten days every hour of their visit was carefully planned. They were a small group and it promised to be intimate and enjoyable. Joe and Pastor took note of everything they would have to do in future when they bring their own group of pilgrims to Israel. One thing was sure; the success of the tour depended much on how well it was planned. They studied their itinerary well in advance and were familiar with what they would be shown.

The tour guides were excellent and they made sure how and when they could be contacted in future. It was a bit scary to think that next time they would be the leaders and the other people would be looking to them for guidance.

On arrival at Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv, they were met by their tour-leader and immediately embarked on their journey through the Sharon valleys to the Plain of Caesarea, the city of Herod. From here they went to the famous battle field of Armageddon. Pictures seen in the past suddenly became alive and with it emotions of wonder, amazement and gratitude.

At Nazareth, there were so much to see like the Mary`s Fountain and the Church of the Annunciation. From there they went to Mount Tabor and then to Galilee where they stayed over in Kibbutz Inn Beit Keshet for dinner and overnight. Everywhere they went they felt the presence of Jesus.

The next day after breakfast they moved on to Capernaum, the place of the prophet Nahum. From there they proceeded to the Mount of the Beatitudes, the site of the Sermon on the Mount, then to the Jordan valley, to Jericho and the Dead Sea, where they enjoyed a relaxing float on the Dead Sea.

The next day they moved to Masada and from there to Bethlehem where churches marked historical places associated with the birth of Christ. They stayed over in the Paradise Hotel in Bethlehem for two nights. Joe enjoyed the vision of the stars at night and with wonder thought about that night Jesus was born.

The next day they drove to the Mount of Olives with its panoramic views of the old city of Jerusalem. They went to the Yad Vashem museum, the memorial to the six million Jew victims of the Holocaust. There were so much to see in Jerusalem like the Via Dolorosa, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Western Wall and the Temple Mount, the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa mosque and the Garden Tomb. They could hardly keep up with all the wonderful experiences they enjoyed.

Their last day of the organised tour was spent in Tel Aviv and Joppa before they moved back to their hotel.

Before Pastor and Joe set out on their own for the rest of their stay they decided to take the morning off, relax at the hotel and decide what more they think would be important for their guests to see. Up to this point, it was an exhaustive tour with no time to relax and to become quiet. They decided to give their tourist a break after the thirteenth 5 days to do on one day what they would like. There remained a few days to fill. Joe and Pastor decided to be very honest about their choices and try to accommodate the other partners' wishes.

Joe would like to go out on one of the boats on the Sea of Galilee. With a Christian preacher on board, it would be a wonderful opportunity for the pilgrims to come into close contact with God. He would also like to spend some more time in the Garden of the Mount of

Olives. This ought to be a private opportunity to spend quiet time with Jesus without interruptions and to let the Holy Spirit be your only Guide. He would also like to go to the towns around the Sea of Galilee to watch the sheep and the shepherds while the shepherds were leading their flocks. In Short, he would like to spend more time in the northern part of Israel where Jesus spent most of His time.

Pastor liked the central and southern parts of Israel. Here most of the Old Testament could be recognised. He would like to spend more time in Jerusalem and see the developments of the new Israel where most of the advanced agricultural methods were developed and exported to other countries.

They decided to make provision for the wishes of both.

The two friends enjoyed the first taste of their planning. It was nice to know they were in Gods will and by letting Him have the last say in how they were to conduct their itinerary. They were blessed and arrived the day before their departure in Tel Aviv so that they could easily get to the airport. They made a lot of notes and created as many as possible contacts which they could use when they were to put their tour together. They had many notebooks covered and a lot of organising lay ahead when they got home.

They were sure they wanted to continue with this idea of Pastor arranging tours to Israel.

They arrived home weary but happy and could not stop talking about their experiences of the last month. God was fulfilling His plan.

For two weeks the two friends would work through their notes and each would be planning a provisional touring plan. Then they would get together and compare notes to see how they could accommodate it. The final plan rested with God. They would submit it to Him and wait for His final say.

