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HE WALKS WITH ME IN OVERALLS

By W. L. Boone

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INTRODUCTION

This small book tells about the journey through one man's life.

Mankind is a relational being, that is, our Maker created us to relate to other beings. He said in Genesis 2:18,

"It is not good that man should be alone".

Without other persons, we are just half fulfilled.

Relationships are the most important aspects of human life -- our relationships to other persons, certainly, but more significantly, to God.

David, the sweet-voiced Psalmist of Israel, felt the beating pulse of human life and living when he penned in earth's dearest prose in Psalms 23:4: "... for Thou art with me. "

Emmanuel (God with man) is the name given by God the Father, to His Son, earth's Savior, and Israel's Messiah.

Jesus has been my life's dearest Friend. He unfailingly touches me with the immortal words of C. Austin Miles:

"And He walks with me, and He talks with me;
"And He tells me I am His Own.
"And the joy we share as we tarry there,
"None other has ever known".

Along with being privileged to live my life as a pastor, the Lord has let me follow in His footsteps as a carpenter. Nothing could be more compatible with church work than building construction.

These pages and chapters were written primarily for our three precious children, Trella, Miriam and Mark. I realize that they may be meaningful to few outside of our immediate family.

The following poem may be offensive to some believers. Some may consider it disrespectful or even sacrilegious, All I can say is that it came from His heart to mine at Easter-time 1992 as we walked and talked together.

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HE WALKS WITH ME IN OVERALLS
by W. L. Boone

He never is behind me for then I could not see Him.
He never walks ahead of me for that would discourage me.
He never walks above me for that would intimidate me.
He never walks hurriedly for that would frighten me.
I am comfortable in His presence.
HE WALKS WITH ME IN OVERALLS.

We talk just like good friends do.
He listens courteously and quietly as I talk to Him.
He has all the time for which I need and ask.
He is never distracted as I talk to Him.
He never acts like He must hurry away.
He gives me His full attention.
AND WALKS WITH ME IN OVERALLS.

He lets me pour out my heart
In the quiet aloneness of the night
Or in the busyness of the day.
At any break in the rush of activity
I look to my side and He is there --
Walking quietly along beside me

IN OVERALLS.

He nods and smiles and squints in the sun,
And His cap is pulled down like mine.
There is sweat on His face
And dust on His pants
And His gloves are all worn like mine.
HE WALKS WITH ME IN OVERALLS.

He kneels with me in the sawdust
And helps me hold a board.
He laughs at me when I get upset,
Whenever I foul something up.
He squeezes my shoulder and
Slaps me on the back when I tell Him I'm sorry",
And we walk along together IN OVERALLS.

Does Jesus understand? and does He really feel what I feel, and can
He really know what I am experiencing?
I know He does because I see
The calluses on His palm from the hammer
And there are some scars from the chisel.
There are rope burns on His wrists,
And His shins are all banged up too.
There is grease on His cap and
Paint on His shoes, just like mine
AND HE WALKS WITH ME IN OVERALLS.

You may like to put Him in a robe --
You may see Him in a business suit. You might
Want Him perfumed and polished and sitting on a throne.
I SEE HIS THRONE OF GRACE RIGHT WHERE I AM
Along life's dusty road.
He walked the road to Emmaus beside two men who were
Not even frightened by the Stranger Who quietly appeared.

Other friends come and go -- we are all so busy
And occupied. We get tired and frustrated and discouraged,
And sigh when the pressure builds up.
We cry in the night but smile because it is right,
And think that we are all alone, until we look to our left
And see He is there -- HE IS STILL THERE --
Sort of looking our way with a free right hand!
OH, HE WALKS WITH ME IN OVERALLS!

What can I say? How can I possibly describe how

Much it means to have a Friend like Jesus?
I cannot. We cannot. We just have to know
Him and walk along with Him.
HE WALKS WITH ME IN OVERALLS!

"I love You, Jesus!" Lester

* * * * *

Chapter 1 INTERESTING MEMORIES FROM CHILDHOOD

My First Job At Shelton's Dairy

Mr. Shelton and an older son did the milking at the dairy that bore their names. It was situated near our small, rather isolated lumbering community in central Oregon. Seneca was rather obviously named after the great Iroquoian Indian chief.

