

THE DAMASCUS ROAD

*Fifty stories of encounters with our
Wonderful God who is full of wonders*

*‘For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has
accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word
and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit
of God, so that from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum I have fully
proclaimed the Good News of Christ.’*

Romans 15:18-19

by

John Wright

The Feast of the Epiphany 2008

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‘ I dedicate this little book to my wonderful children, Francis, Jemimah, David, James and John who have suffered their father through many years of tribulation and survived to become glorious witnesses for Christ. ’

INTRODUCTION

A gift for story telling, a wry sense of humour, a self deprecating humility and an absolute trust in the power of the Lord are four of the qualities that make John Wright's pages sparkle. Some secular readers may think that his style of evangelism borders on the eccentric, but believers will know that the encounters he describes ring true on the anvil of authenticity where real faith hits real life.

The Damascus Road is full of strange and wonderful 21st century stories. Yet they are surpassed in wonder and strangeness by the stories told in The Book of Acts after the revelation to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road of the 1st century. So why should we be surprised that the transformative power, the peace, the mercy and the grace of God is as great as ever?

May these stories open our eyes to see that we walk daily down the Damascus Road and so prepare us, like St Paul, for an encounter with the Living God.

JONATHAN AITKEN
Author and Broadcaster

The Feast of the Epiphany 2008

PERSONAL EVANGELISM

from *'In Pursuit of His Glory'* pages 226-27 by

Rev Dr R.T.Kendall

*Published by Hodder and Stoughton
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'If God had not brought Arthur Blessit to us in 1982 I wonder if the matter of my becoming a personal soul-winner to strangers would have entered my mind. But....Arthur was used by the Lord to change all that. From then until the present time I have almost always carried a selection of pamphlets in several languages to give to those who cross my path. Sometimes I will try to engage others in conversation and, if possible, present the gospel and lead them to Christ right on the spot. Until Arthur came I assumed that I had done my job as an evangelist (2Tim 4:5) by preaching the gospel from the pulpit on Sunday nights in Westminster Chapel.....

Far more can do this kind of evangelism than most imagine. After all we are all called to be soul winners.... One of our members, Derek Temple, a very quiet, laid back Englishman who had been a member since Dr Lloyd Jones' day, came out with us one Saturday. I was amazed but thrilled to see him. He returned the following week and actually led a person to Christ. He kept coming and now never misses a Saturday. He has had dozens and dozens of people from all over the world to pray to receive the Lord. He is now a Deacon.

Our emphasis on personal evangelism is what really changed the Chapel. I will believe until I die that God has honoured us to the degree we have been blessed because we made evangelism a priority. It is what led to the freedom we now enjoy and also is the main reason we have begun to see people of all races and class distinction feel welcome in our services.'

THE DAMASCUS ROAD

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FOREWORD

It seems that the end time Church, which Jesus prophesied would be cold hearted towards the lost, shelters under a religious illusion that keeps churchgoers happy maintaining the Institution rather than building the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. Today many seem oblivious of our top priority as Christians, on which we will all one day be judged, summed up in the words of Jesus to Pilate, ‘For this I was born and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth.’ *John 18:37*

Of course there are glorious exceptions. The Alpha Course, Youth with a Mission, the Full Gospel Business Men, Prison Fellowship and many other ministries do their best to obey the divine command to make disciples of all nations. But large chunks of the Church, especially in the historic denominations, seem to have lost the confidence and urgency of the Acts of the Apostles to spread the Gospel and have ignored the divine command to ‘preach the Word, be urgent at times convenient and inconvenient, convince, rebuke and exhort...’ *2 Timothy 4:2*.

The purpose of The Damascus Road, and The Desert Road South of Jerusalem and The Jericho Road which have preceded it, is to show Churchgoers the fox as described in story no 28 ‘Hounds in Full Cry’. To excite Christians with the wonderful joy on earth and treasure in heaven which comes from learning to step out of the boat by sharing our faith daily in the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is a cost! But at the end we will hear those most glorious of all words, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant!’

John Wright
The Feast of the Epiphany 2008.

1. THE MARKETING MAN

We were on the platform at Norwich station. The 8.30am train to London had not arrived. We were en route to Cyprus where we were doing a Mission at St Paul's Cathedral, Nicosia! I asked the Lord who I should speak to and saw a young man of about thirty five dressed all in black. I went up to him and said,

'I perceive you are a Catholic Priest.'

'No, I am the Managing Director of a Marketing Company,' he replied.

So I produced my business credentials – Price Waterhouse, Harvard Business School, Director of Colmans, founder of a Bank in Norwich. He was duly impressed and realised he had met a bona fide business man he might talk to with advantage.

On the train I asked Martin if he believed in God.

'This is weird' he said, 'My girl friend's sister, Rebecca, is a Christian. She said she was praying for me.' We had a good talk and I left him with a Voice magazine.

The next day in Cyprus I got an email

"I can't quite believe our meeting this morning. Rebecca, when I told her, said, 'God moves in mysterious ways.' Just after our meeting I got an email confirming payment of a long outstanding large invoice. A female teacher sat next to me and we talked. She read two stories from your magazine and was deeply touched. Am I spreading your word already, John? The sun is shining and my heart is uplifted. Thank you, John, it's been a great day already and it's only 10.30 am!"

The next Sunday Martin went to two services at my Church at Stoke Holy Cross. I got another email.

"You know what, John, that experience with you seems to have changed my life in a way that was completely unplanned, unexpected and scarily exciting. I went to your Church on Sunday. Rosie (my blonde bombshell Vicar) was wonderful. I have many questions, though, and people falling over in Church was a little weird for this old marketing person. The following Wednesday, on the train, a South African man sat next to me and asked, 'Are you a Christian?' Unusual for anyone to talk to anyone on a train, but anyway I replied, 'Not yet!' Love to come to your FGB dinner.

A week later Martin was born again and baptised with the Holy Spirit at the Norwich dinner of the Full Gospel Business Men.

A month later Martin was given 20 mins on BBC Radio Norfolk to give his testimony under the title, 'The Man who met God on the 8.30 train to London!'

2. CENTRE COURT, WIMBLEDON.

My wife Susan and I were invited as guests to the dinner of The Anglo Israel Association at the Savoy Hotel in London. It was a very grand affair. Four hundred of the great and the good were there.

At the end of the meal we were each asked to put £10 into an envelope that would then be entered into a draw for three prizes. The odds were therefore 133 to 1 against getting a prize. The Jewish lady on my left did not have any money so I offered her £10 to put in her envelope.

‘I could not possibly let you do that,’ she said.

‘Madam,’ I replied, with mock severity, “That would be very unkind of you. Do you not know that God said to Abraham, ‘Those who bless the Jews will themselves be blessed’? If you won’t let me give you £10 you will be depriving me of a prize.”

‘Oh! if you put it that way’, she replied and so accepted my £10.

Ten minutes later I won two Centre Court tickets for Wimbledon worth £500!

3. THE BLONDE FROM TEL AVIV

We were in Budapest staying at the Hungaria Hotel for a Full Gospel Business Men's Conference.

At seven o'clock on the Saturday morning I followed my daily routine. With a cup of coffee from the restaurant I found a table in a cubicle away from the crowd where I could read and pray without being disturbed.

Ten minutes later a lady in her late forties, with a cascade of blonde curls, came and sat herself down opposite me. She had a cup of coffee and blew cigarette smoke in my direction.

Concealing my irritation with difficulty I asked her where she came from.

'Israel' she said. Into my mind came Tel Aviv so I said,

'You come from Tel Aviv'

'How did you know that?' she asked.

'The Ruach (Holy Spirit) of Y'shua (Jesus) told me. I am a Christian.'

Just then her husband came and sat down. Again a thought came to me.

'Good morning, Isaac!'

A look of shocked awe came over the man's face as his wife Rachel interrupted to say that I knew they came from Tel Aviv as well.

His name was indeed Isaac and we had a good conversation. They were secular Jews but obviously hungry to know God. I was able to pray with them, giving them the blessing of Aaron, and asking Y'Shua to reveal himself to them.

We parted the best of friends and they accepted a Voice magazine of Christian testimonies. As Jesus said, *'Believe because of what I say or believe because of the signs you see my Father do.'* It all reminded me of the conversation Jesus had with the woman at the well in Samaria.

4. THE OIL TANK BOYS

Our old cast iron oil tank was being replaced with a modern radio controlled plastic wonder. Along came three young men to dismantle the old tank.

As they passed my office on their way home I had a talk to them. They were nice lads who were interested in my story of how a mafia boss running the drug trade in Newcastle on Tyne had become a Vicar after Jesus appeared to him.

Although they looked healthy I asked if any of them had any illness I could pray for to demonstrate the love and the power of Jesus today.

Simon, the son of the proprietor, said, 'I have asthma and have to use my puffer when I get an attack.' I offered prayer which he accepted with giggles all round.

So I put my hand on his head and rebuked the asthma, commanding it to go in Jesus' name. Then off they went, still giggling, clutching Voice magazines.

A few days later Simon's father called in to inspect the work on the oil tank. He poked his head into my office and said, 'Are you a healer?'

'No', I said, 'Jesus is the Healer. Why do you ask?'

'Because Simon has not had to use his puffer since you prayed for him!' he replied.

5. 'AFTER YOU, MADAM'

My daughter in law took me to the National Gallery to see Impressionists by the Sea. We had to ascend in a lift shaped like a glass gondola which took about fifteen people up the side of the building.

It was hot so I was wearing my Panama hat. As we entered the lift I noticed an elderly lady behind me so I doffed my hat and said 'After you, Madam'. Then there was another and another. Eventually some seven ladies were ushered in before I squeezed in myself. They looked at me approvingly.

'When I was brought up, gentlemen were gentlemen' I said looking hard at two men who had gone in first. They hung their heads, looking somewhat discomfited.

Then it came to me. I had a captive audience. So I said, loudly, to the last lady I had ushered in, 'Do you know, I went to Church for thirty two years and had no idea whether God existed. Then one evening I had a visit from the Holy Ghost. He showed me all the sin in my life. The pride, the self centredness, the lust for women, the hypocrisy of pretending to be a Christian. So I got down on my knees and asked God, if He existed, to forgive me and change me. To my amazement I felt a big weight lift off my shoulders, thirty two years of sin, and I was filled with joy. It is called Holy Inebriation. I was born again!'

It had all taken half a minute. The lady beamed.
'I'll report this to the Vicar' she said.

Then the doors opened and we poured out to see Boudin on the beach at Villerville, trusting that some seed had been planted for the Holy Spirit to water.

6. THE HAPPY EATER

We had stopped at the Happy Eater on the Newmarket Bypass for a cup of coffee. On the way out I had a strange feeling I should talk to an elderly man walking in front of me to the car park.

‘Excuse me’, I said, ‘but I believe I have to speak to you. Where do you come from?’

‘From Heanor in Derbyshire’, he replied.

‘Did you work for the Butterley Company?’

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘And my Dad and Grandad as well.’

‘That’s amazing,’ I said, ‘Do you know that your Dad worked for my Dad and your Grandad worked for my Grandad? The Butterley Company was my family business. Are you a Churchgoer?’