Chapter 30

The Dream

Joe now had many testimonies. Many times God came to his help. God let him experience a wonderful life by providing for all his needs. The anchor testimony remained his near-death experience. Many people came to God through this testimony. God also used him to do miracle healings. This was not the rule but occasionally he had the urge to pray for a sick person and when he followed the urge miraculous healings occurred. God blessed Joe with another thing; he had a dream. It was as if God was preparing him for this new phase of his life where he had to take people to Israel. This dream came to him on numerous occasions. As with the near-death experience, he first kept it to himself. He decided to share it with Jenny and see if she could make sense of it. When the time was right and they were relaxing in each other's company he confided in her.

“Jenny, I want to tell you about a dream I had. I am not sure what to make of it. Will you please give me your thoughts about it? I dreamed it a few times and am sure God wants to tell me something through this dream:

‘I was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. A friendly person walked up to me and asked if I would join him on a boat trip on the sea. I said I would very much like to do it. We arranged for the next day and I would meet him at the harbour at 10 am. We were the only 2 persons on the boat. He was a good sailor and soon we were in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. The see was calm around us. He took the sails down and we drifted. For some time he said nothing and we could enjoy the gentle rocking of the boat while we enjoyed the far-away scenery of the surrounding land. In a friendly voice, he asked:

“Do you have any idea why I brought you on this trip?”

I said: no.”

I felt such a love for this man. It was almost indescribable. He then said:

“I have known you a long time. I watched what you were doing. I like your sincerity and the fact that you were so humble. I wanted to have you for my own company for a while before you proceed further on your way. Please keep up the good work you are doing. I am going to teach you how to steer this boat. Do not be afraid. I will correct any mistake you make.”

I enjoyed his company and fully trusted him to guide me. So I set the sail as I saw him do it. A light breeze started to blow and the boat gathered speed. He showed me how to use the wind and steer the boat slightly against the wind to make the best use of the wind to increase the speed of the boat. He also showed me how to tack to get to the point I want to proceed to even if the wind was not blowing directly into that direction. We came near to the shore. He helped me to fasten the boat. Then he said:

“Goodbye. “

That was the last I saw of him. Later I discovered the meaning of the word “Goodbye.” It is the short version of *God be with thee*. Although he was gone I could still feel his lingering presence. I so wished I could see him again. Then the dream stopped.”

Jenny was confused. She did not have an idea what the dream was about. She wanted to pray about it and ask God to give her guidance. Joe had already asked God for an explanation and he was waiting on God.

The next day they were again relaxing in each other’s company while they were having their tea. Jenny wanted to share something about the dream with him.

“Joe, it seems to me as if the feeling you had towards the person you met indicated that he was known to you even if you had not seen him eye to eye previously. Your longing to see him again and the love you felt towards him indicated your trusting attitude. I think that Person could only be God. The sea is usually a Bible- symbol for the people of the world. It may be that God was meeting you in your dream alongside the Sea referring back to

your involvement with people after your near-death experience. He took you out to sea with Him, amongst people. There you brought them your testimony. He also took you deeper into the sea and he expanded your ministry. He wanted you for Himself and allowed you to rest with him in the quiet amidst the people, to be more aware of Him while you were working amongst people. He showed you how to launch His boat. His boat is the Good News about Him. Perhaps He is going to give you more responsibilities and want you to make more decisions on your own. You will always have to wait for His wind to blow while waiting on His wind, the direction of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes you won't be able to take the direct route to where you want to go with His people and you would have to tack, to take a non-direct route to get to your destination with His people. You will need practice and wisdom to do it but you must always remember He is with you. One day He will guide you back to the shore and your work would be finished. You will arrive at your everlasting destination and He will be waiting for you. You will be transferred from working amidst people to walking with Him.”

Joe was silent for a long time. He felt a peace and contentment that could only come from God. He felt the wonderful presence of God and knew this message through his wife was from God. He was so strengthened by the thought that God enriched his testimony with this dream revelation. He also became convinced that Jenny was part of his mission and that she would be in the boat with him on his journeys into the unknown. What a blessing to have a wife like Jenny. He cherished her even more now that God used her to explain his dream and to confirm His plans for him. What did he do to be so blessed by God? What did he do to deserve a wife like Jenny? Nothing, nothing! It all was and always will be God`s grace, His unmerited favour. Tears rolled over his cheeks. All he could say was:

“Thank you, Jenny. This message was from God. Thank you for your willingness to convey His message to me. I know you are part of me and my work. From now on we will be

going together to places as He directs us. I will speak to Pastor. If he agrees about your going with me, we will know this is from God and He will provide for us as He did in the past.”