Winters were customarily cold, hard and long, I can still picture the daily, morning ritual of going to the front porch to get the milk left there by Shelton's Dairy. This was fresh, whole, unpasteurized milk put up in glass bottles. Most of these glass bottles were quart sized, though the cream came in pint ones. You can still see some of them around, but they are either antiques or collectibles.

In the winter, the milk would have frozen on many porches, and the resultant expansion produced a fascinating, round, creamy protrusion anywhere from just a little to an inch or so, depending on how long it had been there unreceived by the homeowner. Perched merrily and dependably above was the waxed, cardboard top. It had a convenient, little flap on it that enabled you to pull the top out if you didn't get too anxious or rough with it. In the winter, Mother Nature spared you that little tug.

My parents had heard that Mrs. Shelton, who was the delivery person for the Dairy, needed a delivery boy. This person did the actual porch to porch delivery while Mrs. Shelton did the driving and directing. I must have been in the fifth grade and thought that I could handle it. Mrs. Shelton agreed to give me a try.

As the Shelton men started milking at 3:30 or 4:00 a.m. in the morning, the milk deliveries began soon after. We were usually delivering milk by 5:30 to 6:00 a.m. As I am an early riser by nature, (larks, we are called) this wasn't as much of an imposition as one might suppose, and I looked forward to having a "real job" with eager anticipation.

Mrs. Shelton had already talked to me, in company with my parents, when we had previously gone out to the dairy, about the way we would work together. She gave me the approximate time that she would arrive at our house each morning and told me to wear warm clothes. I looked at the old Ford van that she used as her delivery truck and saw the wire milk cases stacked one upon another.

The following is the specific reason why this story is special, and in retrospect, considerably humorous.

Younger readers need to know that most cars of the day had no heaters. If some more expensive models did, they were generally ineffective, undependable and inefficient. There was no heater in Mrs. Shelton's old Ford.

The first morning of my new job arrived and I was understandably excited and raring to go. I came to the delivery side and opened the door and crawled in to the ominous roar of a blow torch. Sitting on the floor boards on my side of the van was this "heater", spitting out a powerful flame five or six inches and stinking up the inside of the van with kerosene fumes. Mrs. Shelton said, "Good morning, Lester. Don't get your pants on fire", and away we went.

It's not difficult to see why some of us from former generations smile a lot at the myriad government regulations designed to protect us. My generation should also be the most thankful of all as we easily recall comparative privations of the so-called good old days.

The Giant Stride.

At least, that is what all of us kids at the Seneca Grade School called it. My guess is that the manufacturer had another name, but we all called it the Giant Stride.

By today's safety standards, this playground contraption would be classified dangerous, but I can assure you that in the 1940's, there were always kids waiting in line for their turn on the Giant Stride.

The little kids (lower grades) all dreamed of the day when they were big enough to reach the handles and screwed up enough courage to try it. It was somewhat of an unwritten law that if you couldn't reach the lower handles, you were too small to play on it. However, if you could count on an older sister, brother or friend to lift you up to a handle, there you were, feet dangling and hanging on for dear life.

The Giant Stride was a tall, steel pole, maybe six inches in diameter, and twelve to fourteen feet tall. At the top was a rotation wheel to which chains were hooked. If I remember correctly, there were seven or eight chains. A round ring was on the bottom of each chain that varied in length so that children of varying heights could use it.

You picked a ring (these rings were probably six inches in diameter and made out of 1" galvanized pipe) that you could reach comfortably, but without your arm being fully extended. Upon someone's suggestion, usually one of the older students, all began to run, obviously in the same direction, and usually to the left, or clockwise. This enabled you to hang onto the rings with the right hand.

The idea was to run around the pole, of course, but also out from it so that you were off from the ground part of the time. If you had two or three big, strong runners, you can visualize how much fun this could be and why the Giant Stride was so popular.

You can also instantly see how smaller, lighter children would soon be sailing around and around without ever touching the ground, some of them three or four feet high. It wouldn't be too long before one or more of them would start yelling that their hands were slipping, and then you would try to safely halt all of this rotational pleasure before a body went into orbit.

Getting this beast started was simple, but stopping it took time and a mutual coordination that nearly required engineering prowess. Sometimes a little kid didn't yell soon enough or gave up too soon, or a mischievous older student gave it "one more run", and a new satellite was born as a hapless tike went sailing off into space, complete with accompanying screams (if it were a girl) or howls (if it were a boy). Then everyone had to watch out for the empty ring that could result in a rather hefty crack to the head. I never knew of any children who were seriously injured, and if you did get scratched or shook up a little, you didn't yell too much, because you could hardly wait to try it again.