‘No, I can’t say I am really,’ he replied.

‘Well, do you realise that it was God who prompted me to speak to you? You have now had a kick in the pants. Make sure you go to Church next Sunday. God promises that if we look for Him we will find him. Have a go!’

I left him looking somewhat bemused clutching a Voice Magazine with some stories of people who had looked for God and found Him.

7. JEHOVAH JIREH

The God who provides

We were going through two years of desert training with no income living with five children under six in a rented house in Norfolk. We lacked for nothing!

But from time to time oases of encouragement appeared to help us through the empty quarter. One December morning at breakfast I opened a leaflet from the Full Gospel Business Men in Australia about their National Convention being held in Brisbane the following February. I leant over to put it in the bin. There was no way we could afford to go to Australia. As I did so a silly thought came into my mind.

‘That is where you are going.’

I turned back to Susan and said, ‘I think the Lord is sending us to Australia!’ expecting her to knock such an idea firmly on the head. But to my surprise she just nodded and went on with persuading a recalcitrant child to eat up.

So we prayed and asked God for three signs. An invitation from the Fellowship, someone to look after the children and the £2,000 for the air fare and accommodation. The first two were forthcoming but no money. Nevertheless we went ahead and booked the flights which had to be paid for on the Thursday before we left on the following Monday.

Thursday morning came but nothing in the post. I sat at my desk saying, ‘Lord, did you really say we were going to Australia?’

At that moment the telephone rang and a voice said, ‘Johnnie, you will have to forgive me. The Lord told me to send you £2,000 two weeks ago but I have only just put the cheque in the post.’

When the call was over I sat winded by the wonder of it all. I bowed my head and prayed in some despair, ‘Lord, when will I ever learn to trust you?’

8. TWO BROKEN ARMS !

Driving to the Post Office at Framingham Earl I passed a young man walking along the road with both arms in plaster. I felt prompted to talk to him but by this time he was too far behind. I promised myself I would talk to him on the way back if he was still there.

Sure enough, on my return, he came into sight. I backed the car into a providential cart track and got out. Crossing the road, I introduced myself and asked if he was all right.

His name was Paul. He explained that he had been in a bad motor cycle crash. As he went over the handle bars he had put out both arms to break his fall. He was lucky to be alive. I told him that I was a Christian of the Anglican persuasion and that God had told me to stop to tell him that Jesus loved him.

He was very receptive to such a thought. He was not a believer but had been reading the Bible to find out what would have happened to him if he had died!

I asked him if he was in any pain.

‘Yes, it hurts like hell,’ he said.

So I explained that a sign of a believer was that they would lay their hands on the sick who would be healed. Would he like me to pray for him?

‘Yes, please do,’ he said.

So I prayed and then asked if the pain was still there.

‘It’s all gone!’ he said.

I told him that God had given him a sign to help him believe. Also that he had a marvellous Vicar in Poringland and that he should try the Church there. I gave him a ‘Voice’ Magazine with an invitation to the next Full Gospel Dinner and we parted on the best of terms.

9. COMING UP ROSES

Abigail Deacon's story

It was about 10 o' clock at night as I rounded the corner into Notting Hill Gate. I passed a woman, huddled on a bench, with a large bottle of vodka beside her on the pavement. I felt Jesus say, 'Go back and talk to her!' Only recently I had been asking to hear His voice and for my heart to be obedient. Butterflies in my tummy, I went back and sat next to her.

Rose was drunk, but able to have a conversation. I said that Jesus had asked me to sit with her. She thought I was crazy at first! But then she spoke of her own shame at being drunk in this way, of her inability to get out of the cycle of drinking, of sleeping on benches and of her children despairing of her. She had come up from Canterbury where her landlady had thrown her out because of her drinking.

We talked about her past. She had never been happy and had run away from boarding school many times. She had started drinking at the age of twelve. Many AA meetings, hospital and Priory visits later she was right back in the same place. I too had had to go the Priory. Despite my problems I did all I could to ignore the sound of Jesus knocking at my door of my heart. Until that glorious day when I at last realised that Jesus was the answer I was searching for, and I let Him in.

I felt Jesus say, 'She's going to come home with you'. I was scared at first, but knew I could trust this gentle voice. My flat mate was away so Rose and I made a deal. She let me throw away her vodka before we walked down the road to my house. That night I was very nervous but the Lord calmed me down. Rose slept a long while the next day and began to have bad shakes. We prayed and talked a lot about her past. That day we shopped, cooked and ate together.

I wasn't able to spend all of my time with her and it was obvious that as soon as she was out of sight she would go and get another drink. But we arranged to meet back at the house at the end of the day. I had just read a novel called 'Redeeming Love' by Francine Rivers, based on the book of Hosea. It spoke of the love, which releases people to find their own way to Jesus. I was reminded to do only what I was being asked to do and to keep praying. I also had to let Jesus deal with my lurking desire for it to be me that was going to change Rose.

During this time, a friend called to say she felt God was saying I should treat Him like a husband, coming to Him for all decisions. Both Rose and I found this very helpful in our understanding of our relationship with Jesus.

That evening we watched a video of Ian McCormack's amazing testimony of how he came to faith. He was stung by box jelly fish and pronounced clinically dead for 15 minutes. His spirit left his body and he experienced the reality of hell and heaven before Jesus sent him back. Rose was amazed and wanted to become a Christian. We prayed a prayer together for Rose to receive Jesus as her Lord and Saviour.

The next day we went to the women's group at Christ Church. Ceri, the wife of our Vicar Stuart Lees, and the entire group were so lovely to Rose. Ceri suggested phoning the Earl's Court Project in order to help with housing. We sang wonderful worship songs after which a group of us prayed for Rose. We had similar pictures for her. One was of a princess in a tower who had been rescued, the other of a princess having been awoken from a long sleep. We had many more wonderful things that Jesus wanted Rose to know, and she cried as she cradled a very young baby belonging to one of the group in her arms.

The Earl's Court Project suggested Betel – a Christian organisation where addicted and destitute people can start a new life. I cried with joy to think that there was a place like this. They recommended people to stay for 12-18 months, free of charge. Then they encouraged and helped people to get a job.

That evening I couldn't wait to tell Rose. She had an interview with Betel over the phone and was accepted for the coming Monday. Rose changed over the next few days. She became more organised. She went down to Kent to collect her bags and told her entire family that she was going to this Betel.

Rose and I made the trip to Birmingham. It was so wonderful to feel that Rose had a chance for a new life. My heart was full of the biggest love for the Lord and I was so happy to be his 'hands and feet'. The next week one of my letters to Rose was returned unopened. I called the Betel and was told that Rose had left the day after I had dropped her off. She had become abusive to the other people in her dorm and they felt she wasn't ready to change.

My heart sank. It was then that I began to really understand. That my job is to trust and to obey. To do what I am asked to do and not to do things in my own strength. Not to think of myself as Mary Poppins, but to take every opportunity to show His love because he first loved us. That is SO joyful, so full of peace.

I spoke to Rose's son. Rose is safe and staying with her brother. Whatever happens, I will not let my heart be troubled, because 'we know that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purposes for them.' Romans 8:28.

10. THE TRACTOR MAN

It was five o'clock on a gorgeous early April evening. I was walking along a remote hill track in Powys alone except for a wheeling Buzzard, watchful rabbits and the ubiquitous sheep.

Then round the corner came a middle aged man and a woman. As I am a Norfolk Tractor Dealer I stopped them and asked the man, 'Would you like to buy a Tractor?' The man looked astonished as he replied, 'I used to sell Tractors in Norfolk!'

I turned round to join them on their walk. We swapped stories about mutual acquaintances and they told me something of their story. They had come back to their roots in Wales where they eked out a living.

We passed the house where I was staying so I asked them in to meet my hostess over a cup of tea. There, on the terrace, in the evening sunshine, they held hands and prayed for Jesus to be the Lord of their lives.

11. THE STRAWBERRY CAKE

My Godly ancestors, who mined coal, forged iron and built railways in 19th century Derbyshire, also provided medical care, schools and Churches for their employees. As a result I inherited the patronage with the right to appoint the Vicar of a number of parishes.

One of these was Ripley near Derby where I was invited one weekend to meet the Parish Council on the Saturday afternoon and then to preach on the Sunday. When I arrived on the Saturday I discovered that a big tea had been laid out to be consumed after the meeting. My eyes feasted on a sponge cake filled with cream and covered with strawberries. It was not big enough for everyone to have a piece so I chose a chair close to the cake but looking I the opposite direction.

At the end of the meeting, as I prepared to move casually to the cake, an old lady leant across and placed her hand firmly on my arm.

‘I knew your Grandfather’, she said.

I could not escape. For the next ten minutes I had to listen to her reminiscences of my Grandfather. Behind me I could hear the steady munching of many mouths devouring the strawberry cake. Despite all my plans, the cake would be gone.

Eventually I was released as I told the old lady I did not want her to miss the tea. I turned round, only to be astonished to see that only four slices of the cake had been eaten. It was a remarkable mercy!

The Lord, of course, chided me so gently.

‘O thou of little faith...’

12. SURPRISED BY JOY

For the first thirty two years of my life I was a model Anglican. Baptised as a baby, confirmed by the Bishop of Winchester, I attended Church every Sunday at Morley, near Derby. As the Patron I even appointed the Vicar!

My bachelor life was spectacular. I had been educated at Winchester College and Christ Church, Oxford. My business training had been at Price Waterhouse and the Harvard Business School. I was Managing Director of my family business, The Butterley Brick Company, and I drove a dark blue E-Type Jaguar. The Government even built the M1 motorway right up to my front door so that I could race down to the bright lights of London.

One evening in April 1966, as I enjoyed a glass of whisky while my housekeeper prepared my supper, I suddenly became aware of the sin in my life. The pride, the self-centredness, the arrogance, the lust for women and the praise of men were all magnified. On top of this was the realisation of my hypocrisy, pretending to be a Christian when I did not even know whether God existed.

For the first time I realised that I was in a cesspool of sin. The stench made me long for a shower but there was no means of having a wash, of changing my character. I could no longer live with what I had become.

Then the words of Jesus came to me. *'I have come to set the prisoners free.'* It had never made sense to me. How silly to let murderers out of jail. No one had told me that you can not understand the Bible until the Holy Spirit opens it for you. But then the revelation came that Jesus was talking about me, a prisoner of sin.

On an impulse I went up to my bedroom to see if I could find God. I was embarrassed and a bit nervous, locking the door and drawing the curtains, though the nearest house was half a mile away. I got down on my knees, looking towards the East, and said,

God, if you exist, I am sorry I have made a mess of my life. Please forgive me and change me and make me the person you want me to be. Give me the wisdom to know your will and the courage to do it.'

To my astonishment I felt a big weight physically leave my shoulders. Then, just like CS Lewis at his conversion, I got filled with joy. I got a silly smile on my face. It is called in the Church of England, 'Holy Inebriation.' I had been born again.

If I needed any further confirmation that something had happened it came the next morning in the garden. With my eyes newly opened to creation, I picked a daisy and saw for the first time the perfection of the white petals and tiny yellow seeds. I knelt down on the grass, awestruck, and worshipped the Creator of the Daisy.