Almost immediately afterwards the telephone rang. It was Pastor and he wanted to speak urgently to Joe. They arranged for a meeting at their usual place for the next day.

Joe could see it was a heavy and severe message Pastor had for him. Pastor did not smile and although he was his old loving self he was so absorbed by what he had to tell Joe that the conversation became serious from the very start.

“Joe, my friend, I have news for you. Everything changed. Our ways are going to part. I got a calling from a big city congregation. God was so clear about the calling I had no other option than to accept it. It is urgent and we will be leaving in a month. I dragged you into this Israel thing. I still know it was from God but I will not be part of it anymore. I am sure God is going to provide someone who can go with you and support you.”

Joe`s reaction startled Pastor.

“Thank you, Jesus!”

It was only after Joe explained the dream, Jenny`s interpretation of the dream and Joe`s certainty of the calling of Jenny to accompany him on the tours that Pastor understood the extraordinary reaction of Joe. It was amazing to the two friends how God was directing their ways. Joe now understood why the dream was so urgent and frequent. God had and always will have a plan. He wanted to encourage Joe for an expansion of his calling but He had to draw Joe gradually into it according to the faith he had. Joe was sad about the loss of his friend. He knew a new phase was starting in Pastor's life and his role in it will be minimal. It was so nice to have known Pastor through all these years as a friend but also as a spiritual mentor and a guide, and many a time as the presence of God. They agreed not to forget one another in their prayers. They knew they would never be separated because God`s Holy Spirit

was residing in them binding them together during this life and for all eternity being part of the bride of Christ.

They decided to have one last coffee session and during the last week they will have their last meal with their wives accompanying them. Jenny would also resign at the end of the month so she could accompany her husband on his further ventures. The first 10 persons to go with Joe to Israel already paid their deposits and the tour was scheduled two months after Pastor will be leaving. Joe would be the sole tour leader.

Chapter 31

A New Phase

At first, it felt scary. For the first time, Joe discovered how much security he derived from his friend's presence. He had to rely completely on God and how God wanted him to proceed. He discussed more and more issues with his wife knowing that she went with their problems to God. So it was a double dependency upon the guidance of God in all their decision-making. Joe kept to his appointments as this was their financial lifeline. They were very busy attending at least 3 outreaches every week.

They were also promoting their new branch, the touring of Israel. The first tour was already fully booked. They thought it best to start small with a group of 15 people. They were taking 13 pilgrims to Israel. They previously gave a provisional program to the would-be pilgrims after they paid their deposit. It would be a 10-day tour. They would travel together on the same flight. No provision was made for extending the tour. They would later look into such a possibility. The time flew past and soon it was only a week before their departure. Joe went through all the arrangements and knew the tour program by heart. He even knew the names of the guides and was corresponding with them. The tour made provision for short sub-tours to places of interest the tourists would like to visit. They decided to use Christian tour guides. Joe decided to follow his inclination to go for Biblical verified places and not so much for places of interest in modern Israel. As planned after their first visit he stuck to the idea of a break in the tour after the first 5 days to give the tour members a chance to relax and visit whatever they would like. He and Jenny prayed a lot about every aspect of the tour. They placed everything they could think of in God's hands and sought His direction. The foundation of the tour was well-founded and God blessed Joe and Jenny. They were operating in His will and He guided them.

Soon it was time to board the aeroplane. The guests all arrived on time and they had a small meeting where he familiarized them with rules to make it a nice tour for everyone. Joe remembered from the first tour`s hick-ups they encountered and tried to avoid making the mistakes of their previous tour guides.

Some of the pilgrims were not dedicated to rules but soon discovered the annoyance they were causing others when they were late or did not adhere to rules. After the first day, all settled nicely into the new rhythm of touring as a big family.

Jenny was very helpful. She handled her tour duties efficiently and was like a mother to most of the woman on the tour. They could relate to her and share their problems and difficulties with her. Joe had a double role to play. He was the tour manager, the leader and also the spiritual guide. Regularly once a day at places he identified earlier, he would give a short message and share some of his testimonies with the pilgrims. It was a Christian tour and the places they visited were all building faith and reminded them of Jesus and what He did for them and how He suffered for them. The daily guides were well chosen and the logistics functioned. Above all, the blessing of God was on the tour. People were experiencing His presence; they were in awe of what He did for their salvation. People spoke about Jesus, they spoke to Jesus and they experienced His presence in many places.