The Giant Stride went the way of the firecracker. I must confess that there seems to be in my mind much official overemphasis on protecting us from ourselves. I never personally knew any children who were badly injured (needing emergency medical care) by either the Giant Stride or firecrackers. My family and friends enjoyed firecrackers all of my childhood and never started one fire. And our environment was a forest and lumbering one where fire danger in July was all important.

What I do know, is that every family of my personal acquaintance had a father and a mother who accepted and maintained corporate responsibility for the actions of their children. This may have had some bearing on the conduct of my generation's offspring, We had no local law officer, no truant officer and no jail in our lumbering town of some 300 to 400 people. I'm not even remotely suggesting that my friends, siblings and I didn't get into our share of mischief and trouble. What I do know is that our community didn't need the "law" to keep children and teens in line.

Mrs. Jones, My First-Grade Teacher

These words evince a mixture of joy and sadness.

Out of scores of teachers throughout my academic experiences, two of them are outstanding, and one of them was Mrs. Jones.

Out of all of my memories about teachers, one about Mrs. Jones is at or near the top of the list.

So that we may view the specialty of this, may I point out the tremendous and powerful effect our school and college teachers have on us all? Next to our parents, and in some cases exceeding them, school teachers unquestionably have the greatest influence on a person's life.

What they teach us, the facts and figures, impact our minds, But the kind of persons they are pump into us the real influence: attitude and character.

Mrs. Jones did something at the close of each school day that eclipsed the learning of "sums and spelling". I know that she taught us those academic things, but I don't remember that. What I do remember is that we would all line up when the last bell rang and file past Mrs. Jones, who stood at the door of her classroom. Every one of us was hugged and kissed on the cheek as we went out her door. No exceptions. No pets. No highs and lows. No rich or poor. No good or bad. We were all her kids. She loved us. We all knew the strength and security and support of this teacher's embrace. Even though you understood that you were just one of an entire room full of children, when the school day was done and before you went home to become a part of a family unit, you became all alone Mrs. Jones' special person for a few precious seconds.

I can still smell her Mum (the great-grandmother of all deodorants) and feel the tenderness of her hug and kiss, and especially see the love and devotion in her eyes. She truly loved us. We were all her kids. That's the joy part.

The sadness is that, because some few school teachers have betrayed the public trust in them and used their position and control to exploit their students, such displays of love and affection is discouraged and prohibited by our contemporary society.

When we were to leave Mrs. Jones' class for the last time, I cried unashamedly as she held me in one last embrace. She was smiling in re-assurance, but in retrospect, as I have been a father, a teacher and a pastor, I have this tugging impression that the smile was one big cover-up.

I repeat the words that I have said all through my life, "Teachers are my heroes".

Lucky.

My parents, my two older sisters and I lived in a railroad boxcar. No electricity, no running water (unless you ran to get it and ran to bring it back), and no plumbing. Before you cry a river in sympathy, you should know that a good number of lumbering families lived in these boxcars, all in a row and sitting on a railroad track. And it beat a tent in which we had spent some summers.

Lucky was my little dog. I don't remember much about Lucky except about the day he was killed.

My older sister, Aloma, came running to the boxcar, as fast as she could run with a broken arm in a cast, yelling that a car had run over our little dog.

We all went running to the place where he lay, but it was too late. He was dead and lying in a pool of blood.

The reason I write this is because of the powerful effect it had upon my mind. I saw and knew death for the first time, We can never be the same when we discover our mortality, even

from a child's viewpoint. It gives us a specific concept of the importance and value of life, and causes us to start thinking about how we are going to live it.

Fly Casting.

Silvies Creek ran between town and the Edward Hines Lumber Company saw mill. We boys spent a good deal of our time on the creek during the summer months. Half of what we caught were suckers and carp and crawdads, but we were fishing, and that was fun.

Our fishing tackle never varied. It consisted of some black line, an Eagleclaw #6 hook or two, and some shot sinkers, There were a million willows along the bank, and you could take your pick and cut yourself the finest pole in Oregon. You tied your black line on the tip and wound it around and around until you had whatever length of line you wanted to throw out into the water. With a shot sinker bit onto the line a foot or so above the hook, you were ready to look for some bait. It was generally plentiful. Worms were best. Then grasshoppers. Then periwinkles.