13. THE SHEIKH FROM KUWAIT

There was a time when my company, Branch Securities Ltd, was doing deals in the Gulf arranging joint ventures for British Companies with Arab Clients.

At one such meeting in Kuwait the Arab partner was a Kuwaiti Sheikh and Minister in the Government. He was of course a devout Muslim so I was careful not to upset him with my normal enthusiasm.

At a crucial meeting to discuss the terms of the Contract he suddenly looked at me across the table and asked,

“Mr Wright, what does ‘Branch Securities’ mean?”

Immediately my heart was shot through with fear. If I told the truth and admitted I was a committed Christian this might be the end of a beautiful relationship. But I also knew the promise that if we confess God before men Jesus will acknowledge us before our Father in heaven. So I took a deep breath and said,

“It means ‘Jesus saves’ from the Prophet Jeremiah 23 verses 5&6.”

The Sheikh leaned across to me with a smile.

“ Mr Wright, I am so glad to hear that you are a Christian and therefore fear God. Now I know that I can trust you!”

A few weeks later the deal was completed!

14. THE PROMINENT POLITICIAN

I was descending from the street into Piccadilly Circus Tube Station when a man I recognised as a prominent politician passed me as he climbed the stairs.

I turned round and said, 'Excuse me.'

He stopped and looked at me enquiringly. For a moment I was at a loss for words.

'Well done!' I said, hoping he would not ask what for.

He gave me a smile that politicians reserve for deranged members of the public who accost them in the street.

I then told him that I was the business partner of a former colleague of his. This seemed to re-assure him as he said, 'Did you know I have just bought his house?'

I replied that I did and then told him I was also a member of the College of Evangelists instituted by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

'Are you a believer?' I asked.

'No, I am not,' he said.

'Would you like to read the story of how I started a bank with no money?' I replied.

'Yes, I would,' he said.

So I pulled out a copy of my testimony called 'No Easy Ride' from my brief case and gave it to him. Then we continued our separate ways.

This an example of how important it is to carry our testimony with us for such brief, providential encounters as this.

15. SEED CORN

Since 1995 I have been Chairman of an Agricultural Machinery Dealership selling Tractors. On 2nd November 2006 we were summoned to our suppliers HQ to discuss the difficulty we were having in keeping to our two months credit limit. I was accompanied by Andrew Goram, our Financial Controller. The Director in charge of credit control chaired the meeting with two ladies on his staff.

They began to discuss how much we owed them. Andrew and I said nothing but just prayed in tongues (the gift of Pentecost) under our breath asking the Lord to fight the battle for us. So the Lord sent a spirit of confusion upon them. They could not agree amongst themselves how much we owed them. Then they found they had given us a credit note for £83,000 by mistake. The Director finally said, 'Well, all I can say is that it is a complete cock-up!' In the next breath he added, 'I think the best thing to do is to give you three months credit from November 1st.'

At our mid November management meeting we gave thanks for this deliverance and felt we should give the Lord a thank offering of £500 even though we had been making losses for eleven years. Our forward orders went up from £511,069 at the end of October to £1,076,389 at the end of November. We gave another thank offering in December and at the end of the month the forward orders were £1,508,140! Another thank offering in January and by the end of the month orders were £2 million!

It was a good lesson that the Lord responds to seed corn being planted in His field.

'Give and it will be given unto you good measure, pressed down, running over.'

Just as Jesus promised!

16. UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS

One morning I was reading the parable of the servant who came back from a long day in the fields. He got home only to be ordered to prepare a meal and wait upon his master while he ate. Then Jesus asks the question, ‘Does the master thank the servant because he did what was commanded of him? So you also, when you have done all that is commanded of you, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants, we have only done what was our duty.’

Well, I thought, with somewhat smug satisfaction, that is not something that I have been guilty of. I have tried to be obedient but not asked for any reward on this earth apart from the expectation of treasure in heaven. But then I was reminded of a recent fishing trip with my youngest son. At the start of the holiday I had preached in a village Church in Cumbria. To my delight four people had made a commitment to follow Christ and been born of the Spirit.

To my shame, remembering Moses bargaining with God over Sodom and Gomorrah, I had suggested that as I had been hard at work labouring for souls, surely the Lord would respond with a similar number of salmon, or even double measure. We should never limit God!

We fished on the Derwent, we fished on the Spey, we fished on the Earne – all without success. My last chance on the Tyne on the way south was washed out by a flood. So we learnt a good lesson. We had only done what was commanded of us.

We were, indeed, unprofitable servants!

17. HUMBLE YOURSELF!

There is a unique testimony magazine called Voice. In 2006 I was asked if I would take on the job of being Editor. This made sense as I had been involved in typesetting and publishing and even once came top in English at school! I was also a keen distributor of Voice magazines.

We produced two issues which were widely appreciated. This was little credit to myself as the production team that I had inherited did such a brilliant job. Nevertheless I enjoyed the compliments that came my way and began to see myself as a Media Mogul.

But when we came to the third issue a proposal was made by the Media Committee to reduce the size of the magazine in the hope that it would encourage people to use it. There was also a proposal to move production to a new typesetter. I advised that both changes were without merit, would jeopardise quality and increase costs. To my astonishment the Editor's advice was ignored.

I allowed myself to be upset. What did these people think they were doing? I despatched an e-mail of devastating lucidity and logic which must surely bring repentance and an apology. This was ignored as well.

Then, while shaving one morning, the Lord spoke to me.

'It is better for you to learn humility than to have your way with Voice.'

The lesson did not end there.

'Are you now willing to co-operate fully with the new production team and to ask me to make this the best issue yet?'

A song came to my mind:

'Yes, Lord, Yes, to your will and to your way,
Yes, Lord, Yes, I am willing to obey;
When your Spirit speaks to me
I am willing to agree
And my answer it shall be
Yes, Lord, Yes.'

As I have often said, we should embrace every humiliation arranged by a loving Father because it shows that He cares for us. Praise the Lord!

18. LIBERTY UNDER ARREST!

We had arrived the night before from Malta. En route I had developed a bad back so I went off early to a Physiotherapist. When I got out of my car at my office I noticed three large men get out of a car parked nearby. They came towards me and after asking my name announced that I was being arrested over the collapse of a company that I had been advising.

I told them this was the least of my problems as I had a bad back! After searching my office we all got into their unmarked police car for the three hour journey to Cotton Lane Police Station in Derby where I was to be questioned. I suddenly realized that I had a captive audience. So I said to them,

‘Do you three gentlemen realize that you are the prisoners and I am the free man?’ This got their attention as I continued, ‘If you haven’t repented you are prisoners of sin. This means that you will spend eternity in Hell. However the good news is that God has had mercy on you and sent me to show you how you can be saved through the blood of Jesus shed for you on the cross.’ They then heard the Gospel all the way to Derby. I think they were quite relieved to hand me over to the custodial sergeant on our arrival.

They didn’t waste time. I was taken into an interview room where everything was recorded. But my opportunity came when they changed the tape. I had my Bible with me and read to them from 2 Kings 1:9. It is the story of King Ahaziah sending a captain of fifty to arrest Elijah. They found him on top of a hill and said, “O man of God, the King says ‘Come down.’” But Elijah replied, ‘If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty!’ This happened twice until the third captain cried out for mercy and God told Elijah it was safe to go. So I explained to my interrogators that my God was the God of Elijah. They were therefore in dire peril in arresting me but I had prayed for God to have mercy on them as, like the captain of fifty, they were only doing their job. I think they were duly grateful!

After an interesting night lying fully clothed on a wooden bench (it did wonders for my back, I called it ‘Custodial Therapy’) I met a young man called Peter who had been arrested the night before on suspicion of burglary. I invited him to have the first use of the only basin to shave. As he did so I knelt down to explain the way of salvation. Peter agreed that he needed to get his life sorted out and that probably only Jesus could do this. He was born again and baptized with the Holy Spirit under the watchful eye of the sergeant.

Peter was quick to realize he now had a powerful friend. ‘Mr Wright, do you think Jesus would get me bail today?’ ‘Well,’ I said, ‘He got your namesake out of jail so let’s ask Him.’ This was too much for the sergeant who broke in, ‘you are wasting your time there, Mr Wright. This young lad has got a record as long as your arm. He hasn’t got a cat in hell’s chance of getting out today.’ I rebuked the sergeant for his unbelief. With God all things are possible. Two hours later at the Magistrate’s Court Peter ran up to me, jubilation written all over his face. He had got bail. The look on the sergeant’s face, when I came back without Peter, was marvelous to behold!

19. THE NIGHTINGALE IN THE NIGHT

My Chicken breeding company had been overwhelmed by a veritable tsunami. Soya prices had doubled so that it cost 18pence a pound to produce chickens that sold for only 14 pence a pound. Our sales collapsed overnight and a Receiver was appointed.

I was still able to believe that this would work out for good as God promises in Romans 8:28 until the following Friday morning. A threatening letter arrived from the Solicitors of one of our suppliers. I was to be personally held responsible for any loss to his client. This was the last straw. A great cloud of depression appeared over me and I sank into a black hole of despair. I could not think or talk or eat. It was horrible.

The next morning a local Vicar, Guy Moss, called. He asked how I was. 'Fine,' I said, in a leaden voice.

Guy held out a book called 'The Power of Praise' by Merlin Carrothers, a classic remedy for those in the fire of affliction.

'Johnny, I think you ought to read this.'

'I have read it before,' I replied, brushing the book aside. Guy did not give up.

'Johnny, you really should read it.'

'No, Guy, I know what it says,' I replied, getting a bit irritated. Guy persisted.

'Johnny, I believe the Lord wants you to read it again.'

At last it got through to me that this might be God's answer to my unspoken prayer.

I thanked Guy for his persistence and took the book into my study. There I read marvellous stories of deliverance in response to praise and thanksgiving. So, as an act of obedience, despite my feelings, I began to worship and praise the God who had created the Universe.

I was like a Nightingale singing at the darkest moment of the night. Within a few minutes the depression lifted. Mercifully this was my first and only experience of this most terrible trial of the soul.

20. XIANG FU

One hot afternoon in early September 2005 I was having a Siesta. As I dozed a computer screen suddenly appeared before my eyes. It was weird! Nothing like this had ever happened to me before.

In a black box, in the centre of the screen, white letters 'Xiang Fu!' kept flashing on and off at me They came back three times. I panicked, knowing I had to wake up at once and write the words down, lest they become such stuff as dreams are made of and vanish into thin air.

I then called my son David who works in Beijing and speaks Mandarin. 'Are the words Chinese', I asked. David did his research. It turned out that this is a blessing in Mandarin given to a man in his old age. The subsidiary meanings are to swear allegiance to someone, to subdue something and to be conformed to someone. So when we swear allegiance to Christ and subdue the flesh we are conformed to His image and get blessed in our old age!