Many religions had an interest in religious sited in Israel.. Because of the huge influx of tourists, places sometimes got crowded. People got frustrated for not hearing the tour guide and the noise other groups were creating. The joy of being in the Holy Land and walking on Jesus`s footsteps were such a blessing to Joe`s group they seldom felt irritated by other groups. The only problem was the heat and Joe decided to concentrate on organizing his tours to coincide with the more moderate temperatures of the year.

Joe`s favourite part of the tour was their outing on a boat on the sea of Galilee. He gave a short sermon and then shared his dream and Jenny`s explanation of the dream with

them. He could see why God gave the dream to him when he saw the people`s reaction to the dream. Afterwards, some people told him this was the crucial moment when they finally gave over to the Son of God. The joy of seeing how God was at work convinced Joe and Jenny this was what they would like to do for God`s kingdom. They always enjoyed bringing souls into God`s kingdom but this was unique. It felt as if they were also baptized into God`s presence every time a new convert was born into God`s kingdom.

All too soon it was their last night in Israel. They had a small meeting at the hotel in Tel Aviv and Joe thanked God on behalf of all present for this wonderful opportunity they had. He also told them that he and Jenny would travel in future regularly to Israel with a small group like this as long as God provided them with tourists and as long as he and Jenny had the strength. They were welcome to come along for a second or third visit and were welcome to bring their friends and family with them.

There were many tears and some pledged to come again. The tour group would become the best advertisement for future pilgrims.

When they arrived home the first to call was Pastor. He congratulated Joe and Jenny on the excellent way they led the tour group. To his friend, Joe could only in all sincerity admit that all was God`s blessing. He must get all the honour.

So the icebreaker was over. There would be many more tours in the years to follow. They even organised special tours for second and third-time comers. They did it the same way in full dependence on God, always seeking His will, always giving Him the honour for saving souls and helping and blessing them.

God never disappointed them.

Joe and Jenny were not so young anymore. They knew that soon they would have to downscale but it was impossible to downscale on God`s work. They would have to start looking for another way. They would seek God`s will and trust him to show them the way forward.

Chapter 32

The work continues

God is trustworthy. He knows what our needs are even before we ask Him. In Joe and Jenny's case, he gradually brought people on their way that could assist them with the tour business. A young couple who loved the Lord dearly went on the tours a few times with them. They were from a congregation where they were helping the head preacher. It was not a permanent appointment but they gained experience in God's work and waited on God to guide them into the future. Joe and Jenny depended more and more on the couple. They were learning fast and had a few ideas that worked well with younger persons wishing to visit the Promised Land. They made provision for a budget tour where the young people stayed over in backpacker accommodation. They also made use of camping facilities where it was available. Joe trusted the couple more and more and gradually gave over while keeping an eye on everything. They waited on God to direct their paths according to His will. Joe tired easily and he and Jenny decided to take a holiday, the first in many years. There was a nice seaside resort in Israel next to the Sea of Galilee, nothing fancy but peaceful and quiet. They made their reservations and flew to Israel with a tour group guided by the young couple. It felt to Joe like the first time when he and Pastor went over as part of a group. At Ben Gurion, they left the group and departed to their hotel. They had a beautiful room with a nice view of the Sea. Behind the hotel were a mountain range and the hotel nestled at the foothills. Behind were the mountains and in front was the sea. Joe once read a story about a guy named Mai whose wealthy father lived in a place like this. The only difference was the hotel was more like a palace. That evening Joe had another dream.

He dreamt about Mai and all Mai's encounters and how Mai was fulfilling his father's wish to bring the estranged family who left them many years ago, back to him. In the dream, Joe tried to see the father but every time he got near the father disappeared in bright light almost the same as in his near-death experience. The only difference was this time the bright light was much closer. No demons were pulling on his clothes trying to force him into hell.

His clothes were a brilliant white. He experienced the same peace and joy as in his near-death experience. Somehow the dream felt incomplete with the promise of a fulfilment later. He woke up with such peace within him that for a moment he thought no human can experience something like this and keep on living. He later shared the dream with Jenny but to his surprise, she had no comment. She also did not later explain anything about the dream to him. Perhaps she knew something too scary to deal with him?