One time while we had been fishing, we saw some out-of-town men on the Silvies, We were understandably fascinated by the elaborate array of their tackle. Also by the way they were able to cast their lines way out in the middle of the creek where the good fish were. I didn't say anything, but thought to myself that I'd try that sometime, not realizing that there was such an item as a spinning reel.

The next time I went fishing was with a younger neighbor lad and I determined on the way out to the creek that I would learn to cast way out into the middle like those other fellows had.

I unrolled a lot more line than usual from off the end of my willow pole, and correctly figured that I would need to give my pole a powerful swing to ever get that pile of line off from that grassy bank.

The first flail only succeeded in whipping the line and catching the sinker and hook in the weeds, so I rolled up some line. I placed all of that mess of black line on a sandy spot away from any rocks or weeds and let fly with increased intensity.

As I looked out expectantly into the spanse of creek where the hook and sinker was to plop, I heard the neighbor kid make a funny sound. When I looked his way, he was holding his head in an odd position and had something stuck in his ear. He said, "Lester, something's stuck in my ear", in a rather puzzled manner.

It was alright. My hook, with the line faithfully attached, had gone clear through the lobe of his left ear. He never shed a tear or even whimpered as I gently wiggled it to see if it would come out.

I observed that we had better go and tell our mothers, so we walked the mile or so home with him in front of me while I loosely held the line so it wouldn't pull.

I thought that I was really in for it, but his dad and mom weren't even mad at me. His dad just laughed and snipped off the eye of the hook and pushed it on through the hole. It didn't even bleed enough to run down his ear.

We were back at the creek the next day. I didn't try to cast anymore, but he stayed further away from me than before.

* * * * *

Chapter 2

BUTTERCREEK BLESSINGS AND BLUES

In 1945 we had moved from the logging town of Seneca in Central Oregon to the small farming community of Hermiston, located near the mighty Columbia River.

My father was born and reared on an Indiana farm, and though he had spent the past twenty years logging and lumbering in the West, he was anxious to live and work on the farm again. So when an opportunity arose for him to be the hired man on a turkey farm, he brought Mother and their family of two girls and two boys to this new and exciting community. To us it was like moving from one world into a new one, from sticks to the city, even though we lived about two miles out of town on the Buttercreek Highway.

A house was part of Daddy's pay and it was something we had only dreamed about. Individual bedrooms for us boys and the girls, wall plug-ins, indoor plumbing and even bathroom and kitchen cabinets for mother. It was even painted on the outside and there was a carpet in the living room, Talk about high clover! Everything was so nice.

We were all in for many new experiences that were to be learned from shepherding 6,000 turkeys. Turkeys were literally our lives for twenty-four hours a day. The reader can have no concept of the constant, unearthly racket 6,000 turkeys can make unless you have been there! Absolutely any disturbance would set them off. When one gobbled, they all gobbled. A turkey gobble loses its uniqueness fast when you hear it constantly. The contemporary adage that "you can't soar with eagles when you work with turkeys" was never viewed as clever by me. Turkeys are stupid, arrogant, excitable and boringly predictable.

Another part of Daddy's pay was all of the turkey and turkey eggs (when they were laying) that you could eat, We had a solid year of Thanksgiving. Turkey eggs were a bit stronger than chicken eggs and Mother usually scrambled them. The yolks, and therefore the scrambled eggs, were considerably more yellow in color. If you did fry a turkey egg, it would nearly fill your plate, as they are two to three times the size of hen eggs.

We also had all of the milk and cream (and therefore all of the butter and cottage cheese) we wanted, as Gerald (the owner) kept a half dozen or so dairy cows. This was my first experience with milking machines. What an improvement over hand milking! I really enjoyed helping with the milking using those Surge milking machines.

Every day it was one of my jobs to go get the cows out of the pasture for the evening milking. In the mornings, they would always be standing at the barn door. What made this chore so special was Nigger. I mean no offense. That was the name of Gerald's quarter horse. And was he a beauty! He was coal black except for three white stockings that came up a few inches above his hooves and a white diamond in the middle of his forehead. I don't have to tell you that I fell in love with Nigger. He was "my horse", and both Daddy and Gerald humored me in my "ownership".