The blessing began almost immediately. Two missing elements in Susan's kitchen have been sharp knives and good saucepans. With many calls on our limited income they have just been too expensive. However, in November, a young Dutch boy called Toon appeared at our front door in a new Range Rover. He had a boot full of luxury top of the range BergHaus German saucepans and knives. The saucepans, with built in thermometers, have a unique nearly water free cooking system that retains the nutritional value of the vegetables. They cost £950 for a box of nine saucepans. Well beyond our means.

But Toon told us he had just been at an exhibition and would have to pay VAT at Customs on his way back to Holland. If we paid £150 we could have them, so we did! Over a cup of coffee Toon was born again and gave me a big hug of joy. A few moments later he came back from the car with an attaché case of knives selling at £450 as a present! It was extraordinary. We never did discover why he called at our house, so far off the beaten track, and going nowhere. Perhaps he was Angel?

21. THE SNOW GEESE

There was a Scottish Farmer who did not believe in the Christmas story. The idea that God would become a man was absurd. His wife, however, was a devout believer and raised their children in her faith. The Farmer sometimes gave her a hard time, mocking her faith and belief in the incarnation of God in the baby of Bethlehem. ‘It’s all nonsense’, he said, ‘Why would God lower Himself to become a human like us? It’s such a ridiculous story’.

One snowy Sunday evening his wife took the children to Church while the Farmer relaxed at home. After they had left the weather deteriorated into a blinding snowstorm. Then he heard a loud thump against the window. Then another thump! He ventured outside to see what was happening. There in the farmyard was the strangest sight, a flock of geese! They had been migrating south but had become disorientated by the storm. They were stranded on his farm, unable to fly or see their way.

The Farmer had compassion on them. He wanted to help them and realized his barn would give them shelter for the night. He opened the barn doors and stood back, hoping they would make their way in. But they didn’t realize it would be a shelter for them. So he tried to shoo the geese in but they ran in all directions. Perplexed, he got some bread and made a trail to the barn door. But they still didn’t catch on. Nothing he could do would get them into the warmth and shelter of the Barn.

Feeling totally frustrated, he exclaimed, ‘Why don’t they follow me? Can’t they see this is the only place where they can survive the storm? How can I possibly get them to follow me?’ He thought for a moment and then realized that they would not follow a human.

He said to himself, ‘How can I possibly save them? The only way would be for me to become a goose. If only I could become like one of them. Then I could save them. They would follow me and I would lead them to safety.’

At that moment he stopped and realized what he had said. The words reverberated in his head. ‘If only I could become like one of them, then I could save them’. Then, at last, he understood God’s heart towards mankind. He fell on his knees in the snow and worshipped Him!

*This true story appears on one of the **Christmas Cards with a Message**, which you can see at www.branchpress.com . The White Goose is the Celtic symbol of the Holy Spirit!*

22. THE WINE MERCHANT

It was Friday morning when James, a wine merchant from Reading, gave me a cold call to sell me some cheap wine. Ten minutes later he had not succeeded, though I was a bit troubled. Should I have had pity on him?

He then discovered that I was a wine merchant too. But my wine was the best – the new wine of the Spirit – and it was free! It turned out that James was from a Church of Scotland background but had no relationship with Jesus.

I gave James my testimony and then asked if he would like to receive Jesus as his saviour and be born again. He seemed keen so we prayed together the sinner's prayer. I then asked him how he felt.

‘Marvellous’, he said, ‘Fantastic. I feel wonderful.’

I then sent him ‘Now you have received Christ’ and a Voice magazine to help him on his way. A call to the Bishop of Reading also arranged for a follow up call from a local Church.

Opportunities are not always as obvious as this but they are a daily occurrence if we are on the look out.

23. THE CLOUD OF DARKNESS

Susan had just given birth to our third child, David, at the Norwich Hospital. She was asleep in a private room when she suddenly woke up in the middle of the night.

She said it seemed as if a grey cloud covered her. She could not breathe, move or even think. She was paralysed. But from deep down inside her the word JESUS reverberated in her soul. Immediately she was free!

A similar experience occurred to me when I had cancer. I was staying with my Mother in London. One morning, after my usual time of prayer, I left my Bible closed on my bed while I went to have breakfast.

When I returned to my room later I was amazed to find the Bible lying open in a corner of the room. The page was torn at the words:

*They say, 'A deadly thing has fastened upon him
He will not rise from where he lies.'*

Psalm 41:8

There was no one else in the Flat and my Mother had not been in my room. The only explanation was that some demonic force had flung the Word of God onto the floor and drawn my attention to a verse that would appear to prophesy my death.

Happily I was able to recognise, rebuke and bind every demonic power sent against me. That was seventeen years ago. There has been no re-occurrence of the cancer!

It is comforting to read in Job 1:10 that God puts a hedge around His servants to protect them. Satan can do nothing to God's servants without His permission. Job 2:3.

24. COMFORT FOR THE FAINT HEARTED

Francois-Louis Blosius. Benedictine Abbot in France. 1506 - 1566

‘Oh my beloved, be not anxious concerning tomorrow. Thou shall encounter nothing of which I am not already cognizant. My mercy is concealed within every storm cloud. My grace flows beneath every cross. My wisdom has conceived a solution to every perplexity.

I have deliberately set obstacles in thy path to test thy prowess. I shall not always cause favourable winds to blow upon thy barque for then thou would be at ease and would grow soft and dull. It is when the wind is high and the waves are threatening that ye become alert and keen and thus I can strengthen thy spiritual fibre.

The storm is not a thing to fear but rather to welcome. Ye shall learn to head into the wind with sheer delight as soon as ye have made the discovery that in the time of stress and strain ye have the clearest revelation of myself.

Nay, ye need have no fear. Ye need not fear the fickleness of providence for behind all that looks like utter chaos I have a plan that is working for good on thy behalf. Miracles burst forth out of the moist cold soil of human tragedy.

Love and trust me and stay in a place of humility.’

25. A WINCHESTER WALKABOUT 14.9.2007.

1. At Sainsbury's petrol station I realised I had a captive audience in the man filling his car opposite. The conversation continued in the shop. He accepted a Voice Magazine of Christian testimonies.
2. A man queue barged to the till so I tapped him on the shoulder to tell him he had earned my special blessing for persecuting me. Tried to give him Voice but said he was a Jehovah's Witness.
3. At Winchester College, a porter hurried past me on his way fishing. He kept his head down as I had spoken to him before. I ran after him and asked if God had got him on the bank yet, then he would become a fisher of men. Not yet!
4. Spoke to three electricians laying a cable, introducing them to the gangster who had a vision of Jesus just before he committed suicide. He is now a Vicar. Gave them his story.
5. Asked a sixteen year old College boy if he believed in God. He thought hard and said 'Yes'. I replied, 'How weird – really?' 'Well', he said, 'sometimes'! Encouraged him with Voice.
6. Accosted a tourist at the College gate and asked if he was an American Professor. 'No', he said, 'a Surrey Atheist.' Told him the stories of two ex Atheists Unimpressed! Lord have mercy.
7. Spoke to retired business man at Cathedral bookstall. Gave him my testimony No Easy Ride.
8. Spoke to another man at bookshop. He had been a Director of Kleinworts Bank. I shared a room at Oxford with his former Chairman and his family came from Mulbarton in Norfolk where I had taken a Healing Service the Sunday before Coincidences galore! Gave him my testimony of starting a bank with no money.
9. I was disobedient failing to talk to distinguished looking man at the Cathedral West door. But the Lord had a back up plan. As I came out of Cadogans Clothes Shop there he was. So I told him I was meant to talk to him. He was a former Royal Navy Captain and Church Warden.
10. At Cadogans I cried loudly, 'Woe is me' three times. The dramatic draws a crowd. Four young men appeared looking stunned. 'I have missed the August sale,' I cried. One young man fled at the mention of God but the rest listened attentively to my testimony and were given Voice.
11. Called in at the Museum and sang Flanagan and Allen's 'Spread a little love and laughter in your labour' to Marie (RC) and Tanya. They loved it.
12. Walking back across the Cathedral Close I passed a young man sitting on the grass The Lord said, 'He is considering his future.' So I went back and sat beside him and said, 'You are considering your future.' 'Yes', he said. Told him God had a plan for his life.

So I came home drenched with joy. Anyone can be a witness in the way God shows them. You just have to get out of the boat.

For further inspiration see 'Rescue' at www.branchpress.com

26. APHIDS

A Pastor in the mid-west of the United States had a Church member visit him. As they walked in the garden the Church member said.

‘You have a problem with Aphids on your roses.’

‘What should I do about it?’ asked the Pastor

‘You have a choice. If you are a man of God you can curse them in the name of the Lord and they will drop off. Alternatively you can spray them.’

The Pastor felt he was on the spot. Of course he was a man of God. So he cursed the Aphids. Nothing happened !

When the Church member had left the Pastor repented before the Lord.

‘I am sorry Lord; I did not have the faith to curse those Aphids.

Please give the faith for cursing Aphids.’

The Pastor did not fast and pray or search the Scriptures. He knew the Word of God. He just waited on God. A week passed by. Then one morning, as he walked through his hallway, he felt anointed with the gift of faith to curse Aphids.

He went straight out to his rose bushes and cursed the Aphids.

They all fell off!

I believe this is a very revealing story. ‘Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours.’ Mark 11:24. It suggests that the ability to ‘believe you have received’ is the gift of faith. The sovereignty is always with God. The key is to pray in God’s will.

27. IT WORKS!

We were with 2000 hungry Catholics at the ‘Celebrate’ Camp at Ilfracombe organised by Charles and Sue Whitehead. I had spoken on ‘Walking as Jesus walked’ on the Tuesday evening, emphasizing the need to hear and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit.

On the Thursday evening a car pulled up alongside us as we walked to the meeting. A lady in her mid forties wound down the window and shouted, ‘It works, it works!’ ‘What do you mean’, I asked? ‘What works?’

‘Your telling us to hear and obey the Holy Spirit’ said the lady. Last night I was sitting next to a man in his early thirties. I felt the Lord tell me to ask him, ‘When am I going to hear from you?’

I panicked! Was it God? Eventually I realised there was only one way to find out. So I said, “I think God is telling me to ask you, ‘When am I going to hear from you?’”

‘Hear about what?’, he asked.

Then I was really amazed to hear myself say, ‘About becoming a Priest!’

The young man looked astonished. ‘I have just resigned as an Accountant,’ he said, ‘and I was wondering if God wanted me to become a Priest!’

28. HOUNDS IN FULL CRY

In prayer one morning I was grumbling about the state of the Church. So often, it seemed, they had forgotten their real call to take the Gospel to the world and instead were more concerned with Church politics.

Then a picture came into my mind. I saw foxhounds in their kennels. There was an open exercise area where they were wandering about looking bored. Some were snarling and backbiting each other. Others were laid out asleep in the sun. One or two were scratching for fleas. It was not a happy picture.

Then I saw them in full cry after the fox. They were alert, stretched to their limits, bright eyed, working in harmony with a common objective. No boredom or backbiting was evident. They were fulfilled by performing the purpose for which they had been created.

I realised what the Lord was saying. A healthy, happy Church is to be found where evangelism is the top priority.