He and Jenny went for long leisurely strolls. Sometimes his emotions overwhelmed him when he thought about Jesus and how Jesus most probably also walked along this same shore. He felt a closeness to God he never experienced before. His thoughts went to Mai and the passion he had for bringing people into his father's kingdom. He could relate to that feeling. He experienced the same feeling in the past. Bringing pilgrims to the Holy Land was symbolic of the much bigger work God was doing in the lives of people by bringing them into Heaven. Everything made sense. Everything was falling into place. It was as if a big puzzle was being put together. There was one piece missing. Perhaps God will unlock the mystery in future. He felt certain Mai had something to do with it.

Occasionally the young couple contacted them and gave them reports on how things were developing. Joe felt an urgency to discuss the future with Jenny. Say something happened to him what would become of her? They owned a small property in their hometown and had wonderful friends there. They would surely look after her and help her. She was an active member of Pastor's old church and people loved Jenny. Their son was teaching at a school not far from their hometown. He would take her in anytime. His wife had a very good relationship with Jenny and would like to have her stay with them. They saved a little money and with the state pension, she would come by. They lived a simple life and did not require much money. God always looked after them and Joe knew He would in the future look after Jenny.

The young couple were happy and prosperous in the touring business. They willingly shared with Joe and Jenny the income from the business. As in the past, the first half always went to the furthering of God`s kingdom. It was to Joe as if God was getting everything into place for one big event to happen.

Joe and Jenny undertook small excursions. Their favourite still was the boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, the sermon on the boat which Joe occasionally undertook and the pleasure of sharing his testimonies with the pilgrims. More than one of the Christian tour guides made use of Joe. He and Jenny were settling into a nice rhythm and enjoyed the Holy Land. The Holy Land became more like the foretaste of heaven. They had plenty of time to read the Bible and discuss topics as the Holy Spirit placed it on their hearts. Especially the Book of Revelation fascinated them. They found themselves watching the clouds in anticipation of the coming of Jesus.

One day Joe took Jenny some way up the mountain. He took his Bible with him and when they were seated he started reading the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew 5 to 7. He remembered the teaching of Jesus of His disciples and how the Bible came alive. Even today 2000 years later these words spoken by Jesus had immense power. They were fresh and relevant and applied to everyday circumstances. It was a timeless Word. So much wisdom, love and compassion flowed from these words. Joe wished he had a better memory for he would have liked to say these words over and over to himself.

Jenny was such a nice companion. She endeared herself to his heart when she allowed the Holy Spirit to uncover the deeper meanings of the dream Joe had. He had learned to trust her and the way God spoke through her to him. He had such a good life. The ways of God was wonderful and He felt deep gratitude towards God. Suddenly there was a longing in his soul to be with Jesus, to stay with Him forever and ever, to penetrate the Light he was longing for since his first encounter with God.

“Jenny, my love, thank you so much for everything you did for me. You must always remember that I love you with all my heart. Thank you for your quick decision so many years ago to accept Jesus as your Saviour. Thank you for always trusting me to make the right decision. Thank you for being my wife. If I step over into eternity before you, always remember I will be waiting for you”

Now Joe was eager to get home. He felt an urgency, why he did not know.

Later in the afternoon he felt very tired and asked Jenny to excuse him. He lay on the bed and later faintly called her. She put her ear to his mouth.

“ Jenny the Light is so near. I feel His presence. It is the best place to be.Jenny, I can seeHim! with these words he breathed his last breath and with a wonderful smile on his face he stepped over into eternity to be with his God.

Chapter 33

The Key

Not far from the hotel was a small cemetery at the foot of the mountain. It was a family burial site but the family, all Christians, offered a gravesite to Jenny if she was interested. She knew Joe would very much like to have been buried there so she gladly accepted their offer.

The arrangements were made for the burial. As many people would like to attend the burial they decided to postpone the burial for then days. Many dear friends made up a group of special pilgrims, led by the tour leader, Pastor. They would all stay in the hotel Joe and Jenny stayed. The ceremony was conducted from the front porch of the hotel with a beautiful view of the Sea of Galilee. Pastor conducted the service.

“Dear friends, Joe was a special friend to us. He was such an ordinary guy specially chosen by God for extraordinary work. Looking at his life, we all get strength knowing God uses ordinary people without special talents so that all the honour can go to Him. Even Paul who had special talents was given an infirmity to make him dependent on God. Joe was genuine, with no falsities. His strength was in his total trust in God. He spoke to God about all the problems he encountered and God wonderfully directed his ways.