This tells you much about Gerald, He was a really fine man. He and Laura only had a small daughter, and in many respects, they treated our family as the big one they didn't have. They would take us places and do things with us that my folks were unable to afford by time or money.

Nigger had all of the tack anyone could desire, as Gerald rode him in all of the local parades. I preferred to ride him bareback. Maybe I was just too lazy to put all of that stuff on. I promise you that Nigger preferred it. What thrill to throw the bridle on him, open the stock gate and let him go! There is nothing to compare with the experience of sitting on a half ton of exploding horsepower. We both loved it.

I rode Nigger up to the neighbors one day to visit my friend, Ivan. He was two or three years younger than I and didn't have a horse, so I would go over periodically and let him get on behind me and we'd walk around in his driveway. His mother came out this day and asked him to go down to Clarkes and get two dozen eggs. They kept quite a few chickens and sold eggs to the locals. She handed Ivan a 1½ gallon bucket, syrup or lard, and he immediately asked me if I would take him over on Nigger so he wouldn't have to walk so far. As Clarkes was a half mile or so beyond our place, I readily agreed.

Nigger was shod, but I never ran him on the pavement, for it was just too risky for him to have good footing. We trotted along the side of the highway with Ivan's left arm around my waist and the right hanging onto the egg bucket. What escaped my attention was that every bounce produced the banging of that bucket on the horse's side, He wasn't used to that and didn't like it, but we were too busy talking and enjoying the scenery.

Ivan quickly asked me to make him run. It was against my better judgment, but away we went. As we came to the canal bridge, Nigger was forced onto the pavement, and strange things began to happen. At every jump, he would put his head down and kick up his hind feet while he was at a dead run. Don't tell me they can't do it. They can, Without a saddle and with Ivan hanging onto my middle with a death grip, I was soon up on Nigger's neck and slipping off. I let loose of his reins and grabbed his neck in a last futile effort to stay aboard, but his pitching and Ivan's extra weight was just too much, and we both came down hard to the pavement with the horse running right over us. Angels must have kept him from hitting one or both of us with his hooves.

I lit on my head and back (both Nigger and me were bare-backed that day) and Ivan landed on top of me. Seeing stars was just a phrase until then. I wasn't knocked unconscious, but I couldn't move much. Both of us crawled (me painfully) off to the shoulder to be out of the lanes of traffic.

As we were only a hundred yards or so from our driveway when we were dumped, Nigger had come flying into it and past our house with trailing reins and no Lester. As soon as Mother

came out on the porch, she could see what had happened and came on the run. As Ivan was only shook up and I was too big to cry, she only found a bloody mess. My back and arms and elbows and shoulders were just that. Both wrists and one ankle were sprained and the offending egg bucket was in worse shape. It never rode again.

Do you know how inglorious it is for a thirteen year-old to have to be nearly carried to the house by his mother? Brother, that was the real pain! She nearly emptied the bottle of merthiolate on me, and I went absolutely nowhere but to the bathroom and table for a good number of days. I did have the dubious pleasure of picking off scabs for the rest of the summer. Boys are weird, I know. Both Ivan and I could easily have been killed. In retrospect, it was easy to see that the accident wasn't the fault of the horse, but my inattention to the banging of the egg bucket on his ribs. He never reared or pitched with me before or since.

Turkeys are like any other animal in that they are susceptible to certain illnesses, They are especially vulnerable to certain parasites that result in a contagious condition commonly termed "sour crop". Instead of the crop being firm with wheat (their primary feed unless they are brooders or layers), it would become distended and bulbous with a watery, stinking mess inside, If left unattended or in later stages, it was most certainly fatal. Older, larger birds could be caught, upended with the head down and that corruption "milked out" through their beaks. The smaller birds (called turks) usually succumbed or we just had to kill them. I have killed dozens of them by just breaking their necks with a long stick. That's a huge loss to the farmer, but if they weren't isolated, and then treated or killed, they would infect and destroy the entire flock.

This is a major reason why all 6,000 birds were not penned together. Gerald had them separated by age and groups into four or five different areas. The small birds had to be separated anyhow for their safety. Big turkeys are notorious bullies. The big toms have inch long spurs and know how to use them. It was necessary to establish and maintain an intimidation over them or they wouldn't hesitate to flog the weak or unsuspecting.