29. DEAD SEA FISHING!

The Lord, for some good reason, has never allowed me to have more money than that needed to pay the bills. I have never owned a house. Nothing has been allowed to replace God as my security.

But my entrepreneurial mind has often, over the years, discussed with the Lord the thought that I would get the fishing rights on the Dead Sea. Then, when the prophecy of Ezekiel 47 is fulfilled in the Millennium and the Dead Sea becomes fresh and filled with every kind of fish, I would become a Millionaire!

Then one morning in 2004 it seemed as if the Lord said to me,

*'You have been talking about this for long enough.
Why don't you do something about it?'*

The idea quickly developed. Having got the fishing rights we would sell Fishing Licences for \$100 each on the internet with the proceeds going to bless Israel by building orphanages and other charitable works.

The only trouble was that I had been involved in a Court Case. Such a proposition would surely be rejected as a scam. But talking it over with my old friend Michael Fenton-Jones, the UK President of the International Christian Chamber of Commerce, it turned out that he had had a similar prophecy about the end times.

So Michael shouldered the Vision. After years of expense and magnificent effort he succeeded in getting the fishing rights from the local Council. He produced a Licence to Fish in the Dead Sea and gathered round him an International Council of leading Christian Business Men.

Now you can get a licence to fish in the Dead Sea from www.deadseafishing.net and hang it in your living room to show to guests. The conversation will then inevitably turn to prophecy and their fulfilment as evidence that the Bible is indeed the inspired Word of God.

30. GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES

It was on the morning train back to Norwich. Two delightful young ladies called Nikki and Katie came to sit next to me. They were blond, giggly and fun! So we chatted happily about Jesus who was often fun to be with for those who loved him.

But just in front of me, sitting on a tip-up seat by the door, was a tall, dark, good looking young man in his thirties talking to a lady colleague. I could see all his talents and potential as an evangelist. It reminded me of Jesus who looked at the rich young Ruler and loved him.

I felt a gentle urging to talk to him but resisted till we were almost at Ipswich. After all, was I not well employed talking to these nice young ladies? Eventually I had to see if I was missing anything. So I got up and asked him,

‘What do you do for a living?’

‘I am a Lawyer’ he replied.

‘Then you are very privileged to be talking to me’, I said. ‘I have been in the Dock in a Criminal Trial for longer than anyone in the History of the World - seventeen months - it’s in the Guinness Book of Records!’

He and his colleague were duly impressed so I added, ‘You had better read this collection of wonder stories. Many of them happened on this train.’ I passed ‘The Desert Road South of Jerusalem’ to the young man who opened it at random and began to read story no 17 ‘Those who bless the Jews....’

As the train stopped at Ipswich where he was getting off the young man said,

‘Having read this story I will read the rest. I am a Jew!’

31. SECURITY FOR A LOAN

My Massey Ferguson Tractor Dealership had a problem. We had done a major repair on a tractor costing £6,000 for a farmer who was notorious for paying his bills late. He was also rumoured to be in financial difficulties. In the circumstances it seemed wise not to return his tractor until we had been paid.

The only trouble was that it was the ploughing season after harvest. I knew he needed the tractor. Then I remembered the scripture which says that when we take a man's cloak as security for a debt we must return it when it is needed at nightfall or he will be cold.

We are known to be a Christian Company which makes it imperative that we practise what we preach. I felt we had no alternative but to return the tractor and trust the farmer would repay the debt. The Lord is our source, and if we lose out by following the law of love, we can trust Him to make it up in other ways. The farmer, something of a hard nut, was visibly touched.

A few months later the farmer gave up his rented farm and we never got paid. When I asked the Lord about this he showed me something I had missed. When the cloak is given back at nightfall it is only on the basis that it is re-possessed the following morning.

If I had read the scripture more carefully I would have returned the tractor only on the basis that it belonged to my company until the debt was paid. A disaster in financial terms, but who knows if this act of kindness may not be one of a chain of events that will one day lead this farmer to Christ.

We never stop learning!

32. THE BROWN PAPER ENVELOPE

The rent demand had arrived the previous week on 12th October. £2,800 was required and I had an overdraft of £1,700. Where was £4,500 to come from I wondered.

The only solution was to use up what was left of my pension which was meant to have lasted until the following April. So I sent a fax to the Axa Sun Life to request the draw down.

The following Monday a brown paper envelope arrived in the post with something inside. Someone returning one of my booklets with a request never to be sent such stuff again, I surmised.

I opened it last. Inside was the most beautiful thing. The Fire Sonnets by Roger Wagner hand set by the Bezalel Press, 62 Rose Hill, Oxford. OX4 4HS

I love Sonnets. I have even written a few myself. But these were like jewels. All about the Day of the Lord and the Final Harvest illustrated by glorious woodcuts that spoke of Samuel Palmer. One wanted to read and meditate and never have enough.

This wonderful introduction to a great contemporary artist and poet came from a friend of my daughter Jemimah who had recently become a Christian. I had sent her The Jericho Road and this was her return gift with thanks.

Attached to the Sonnets was a cheque for £5,000. When I called Axa Sun Life to see if I could cancel the draw down they had no record of my fax instruction.

After the tithe the Lord had provided exactly for my needs.

33. BATTERSEA PARK

It was a gorgeous October Sunday afternoon with the temperature unseasonably in the seventies. I had been having lunch with my children nearby. Afterwards we all went for a stroll in the park.

There were crowds of people walking round this most beautiful of the London Parks. A lady approached alone with an empty buggy. She seemed to be unattached.

‘Madam,’ I cried, ‘may I help you find your lost child?’ She roared with laughter. The child was not lost after all. She went off happily with Voice magazine of Christian testimonies.

Then a couple came down the path with a daughter of perhaps eighteen months dancing along in a harness with the reins firmly held by father. The child was gurgling with delight and incandescent with joy. I stopped them and said,

‘Excuse me, but seeing your daughter so full of joy and innocence in the midst of this dark, chaotic world is the most wonderful sight.’

They were, of course, charmed to hear compliments about their child and went off with Voice.

Another couple appeared, the man wearing a dark blue French beret.

‘How wonderful to see a beret,’ I said. ‘Monsieur Renoir, I presume.’ We had a good laugh and it transpired that the lady was a Church goer. I gave my testimony and they went off with Voice.

Another couple in their sixties walked by holding hands. Such a beautiful sight. I walked by on the other side and regretted it bitterly a moment later. I could have sung, ‘We’re holding hands, life is getting glamorous.’ From the old musical ‘Salad Days.’ They would surely have swooned.

Offering to help, saying something complimentary, always opens a door. So many opportunities are given by the Holy Spirit to start a conversation if we make ourselves available and say, ‘Here am I, Lord, send me.’

34. THE BREAD TIN

My wife is an expert cook, hence my advice to young men,
'Above all, marry a cook. Looks may fade but cooking improves.'

Baking bread is one of Susan's enthusiasms. Multi grain with all sorts of extras make her loaves very popular. When they come out of the oven in their tin, Susan tips them up onto a wire mesh platform to cool off.

One day she tipped the first loaf out but a chunk of bread stuck to the tin. As the Priest of the family I saw an opportunity to give my wife some spiritual instruction.

I explained that we need to involve God in the ordinary chores of life especially when we think we know how to do it and don't need His help. I pointed out the need for the humility of helplessness before God which says,

'I can do no good thing without your help.'

I proceeded to demonstrate my teaching with the second tin. I laid hands upon it, calling down the mercy of God and the anointing of the Holy Spirit to ease the bread out 'not by might, not by power, but by my Holy Spirit'. It was a great prayer.

What happened next was astonishing. I tipped the tin over with a flourish but could not resist giving it a knock on the top of the stove to make up for any lack of divine favour. The loaf came out, but left an even bigger chunk stuck to the tin.

When Moses, with a similar lack of faith, struck the Rock with his rod instead of just speaking to it to get water as God had said, he was denied entry to the Promised Land.

Fortunately my sentence was less severe; just a shrivelling look from my wife!

35. MY FATHER'S VOICE

The Testimony of Debbie Hunt

I was jogging through Battersea Park, listening to Michael Jackson, and not feeling holy at all. I ran past a girl, maybe 30 years old, wearing a bright orange tracksuit. A voice inside my head said 'Go tell her that I love her and she shines brightly for me.' I ran on but, to my dismay, it came again 'Go tell her that I love her and she shines so brightly for me.' Trying to practice obedience (not sure if it was God, thought it probably wasn't, but what could I lose?) I turned round and began to walk towards her. Then I got scared and turned back, only to hear the voice again. Finally, extremely embarrassed, I approached the woman in the tracksuit.

'I am sorry to bother you, but I am a Christian, and as I ran past you I just felt as though God wanted you to know that you shine brightly for him, and that He loves you. I don't normally do this, but just felt I had to tell you'

She began to cry. Tears ran down her face, as she told me her story.

Her name was Amber. She had just moved down from North London, and was living round the corner. That morning she had decided to go for a walk, and was feeling low and lonely. She had stopped by the lake, and was praying "Father God, show me that you are real and that you have a plan for me being here" Then, as I jogged past, she prayed that I would stop and talk with her. She watched me run on, and then stop and turn, and then turn away again. So she had prayed again that I would stop and chat. It was then that I turned round.

Now I began to cry. Partly out of shock; realising I had heard the Voice of God. I thought it was me, my thoughts, my ideas...

We walked round the park, talking non-stop, and exchanged numbers. This was the beginning of what has been a two-year friendship. Amber had a breakdown and spent time in hospital due to mental illness and attempted suicide. When she was finally discharged, she began to piece her life back together, and was housed in a secure unit in Battersea. I have had the utter privilege of watching Amber venture along the path of life over these past two years as she has moved from a fragile and vulnerable woman, to becoming a confident lady that is taking life by storm. She found a good church where she has become a lay reader and has moved out of the secure unit, into a home where she lives with others.

What amazed me was the discovery that the still quiet voice was God! It is a familiar voice that I hear the whole time. It has made me realise that God is so desperate to speak to me and so desperate for people to know how much He loves them. I was feeling so un-spiritual that day, it was such a boost to my faith to realise that God will use me whatever state I am in. What a beautiful thought.

36. THE APPOINTED TIME

A Meditation by Francis Frangipane

In spite of escalating world turmoil, there still remains one last outpouring of mercy before the time of the end (Matthew 24:14; Acts 2:17). This supernatural season is not something for which we must beg God. No, its coming has been predetermined. It is the “appointed time” of the Lord.

An “appointed time” is an open display of the sovereignty and power of God. In it, we discover with absolute certainty that nothing is impossible for God. It is a season when God fulfils the hopes and dreams of His people. The Psalmist wrote, “But You, O Lord, abide forever, and your name to all generations. You will arise and have compassion on Zion; for it is time to be gracious to her, for the appointed time has come” (Psalm 102:12-13).

During an “appointed time,” it is as though the Lord physically rises and moves in unflinching compassion on behalf of His people. It is the time when divine promises, dreams, and spiritual hopes are fulfilled. Recall how Abraham and Sarah had waited in faith for a quarter century for the promise of God. Finally, as they neared one hundred years of age, the Lord told Abraham, “At the appointed time I will return to you . . . and Sarah will have a son” (Genesis 18:14). One year later, “at the appointed time” (Genesis 21:2), Isaac was born to aged parents!