We all had heard his first testimony. I was privileged to be the first one he shared it with. With the near-death experience, he reached many people. The first time we had a meeting, where he gave his testimony, people streamed to our church. Since that time our church had never been the same. Our congregation grew much. It was not only the numbers but the quality of Christians filled with the Holy Spirit that was the real blessing.

Joe walked with God. God also walked with Joe. In dreams, Joe had wonderful encounters with God. Jenny told me about a dream Joe had. I am not going to relate it in detail as Jenny told it to me but I would like to let her share her interpretation of the dream with you.

In short Joe had a dream about a person who met him on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. This person invited him to a boat trip on the sea. Later this person taught Joe to sail the boat and eventually they went back to where the boat was launched. Joe had wonderful feelings about this person and the peace he encountered in his presence.

Jenny told how God explained the dream`s meaning to her:

“As the dream`s meaning meant a lot to me I am going to relate it verbatim to you as I explained it to Joe: ‘it seems to me as if the feeling you had towards the person you met indicates that he was known to you even if you had not seen him eye to eye previously. You’re longing to see him again and the love you felt towards him, your trusting attitude amidst the danger of going on to the sea with him indicates that he was and still is be the most precious person in your life. That Person can only be God.

The sea is usually a Bible- symbol of the people in the world. It may be that God was meeting you alongside the Sea, alongside your involvement with people at your near-death experience. He took you out to sea with Him, amongst people where you brought them your testimony. He also took you deeper into the sea and he expanded your ministry. He wanted you for Himself and allowed you to rest with him in the quiet amidst the sea of people while you were at sea. Perhaps He longs for more intimate relationship and wants you to be more aware of Him while you are working amongst people. He showed you how to launch His boat of the Good News about Him. Perhaps He is going to give you more responsibilities and want you to make more decisions on your own. You will always have to wait for His wind to blow. Then, when He wants you to move you can adjust the direction of your lifeboat according to the direction His wind is blowing. Sometimes you won't be able to take the direct route to where you want to go with His people and you would have to tack, to take a non-direct route to get to your destination with His people. You will need practice and wisdom to do it but you must always remember He is with you. One day He will guide you back to the shore and

your work would be finished. You will arrive at your everlasting destination and He will be waiting for you. You will be transferred from working amidst people to walking with Him.’

Then Joe was silent for a long time. He later told me he felt a peace and contentment that could only come from God. He felt the wonderful presence of God and knew this message through me was from God. He was so strengthened by the thought that God enriched his testimony with this dream revelation. He also became convinced that I was part of his mission and that I would be in the boat with him on his journeys into the unknown. What a blessing it was to have been a wife to Joe. He cherished me even more after God used me to explain his dream and to confirm His plans for him. All was God’s grace, His unmerited favour.” Tears rolled over her cheeks.

“He also had another dream about building a puzzle but one piece of the puzzle was missing.

I want to speak to you about this missing piece of the puzzle which God provided. We can also call it *The Key to unlocking the mysteries of life*.

Joe once read a book about a guy named Mai whose passion was to bring in the lost family of his father into his father's kingdom. It eventually turned out that Mai was standing for I am, read from back to front as it is in Hebrew. So the story was about Jesus and His father being our God. In fact this story was the story about Jesus and His endeavours to bring lost souls into God’s kingdom. Joe could identify with Jesus as it also was his passion to bring souls into God’s kingdom. As Jesus taught his disciples through parables and direct preaching on the Mount of Beatitudes, Joe also endeavoured to teach people through his many testimonies about the grace of God. Joe was so humble he never discovered the mystery of the meaning of the missing piece in the puzzle. He, through the grace of God, was the missing piece. God was providing this piece to disclose His infinite never ending love for the sinner through the preaching of His servant.

So we can conclude with this wonderful message written by the life of Joe:

Jesus is the Key

to all that is good, lovely, worthwhile and everlasting

This Key is available to all who are confused about how to unlock the many mysteries of life and who long for the redemption of sins, who confess their sins, trust God to forgive them their sins, accept Jesus as their Saviour and follow Him as He might choose to guide and use them through their own mysteries of life.

Amen!"

[For the back page:](#)

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.

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