My sisters didn't care to even be around the big toms. The big breeders could easily hit forty to fifty pounds. One came at my sister, Joella, one time in a ferocious, rushing charge. I was nearby feeding and heard her yell. I grabbed a four foot long lathe as I headed towards her and cracked old tom a good one right alongside the head. He fell at her feet deader than a hammer like a shot beef. She dropped to her knees and grabbed that old tom's head and began stroking it and crying. How can you explain women? She was certain that we'd be in trouble big time for killing a breeder, and I became a bit concerned then.

Do you know that old codger opened one eyelid and then the other and sort of closed them again sleepily. I thought that it was the death throes, but it encouraged Joella to massage the old bully some more and croon to his cantankerous old heart. In a little bit his eyes snapped open and he shook his head like the lights had just come back on.

Joella helped him stand up and he just kept blinking his eyes like the fog was clearing. He finally tried walking, and it was hilarious, at least I thought so. It was equally funny listening to my sister encouraging that old brute with her, "Come on, Tom. You can make it, Tom. Please, walk,

Tom. Come on , Tom". Funny thing about turkeys: the hens can all have individual names, but all the males are Tom, no exception.

Joella was certain that he was brain damaged and had no motor skills remaining, I can attest to the fact that his fan was folded, his waddle was fully retracted, the starch was out of his neck and all of the strut was gone. But that old boy lived to sire a few thousand more knot-heads just like himself, And folks, that was where turkey CPR all started. My sister originated it. And I'll guarantee you that she had turkey doo-doo all over the bottom of her clothing.

Harvesting the birds was an experience all of its own. These were days before the modern kill floors and cooling and packing rooms. These were the days before turkey meat was an everyday food item. They were only marketed during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons. So like any other farmer, the turkey raiser worked all year long for the harvesting.

Gerald had the newest slaughter house of any turkey raiser in the area and this is how the birds were processed.

They were rounded up and placed in large, cages on the Ford 1½ ton truck and driven to the plant right on Gerald's property. Men with powerful arms and shoulders pulled these twenty to forty pound birds from the cages and hung them upside down, flapping, flogging and squawking. Their feet were secured on hooks that hung down from a chain moving on an overhead track. The stickers, who were a small, elite group in the entire Northwest, were there to immediately grab the heads of the upside down birds so that they could control them. Their sticking knives were smaller, thinner versions of a boning knife and were razor sharp.

The sticking accomplished two important tasks, but it was done with such speed and skill that it appeared to be one motion to a casual observer. The first thrust through the opened beak (the birds did that on their own with all that squawking) put the fine point of the knife to the brain and instantly killed the bird. There was no suffering at all. This stopped nearly all of the flapping and racket. Then the knife pierced the jugular and was removed, This was accomplished so quickly and efficiently that there was no external wound, the heart would beat on for some few seconds, and the blood would actually spurt from the inverted birds cleanly voiding the carcass of blood. Then a weighted hook was inserted through the nostrils to refrain any additional involuntary movements.

The pluckers were next, usually women, and most of the feathers were removed by dry plucking. This was a hard job and produced many painful blisters. People accustomed to scalding chickens to feather them would be surprised how easily a turkey can be dry plucked if done immediately. All that remained was the tail and wing-tip feathers. They were removed with pliers and then singed to remove body hairs. After that the carcasses came down to drawing tables where they were drawn and pin-feathered. Feet and head remained, That is the way they were marketed. The retailers either displayed them like that or with feet and head removed. Then they were placed in a large cooling room. This wasn't refrigerated, for that was very expensive, and anyway, this was in mid-November.

The method used to transport the birds to market may seem hard to believe, but I was there and helped do it. This was in 1941 and a lot of things have changed.

We started loading Gerald's 1½ ton truck one late afternoon a few days before Thanksgiving. This was the day after the butchering was completed and the birds were well-cooled.

We carefully began unrolling butcher paper on the bed of the truck, starting on the back and taking it clear up over the truck cab. Once the bed was completely covered, we unrolled the paper crosswise, allowing long ends to drape over the side stock racks. The one man on the truck was in his stocking feet. I believe that was Gerald.

Then a number of us began loading the freshly butchered turkeys into the truck, in the open air, onto the freshly spread butcher paper. They were stacked one upon another, breast first and on their backs, just like so much cord wood.