While there are, indeed, appointed times of judgment (Mark 13:33), the phrase most frequently represents a time, preset by God, when He invades mankind with “. . . wonders, plans formed long ago, that unfold with perfect faithfulness” (Isaiah 25:1).

Demons may stand arrayed against the Lord; nations may align themselves to fight Him. It does not matter. He who sits in the heavens laughs. For He makes all things His servants (Ps 119:91), even His enemies’ plans for evil are reversed and made to serve the purpose of God (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28; Acts 2:22-24).

If God has given you a vision, a spiritual hope or dream for your future, there will be an appointed time when that which God spoke comes to pass. Thus the Lord assures us, “Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. For the vision is yet for the appointed time. It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay” (Habakkuk 2:2-3).

If you have a vision or promise from God, that vision also has a time of fulfilment. Though it tarries, wait for it. For it will certainly come to pass at the appointed time.

Appointed Servants of God

Prior to the unveiling of an appointed time, God has, of course, been actively working in hiddenness. When He rises and moves, He is moving the power grid He laid in secret. The work manifests suddenly, but the preparation may have taken years. Likewise, the Lord also appoints people. He predestines the time of their breakthrough in advance, even as He works silently within their hearts in preparation.

Consider the Lord's word to His disciples. He said:

“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain.” --John 15:16

So, let us make no mistake: God chose us. Yet, He who chose us also appointed us to bear fruit. The same power that worked in us to surrender and then inspired our faith continues to work in our hearts throughout our days, appointing us to bear fruit.

You may look at your life and feel unfruitful, but God is not done with you yet. Do you believe God has chosen you? Then believe also that He has appointed you to bear fruit. The same power that drew you to Christ is now working to conform you to Him as well.

The Enemy's Work

One may argue, “But I know people who were good Christians who have fallen away.” Yes, but in most cases you will find that, at some point, they fell into deep disappointment about some failed, spiritual expectation. Disappointment is not just a sad state of mind; deep disappointment can actually sever our hearts from faith. It can “dis-appoint” us from our appointed destiny.

I have known many who were doing well, moving toward their appointed destiny. The future God had for them seemed almost close enough to taste. Then they became disappointed in someone or something. By accepting disappointment into their spirits, a bitter, cold winter took over their souls, and their faith turned dormant.

When one is dis-appointed, he is cut off from his appointment with destiny. The appointment remains in the heart of God, but the individual is isolated. It is here, even in the throes of disappointment, that the righteous must learn to live by faith (see Habakkuk 2:1-4).

I, too, have been through disappointment. Indeed, the promise of God was so distant that it seemed like a foolish spiritual fantasy. For nearly three years, I had not been involved in pastoral ministry. No doors would open. God was doing a work in my soul to cause me to trust Him, but I felt abandoned and cut off from my calling. In a moment of abject honesty, I prayed, “Lord, You promised that those who believed in You would not be disappointed. Master, You know all things. Look at my heart. I am full of disappointment.”

The Lord simply replied, “You’re life is not over.” Of course, I knew that. I was a healthy, young man not older than forty. Yet, the spell of disappointment had flooded my soul with darkness, causing me to conclude erroneously that God was done with me.

Listen well my friend: Satan can stop our destiny if we accept the power of disappointment into our lives. Once we accept the heaviness of a deep disappointment, backsliding is often not far away. You see, dis-appointment cuts us off from our vision, and without a vision, people perish.

Therefore, let me ask you: are you carrying disappointment in your heart? Renounce it. Forgive those who have let you down. Have you personally or morally failed? Repent deeply and return to your Redeemer. Right now, I ask the Holy Spirit to remove disappointment’s paralysing sting! Beloved, the Spirit of God has come to release you from the effect of the dis-appointment. He reminds you, “Your appointment with the plans I have for you is still set.”

Holy Spirit, I confess that disappointment has crept into my soul. I forgive those who have disappointed me and release them back to You. I also forgive myself for accepting disappointment. I renounce unbelief and submit again to Your call on my life. Lord, prepare me again to move into the future You have appointed for my life. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

37. MAD AT GOD

But respectfully!

Recently I was on one of my missionary walks round the lanes of Bramerton in Norfolk complaining to God.

‘Lord, it is not good enough. Here I am bursting with the Gospel, talking to everyone every day that you bring across my path, giving out testimony magazines, inviting people to Full Gospel Business Men’s Dinners, all with seemingly little help from you. I thought this was meant to be a co-operative effort, Lord. Aren’t we co-workers? The fields are white and there are few labourers.

The next day was our Full Gospel lunch at the Maids Head. A week earlier a sudden breeze had blown away one of our lunch programmes at a car park in Norwich. A man passing by had picked it up for me.

‘Keep it.’ I said, ‘Bring your wife next Thursday and be my guests at the lunch.’

To my surprise they turned up and after the lunch they were both born again and added to Hellesdon Church!

This made me, if possible, more mad at God.

‘Lord, if it is that easy, (and all things are easy to you), why not more often?’

The next Wednesday I was with my wife in a dress shop at Burnham Market buying an outfit for our son’s wedding. I talked to Lesley, the Vendeuse, about God, as one does. Later I sent her a bit of my testimony called ‘*No Easy Ride.*’

The next Saturday Lesley went down to Sussex to her niece’s twenty first birthday party. There she was talking to a young man who told her he came from Norfolk but was working for a Christian Charity in London called ‘The Besom’.

‘That’s odd,’ Lesley said, ‘I had a strange man in my shop this week who talked to me about God and then sent me his story which amazed me. I wonder if you know him? His name is John Wright.’

The young man replied, ‘That’s my Dad!’

This is a nice illustration of Archbishop William Temple’s famous dictum, ‘When I pray, coincidences happen. When I don’t, they don’t!’

38. ANTHRAX

We were on the Costa del Sol at the beginning of October speaking at Full Gospel Business Men's outreach meetings and Churches.

At a Saturday morning breakfast at Fuengerola I had a word of knowledge that someone had Anthrax. This seemed weird, to say the least. But as I endlessly teach people to speak out the seeming foolishness that you are given and leave the outcome to God I knew I had to ask who had Anthrax. Not surprisingly no one responded.

The next word was for someone with a big itch. A lady immediately responded. She had been bitten by a Mosquito. Her hand had blown up and was itching furiously. She was prayed for and the itch and swelling subsided. Other words followed which resulted in more gifts of healing.

The next day we visited the home of the lady with the itch. As I came in the door she said,

‘John, sit down in that chair and listen to what I have to say to you. When you mentioned Anthrax I felt prompted, when I got home, to look it up on the Internet. First, I found that Anthrax comes from areas where there are cattle, sheep and goats. We have been in the country for the past three days walking amongst sheep and goats which is where I was bitten. Secondly, the first symptom of Anthrax contracted through an open wound or by Mosquito bite is a swelling and acute itching. Thirdly the next symptom is similar to a virus infection – shivering, temperature etc. I had all these symptoms and have no doubt that I had Anthrax and that the Lord has healed me.’

I was quite glad I was sitting down!

39. POLITENESS

The testimony of Penny Money-Coutts

A couple were asked by their daughter and son in law, who lived nearby, if they could show two friends round their garden.

They came on a warm summer's day. The two couples looked on fondly as their terriers raced around the lawn having a great time.

Then the couple joined them. However, for ten minutes they stood unnoticed and seemingly ignored. Eventually, feeling rather exasperated, the mother said to her daughter

'Do you think you could introduce us?'

A flurry of embarrassed exchanges took place and then normal conversation flowed.

That evening, when the Mother was telling the Lord how miffed she had felt at the lack of manners, He said quietly, 'That's how I feel when you don't introduce Me!'

There is a deep significance in this story. Jesus said that when people receive those who know Him, they receive Him also! So when we talk to people Jesus is standing there waiting to be introduced. How embarrassed we would be to talk to people in the presence of Her Majesty, the Queen, and fail to introduce them to her.

40. THE COMMUNIST ATHEIST

My cousin, Stephen Nash, was our Ambassador in Georgia so I went out to see him.

Stephen kindly invited a neighbour to join us for lunch at his residence in Tbilisi. He spoke perfect English and told me his story.

“I was a Communist, Atheist, Nuclear Physicist in the Space Programme in Soviet Russia. I looked at the stars, all seventy trillion, trillion of them. They were all dead with no life as we know it on planet Earth.

I compared this emptiness with the millions of insects, flora and fauna that we see around us. I realised that all these sights, sounds, smells and tastes could only have one answer. I knew, if I was honest, that such beauty that we behold on Earth must have come from a Creator. To deny it was as silly as denying that an oil painting had an artist who painted it.

So I went to Church to look for this Creator and found Him. I became a Christian. Then one day an Angel appeared to me and said, ‘You are to be a Priest.’ So I became a Priest!”

He is now Father Zachariah in the Georgian Orthodox Church in Tbilisi.

41. THE RAIN OVER THE HEDGE

The Testimony of Leonora Gotts

Leonora Gotts farmed a smallholding in our village in Norfolk. Her husband had died the year before so that when harvest came she had no help except from her two sons who had jobs elsewhere and could only work on a Saturday.

The weather forecast for Saturday was dire. Two inches of rain were expected in Norfolk. So Leonora, with her two sons Kevin and Tony, got on their knees on their living room carpet on the Friday night. They had read in Amos 4:7 that God could send rain on one city but not on the next, on one field but not on the next.

So they asked God to send the rain over the hedge from the field of wheat they had to harvest. The next morning the clouds were black and threatening. There was a smell of rain. But they took out the combine and started harvesting.

Two inches of rain fell in Norfolk that day. It poured down in our parish. But on the field they were harvesting all the rain fell over the hedge. Until seven o'clock in the evening, as they closed the barn door, the heavens opened.

The God of Amos evidently has not changed!

42. PIGEONS ON THE PEAS

The testimony of Colin King, farmer at Winterton on Sea, Norfolk.

I had contracted with Birds Eye to grow twenty-six acres of peas. The Lord spoke to me one morning and said, *'I will bless you through this field of peas.'*

But when the peas came through they were attacked by a great flock of several hundred pigeons. I went out with my gun and of course they flew away. But I knew as soon as my back was turned they would destroy the crop.

So I complained to God, 'Lord, you said you were going to bless me but look at what is happening. Soon I will have no peas left.'

'Take authority over the pigeons!' That did sound really weird, but I knew that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man. I reflected that Jesus had said that we would do the things that He did. I remembered the many miracles of nature in the Bible, when God sent a worm to eat Jonah's gourd, a bear to discipline unruly children, a raven to feed Elijah.

So next morning I went to the field without my gun. As the pigeons flew up I rebuked them in the name of the Lord and commanded them not to return. I did feel a bit silly! The next morning there were only twelve pigeons on the field. I surmised that they had not been there the day before so I rebuked them as well. From then on I had no more trouble from pigeons, which fed on a neighbour's sugar beet instead.

At harvest time I asked the Birds Eye harvester driver what the normal yield from a field of peas should be.

'Three tons an acre', he said.

That year we gathered six tons of peas per acre. The Lord had surely watched over His word to perform it!

43. GOOSY GANDER

Some people will meander
But not my goosy gander;
He'd run straight up to me,
Snickering with glee.
Affectionate, his beak
A hidden treat would seek.
He had the cheek!

His naughty eye still twinkled
Through passing years though wrinkled,
Then came the night he died.
Returning home I cried,
'All creatures have their end,
Although our hearts they rend.'
He was my friend.

I held him in my arms
Remembering his charms.
As heavens gates I stormed,
His body strangely warmed,
He opened up his eye!
I gasped and gave a cry,
'Do geese not die?'

He stayed for hours seven
Then rose again to heaven.
But now my heart was buoyed,
Exultant, overjoyed,
As on that Easter morn
Mary no more forlorn.
The veil was torn!

John Wright
19.7.2005

This poem commemorates the extraordinary corroborated story told to me by Sylvia Hawkins at Eden Hall, Kelso, Scotland. A pet Gander died while she was away overnight. On her return she held his dear body, stiff with rigor mortis, in her arms, saddened she had not been there to help him on his way. Suddenly, unbelievably, the Lord restored him for a few hours so that she could say goodbye!

44. FORGIVENESS

A frail, black woman stands slowly to her feet. She is something over seventy years of age. Facing her across the room are several white police officers, one of whom, Mr van der Broek, has just been tried and found to be implicated in the murders of the woman's son and husband some years before.

He had come to the woman's home, taken her son, shot him at point blank range and then burned the young man's body on a fire while he and his officers went to a party nearby. Several years later, van der Broek and his cohorts had returned to take away her husband as well. For many months she heard nothing of his whereabouts. Then, almost two years after her husband's disappearance, van der Broek came back to fetch the woman herself. How vividly she remembers that evening, going to a place beside a river where she was shown her husband, bound and beaten, but still strong in Spirit, lying on a pile of wood. The last words she heard from his lips as the officers poured gasoline over his body and set him alight were, 'Father, forgive them....'

Now the woman stands in the courtroom and listens to the confessions offered by Mr van der Broek. A member of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission turns to her and asks, 'So what do you want? How should justice be done to this man who has so brutally destroyed your family?' 'I want three things', begins the old woman, calmly but confidently. 'I want first to be taken to the place where my husband's body was burned so that I can gather up the dust and give his remains a decent burial.' She pauses, then continues. 'My husband and son were my only family; I want secondly therefore, for Mr van der Broek to become my son. I would like for him to come twice a month to the ghetto and spend a day with me so that I can pour out on him whatever love I still have remaining in me'. 'Finally', she says, 'I want a third thing. This was also the wish of my husband. I would ask someone to kindly come to my side and lead me across the courtroom so that I can take Mr van der Broek in my arms, embrace him and let him know that he is truly forgiven.'

As a court assistant came to lead the elderly woman across the room, Mr van der Broek, overwhelmed by what he has just heard, faints. As he does, those in the courtroom, family, friends, neighbours - all victims of decades of oppression and injustice - begin to sing, softly and assuredly, 'Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch...'

45. THE ARROW IN THE QUIVER.

A Vision received by Dr Helen Roseveare

I saw Jesus walking through a forest. His eye lighted upon a fine, straight branch from a tree. He saw that one day it would make a great arrow. So he took his knife and cut off the branch. It was so proud to have been chosen by God Incarnate.

It was still a great shock to be torn away from its mother tree. It was even worse when all the side branches, all the idolatries which would deflect it from its course, were lovingly cut away. Then even worse. The bumps where the branches had been cut away were carefully sandpapered to a smooth finish. Worse was to follow! Jesus took his knife and ripped down the length of the branch removing its protective bark. Its reputation was left all in tatters.

In the midst of so much pain the branch suddenly got an inkling of what Jesus was about. It was being turned into an arrow, no doubt for some great purpose. It began to get excited as the steel tip was fitted at one end and the feathers at the other end. Finally the varnish was applied and the words written in red down the shaft,
'Holy to the Lord'.

Jesus took the branch, now transformed into an arrow, into his hands. The arrow felt the great love of the Lord and his great delight in his creation. No doubt The Lord had prepared it for some great target. But then the arrow was put into the quiver. It was in darkness; there was no presence of the Lord. The arrow could not know if the war might be over before Jesus fitted it to His bow.

And this is how we may feel. After the Lord has invested so much in our lives, it may seem that we have been put aside and will never be used in the great scheme of things. But take courage!

'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in the Lord, I will again praise Him, my help and my God.' Psalm 42:11.

'The Lord will fulfil His purpose for me.' Psalm 138:8.

46. A TRIAL OF FAITH

Marty Tharp is an American Evangelist. He travels to Norfolk, England each autumn with his family in a big van. They go round the schools, attracting the children with loud music, and then preach the Gospel to them. He is very popular.

One August, as they were preparing to set out, Marty had a massive heart attack. He was in hospital, wired up to monitors, when God spoke to him. ‘This is not from me. Go to Norfolk and I will heal you!’

So Marty pulled all the wires off his chest and got out of bed. All the alarms went off and the room filled with Doctors and nurses. They would not let him go until he signed a document exonerating the hospital from the likely dire consequences of his departure. Medically speaking, it was sheer folly.

They arrived in Norfolk where Marty had a stroke. His right arm was paralysed but, with physiotherapy, movement was restored. This was necessary as only Marty could drive the van. Then he had another small stroke. Everyone told him he was a fool to continue.

With the mission to Norfolk completed Marty and his family set off across England to catch the Irish Ferry at Anglesey. He felt terrible and was only too well aware that if he died at the wheel he might cause a major accident in which other people and his family would be at risk. Then his Pastor from America called him on his mobile.

‘Marty, we love you. Be wise. Come home and have an operation and get well for next year. We will pay all your costs. Please come home!’

Marty got out of the van and sat on the roadside. Had God really spoken to him? They were coming to the M1 where they had to turn left to go home or right to go to Anglesey. Marty tried to turn left but the wheel would not turn! So they turned right and carried on to Anglesey.

When he had driven the van onto the ferry, Marty had to climb six flights of steps up to the saloon. At each step he had to rest from the acute angina pain. He was sweating and knew he could die at any moment. The ferry was half way across to Belfast before Marty made it to the saloon and collapsed into an armchair. Then the power of God fell on him and he was completely healed!

I heard Marty give this testimony a week later at the Irish Convention of the Full Gospel Business Men. When he finished there was not a dry eye in the room. It is one of the greatest trials of faith I have ever heard.

47. THE HALF INCH SPANNER

The Testimony of Lennie Fisher

I was in business in Florida. One morning I set off to do some work on my boat about twenty miles to the south. It was a simple job. All I needed was a half inch spanner. After that I had to hurry back for a very important lunch with the most influential business man on the coast. This lunch, I knew, would make all the difference to my prospects.

On the way down I passed a tramp walking along the highway. It was getting hot and I felt sorry for him. When I got to the boat I found I had left behind the half-inch spanner. Somewhat vexed, I headed back for the lunch date. On the way I saw the tramp again, a few miles nearer his destination. An inconvenient thought came to me. *'Pick him up.'*

I reckoned there was time to get to the next town and still make my lunch date so I did a U-turn and picked him up. He was very grateful. At the lights coming into the town there was a restaurant at the side of the road. Another of those thoughts came to me. *'Give him a meal.'* This was not reasonable. If I did that I would miss my lunch date. But God is not reasonable. I had to call my friend and apologise that something urgent had cropped up.

The restaurant put us in a dark corner where other guests would hopefully not notice or smell my strange guest. He was hungry and ate a good meal. Over coffee I said to him, 'You must have a story. Do tell me.' 'Well, Yes,' he said, ' I suppose I do'.

'I was a shift foreman at an engineering works. My one ambition was to have my own pick-up truck. Eventually I saved up enough to buy one. I kept it outside our front door and polished it every day. One evening the Works Manager called to see if I would do an extra night shift as the foreman had gone sick. It was a filthy night with a lot of roadworks and mud which would have messed up my pick-up. I asked my wife if she would mind putting our two kids in the back of her car and take me down. She agreed and off we went.

On the way back a big juggernaut lorry, mistaking the road up sign, ran into my wife and killed her and our two kids. When I eventually got home I saw my pick-up, gleaming and spotless in the lamp light. I put one foot on the threshold and could go no further. I turned round and started walking. I have been walking ever since. I have come to know Jesus and try to bring his love and forgiveness to all the hobos, winos, and drop-outs that I meet on my travels. I guess I know every doss house and railway arch in three States. That was thirty years ago.'

Outside, as we said goodbye, he said to me, 'You have been very kind. On the road I see things and pick them up. I would like to give you a present.' He then felt in his pocket and presented me with – a half-inch spanner!

48. THE HERON

A Heron flew over my head as I walked by the river Yare near my home in Norfolk. As it did so the Lord began to speak to me.

‘Consider how the Heron stands motionless in the water until I bring a fish to it. Then it strikes and the fish is caught. This is how I want you to fish for men. Let me bring the ones I am calling into my kingdom alongside you. Then you can speak to them of my love for those I have created.’

When I got back and told my wife Susan, in some excitement, what the Lord had said she was not impressed. ‘I have been telling you that for years’, she said!

The next week I was in Malta staying in Valletta. As I left the house early one morning to take a fifteen minute walk to meet the new Archbishop a thought came to me.

‘Go by the harbour road.’

This did not make sense and would take longer than going by the direct route along the main street. But sensing an adventure I turned down hill and then began a long ascent past the Excelsior Hotel. As I did so a middle aged Maltese business man overtook me. I apologised for hogging the pavement and we began to talk. He was from the Bank of Valletta so I told him how God had told me to start a bank with no money. Like all Maltese people he had a Catholic background and was delighted to take away my testimony ‘No Easy Ride’ He was well aware it had been a divine appointment.

Nor did it end there. Walking down a long empty road I sensed I should cross over to the far side. I did so and half way down was surprised by a man who seemed to come from nowhere, crossing the road to walk beside me. He was a security guard unusually, for a Maltese, called Leslie which is also my second name. Another coincidence which opened the door to another good talk.

I have no doubt that, if God knows we will talk, He will bring people alongside us on the telephone, on the bus or the train, at Sainsbury’s check out, wherever we are. Then, when we talk to them, we will have that special food that Jesus talked about which is to do the will of the Father.

49. YEHUDA THE HASSID

Yehuda ben Samuel, known as Yehuda the Hassid, (1150-1217), was the founder of Jewish mysticism in Germany. He became so famous that he was consulted by the Bishop of Salzburg and the Duke of Regensburg.

He wrote about 1200 AD that the days were coming when Jerusalem would again be overrun by Islam. On the eighth Jubilee (a period of 50 years Leviticus 25:8-17) after this event Jerusalem would be liberated, but not to Jewish control. Then, on the ninth Jubilee, Jerusalem would be restored to Jewish control and then Messiah would come.

In 1517 the Ottoman Turks did indeed occupy Jerusalem which they held until 1917, the eighth Jubilee, when Jerusalem was liberated, but not to Jewish control. Then on the ninth Jubilee in 1967 the Jews finally got control of Jerusalem in the Six Day War. The tenth Jubilee is 2017.

The Gaon of Vilna (1720-1797) was a mathematician and the father of scientific Biblical research. According to his calculations, Yehuda's Jubilee prophecy started with the Ottoman conquest of 1517. Jerusalem Torah Scholar Shabtai Shiloh has also calculated that Daniel's 2,300 'days', which began with the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, were completed in 1967, the ninth Jubilee.

The sign of a prophet is that what he says comes to pass. That the first three legs of Yehuda's prophecy have happened is remarkable. While his prophecy says that Messiah would not come before the ninth Jubilee, it is not clear whether Messiah will come at any time after the ninth Jubilee or whether he will come before the tenth Jubilee. The structure of the prophecy suggests the latter as a strong possibility.

The Encyclopaedia of Biblical Prophecy lists six hundred and ten prophecies that have to happen before Messiah comes. Of these five hundred and ninety eight have happened. There are only four more still to happen before the start of the final seven year tribulation period.

Jesus said that we should recognise the season of his return, but only His Father knew the hour. It would be like the Days of Noah when all men did continually only the evil that was in their hearts. The earth's crust came under pressure so that the fountains of the deep broke out and there were signs in the heavens. So we must look for Volcanoes, Earthquakes and Tsunamis.

The earth was then, and is now, ripe for God's judgement.

50. THE REFINER OF SILVER

A group of ladies were doing a bible study on Malachi chapter 3 when they came to the words in verse 3,

‘He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.’

When the study was finished one of the ladies felt there was more to the words ‘He will sit’. So she visited the workshop of a silver refiner and asked him to explain the process. When he had finished she asked,

‘But do you sit?’

‘Why, yes, Madam’, he replied, ‘we have to sit and watch very carefully because the process of boiling the silver and raking off the dross can easily go too far and the silver can be spoilt.’

‘How wonderful’, thought the woman as she left the shop, ‘that the Lord watches over the painful process of our sanctification with such care so that there will be no lasting damage.’

At that moment the silver refiner ran out of his workshop to catch her.

‘Madam, there is one thing I forgot to mention. I know when the process is finished and the silver is pure when I can see the reflection of my face on the surface!’

DRIP! DRIP! DRIP!

At a Living Water Conference at Norwich, just before I gave a workshop on 'Prophetic Evangelism', heavy rain fell on the roof. There was a leak just next to our Stand so a bucket was found into which the water fell drip by drip. I sensed God was wanting to say something. When I asked this came to me: *'I have poured out the Gospel on the Church in all its abundance but only a few drips get through to a thirsty world.'* Then I had a picture of a cullender, with water pouring through. Each hole a Christian who has repented and become a witness like Jesus who said to Pilate, *'For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world, to bear witness to the truth.'* John 18:37

A second word came as I was looking at pictures of the famine in the Sudan. I was crying out to God, feeling helpless. What could one do? Then this word came to me, *'You may be upset at ten per cent of the world's population dying from lack of food and water; but what do you think it is like for me, Almighty God, when ninety per cent of the world's population is perishing for want of the Bread of Life and the Living Water which I have given freely to my Church but which they seldom give away.'*

A third deeply shocking picture was of demons walking Poodles to Church. The poodles were Christians, muzzled and on leads. The demons had names, 'Respectability', 'Pride', 'Fear', 'Religion'. When they got to the Church the demons let their charges go. They scampered into the Church yapping, 'Praise the Lord, Hallelujah, Glory to God.' The demons, like nannies, chatted amongst themselves. 'They do love their time in Church each week; it makes them feel good.' When the poodles came out they were muzzled, put on the lead and led away to another fruitless week passing people bleeding and dying on the Jericho Road but not seeing them.

A fourth word came as I was reading the obituaries in my daily paper. Marvellous lives were portrayed of soldiers, statesmen, scientists etc who had made a difference. Then the thought came, *'What do you think their obituary is in heaven?'* 'I don't know, Lord,' I replied. *'Perished, perished, perished!'* came the answer. Only then did I realise that in none of the obituaries had there been any mention of faith in God.

THE HIGH CALLING

If God has called you to be really like Jesus, He will draw you to a life of crucifixion and humility, and put upon you such demands of obedience that you will not be able to follow other people or measure yourself by other Christians; and in many ways He will seem to let other good people do things which He will not let you do.

Other Christians and ministers, who seem religious and useful, may push themselves, pull wires and work schemes to carry out their plans, which you cannot do. If you attempt it, you will meet such failure and rebuke from the Lord as to make you sorely penitent.

Others may boast of themselves, of their work, of their success, of their writings, but the Holy Spirit will not allow you to do any such thing and if you begin, He will lead you into some deep mortification that will make you despise yourself and all your good works.

Others may be allowed to succeed in making money, or have a legacy left to them, but it is likely God will keep you poor, because he wants you to have something far better than gold, namely, a helpless dependence on Him, that He may have the privilege of supplying your needs day by day out of an unseen treasury.

The Lord may let others be honoured and put forward, and keep you hidden in obscurity, because He wants to produce some choice fragrant fruit for His coming glory, which can only be produced in the shade. He may let others be great, but keep you small. He may let others do work for Him and get the credit for it, but He will make you work and toil on without knowing how much you are doing; and then to make your work still more precious, He may let others get the credit for the work which you have done, thus making your reward ten times greater when Jesus comes.

The Holy Spirit will put a strict watch over you, with a jealous love, and will rebuke you for little words and feelings, or for wasting your time, which other Christians never seem distressed over. So make up your mind that God is an infinite Sovereign, and has a right to do as He pleases with His own. He may not explain to you a thousand things which puzzle your reason in His dealings with you, but if you absolutely sell yourself to be his love slave, He will wrap you up in a jealous love and bestow you many blessings which come only to those who are in the inner circle.

Settle it forever, then, that you are to deal directly with the Holy Spirit, and that He is to have the privilege of tying your tongue, or chaining your hands, or closing your eyes, in ways that He does not seem to use with others. Now, when you are so possessed with the Living God that you are in your secret heart pleased and delighted over this peculiar, personal, private, jealous guardianship and management of the Holy Spirit over your life, you will have found the vestibule of heaven.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Received by John Wright 28.6.2005.

1. Background

I have been impressed for some time by the Encyclopaedia of Biblical Prophecy demonstrating that there are 610 prophecies that must precede the second coming and of these 598 have already happened. There are only four more before the start of the final seven year tribulation. This suggests to me that we are in the season of the Lord's return which Jesus told us we would recognise as being like the days of Noah. This is evidenced by lawlessness, 'all men doing continually only the evil which is in their hearts'. By signs in the heavens. By the earth's crust under pressure producing earthquakes, tsunamis etc. By a tiny minority of God fearing people being mocked for believing the unbelievable. By a world which, like Sodom and Gomorrah, has become a stench in God's nostrils and is ripe for judgement.

2. Yehuda the Hassid (see story no 49)

Yehuda was a German 12th century AD Jewish prophet. He wrote towards the end of that century that the days were coming when Jerusalem would be overrun by Islam. On the eighth Jubilee (a period of 50 years) from this date Jerusalem would be liberated but not to Jewish control; on the ninth Jubilee Jerusalem would be returned to Jewish control; then Messiah would come. This could mean before the tenth jubilee. In 1517 the Ottoman Turks overran Jerusalem; in 1917 eight Jubilees later, General Allenby liberated Jerusalem but not to Jewish control; in 1967, the ninth Jubilee, Israel got control of Jerusalem in the six day war. The tenth jubilee is 2017.

3. How can the Church prepare for the panic following world chaos?

In Buenos Aires in 2001 there was panic. The Banks were closed. People could not get money to buy food. The Churches put out 900 prayer stations in the streets. Just two people with a poster saying, 'If you are anxious we will pray for you.' In four days they prayed for 70,000 people and 22,000 made a commitment of some sort to follow Jesus.

4. A Word from the Lord?

I have been saying that the Lord could come by 2017, not as a prophecy, but as an expectation from season watching. This morning I asked the Lord to give me three heads from coins shaken in my hands IF IT WAS TRUE He would return by 2017. I got three heads! Then I asked for confirmation from a second witness in the Word. I was given page 1207 which in my daily Bible is Daniel 2:12-37 – the dream of the Rock (Jesus) crushing all kingdoms and becoming a mountain. I asked for a third witness and opened my bible at random. It was Zechariah 14 speaking of the Lord's return, crushing the nations attacking Jerusalem!

5. Confirmation

Four weeks later at the Norwich Crusade on 23rd July 2005 Benny Hinn opened with a serious word. He said the Lord had told him on July 4th to go home and be alone with God for two days. At the end God told him to warn people of imminent global tribulation. I believe the Lord has also shown me that this **Third Day** Century will start with seven fat years and end with seven thin years of tribulation as in Genesis. This puts the return of the Lord around 2014.

A PROPHETIC WORD

My dear children, I love you all very greatly.

Do not fear the increasing turbulence of the world around you for you are not part of this kingdom. I have caused this turbulence so that many children of this kingdom should look to me. I gave them life and created the world in which they live. I am the only means by which they, like you, may be saved from eternal destruction.

You are in my Kingdom of Light. You have eternal life in Me and your future is entirely in My hand. You have nothing to fear from the turbulence since you are no longer in the kingdom of this world.

You do, however, find yourselves in intimate contact with the children of this kingdom. Every day, if you look carefully, you will see children of this world floating past you. In many cases they are looking to me for relief from their suffering, for re-assurance about their future and for an opportunity to start a new life with me.

I have empowered each one of you with the Holy Spirit who lives within you. He is the agent who performs my will. You are the vessels through whom I have chosen to speak. You are now My light in the world and your words are my words to this world. Do not allow any opportunities to pass. I have purposely created great turbulence in this world, which will only increase, expressly for the purpose of opening the spiritual eyes of the children of this kingdom who come into contact with those who know me.

My Spirit lives within each one of you. He is empowered to speak My words and to reveal My Kingdom in this present world. I am the Lord and I change not.

MEN'S MINISTRIES

Christian Vision for Men (CVM)

CVM exists for evangelism to men of the UK. They resource Churches and workplace fellowships and offer speakers for men's outreach events.

Isabella House, The Avenue, Coombe Down, Bath. BA2 5EH

01225 833748 richard@cvmoffice.fsnet.co.uk www.CVMen.org.uk

The Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI)

An interdenominational ministry in 160 countries calling men back to God and into the Church through testimony after a meal in the power of the Holy Spirit confirmed by signs and wonders! Contact your local Chapter & order Voice testimony magazines from the Field Office at:

PO Box 11, Knutsford, Cheshire. WA16 6QP. Tel: 01565 632667

fgbmf.uk@NTLBusiness.com www.fgbmf.org.uk

GOOD BOOKS from the Branch Press

Prophetic Evangelism by Rev Dr Mark Stibbe £7.99

A brilliant reminder that we are called to seek earnestly the gifts of the Holy Spirit to empower our daily witnessing.

The Desert Road South of Jerusalem by John Wright £3

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