When the truck was full, the end rack having been placed as we neared the back of the truck, the hanging butcher paper ends were pulled over the gleaming, white carcasses of a few hundred birds, covered with a clean tarp and tied down.

Time was of the essence, night had fallen and it was time to head for Spokane, some 200 miles to the North. I was especially excited as Gerald and Laura had asked me to accompany them so that I could help unload. I had never been to Spokane or any other large city before.

Spokane was fascinating in a scary sort of way to a country bumpkin. The lights nearly overwhelmed me. I didn't know that there were that many lights in the entire world. I realize that this sounds silly to us city dwellers, but at that time I simply couldn't conceive of block after block of blinding, flashing neon sign lights and blazing street lights that brought a daytime atmosphere to Spokane at night.

We went directly to a packing plant that had refrigerated cooling rooms and unloaded our turkeys. There may have been some sort of an inspection that I didn't see, but if there were, I wasn't aware of it. By then it was very late in the night and Gerald and Laura were bushed. I was as wide awake as a hoot owl, for this place was another world to me. Then came a further new experience.

Gerald drove right downtown through all of that noisy, roaring traffic and pulled in at this huge building. I was nearly numb with fear and apprehension, but certainly didn't let them know how I felt. Here was this kid who wasn't afraid of the dark, or roaring rivers or towering forests and their wild animals; this kid who kicked bulls around and handled rattlesnakes just to show it wasn't dangerous; this kid who operated trucks and tractors and worked like a man in the grain and hay fields, but was fearful of the sights and sounds of a large city. Most of our fears don't make much sense, but they are usually about our ignorance and lack of control.

We walked through this huge hotel lobby (it may have been the Davenport for all I know) with uniformed attendants scurrying this way and that. Then we rode the elevator (another interesting first) up, up, up, I was neither impressed or delighted, All I could think of was how I

was going to get out of this monstrous building that seemed to be engorging me and my friends, I said nothing of all these fears to the Kellers. They seemed to be thoroughly enjoying a night away from the farm, This was to be a special treat for me, and my generation was taught to be seen and not heard.

These inner reactions only intensified when we were shown into this lavish room by a bellboy. Gerald and Laura seemed to be tremendously relaxed and my stomach was tied in knots as I sat by the window eight stories up and viewed all of the activities on the streets below. It seemed to me that firm ground was a hundred feet below me and I was suspended in this little window.

When we were all in bed and the room lights were out, the flash of neon lights could still be seen through our room window eight floors up. And then there was the traffic noise and sirens. I heard more sirens that one night than I had heard in all my life until then, Is it any wonder that I was still lying awake in the wee hours of the morning?

Gerald was sawing logs, but Laura must have sensed my unease. She came over to my bed in the dark and said something about tomorrow being a long day, so I should get some sleep, What she said wasn't important. The caring sound of her feminine voice must have signaled the "all is well" code in my head, for I was out like a light and awoke in the morning to sunlight streaming through the window.

When that Ford truck headed south, I was one happy lad. The ministry has necessitated our living in an urban setting for most of my adult life, but I am unquestionably a country boy at heart. "Don't Fence Me In".

The last "spanking" I got was at the house on the Buttercreek. Both my sister, Joella, and I had done something to provoke Mother into the acquisition of a stick. We were all in the table vicinity, and I was in my best foolishness form. It was time to pull out all stops if a judgment were to be averted. I kept grinning and telling Mother that she really didn't want to use that stick, and how much more beautiful she was without a scowl and other hastily formed bits of ingenuity.

Both Joella and I could see that she was starting to come unraveled and moved in unison around the table, keeping just out of her reach. When she did move on us, we moved too, and all three were running around the table like a trio of turkeys. She wore out before we did. That possibility should have been obvious to her.

She stopped, and we stopped, panting and looking at one another. She started to crack up and we knew we were home free. Nervous laughter changed to hilarity, and she left us with dire threats of "some day when you have kids of your own". She was right. Mothers are usually right.

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Chapter 3 TALES FROM HERMISTON JUNIOR HIGH

Mrs. Brown was a legend at the Hermiston, Oregon Junior High School. All of the kids talked about Mrs. Brown. Seldom was another Junior High teacher mentioned. We were new to the community and her reputation went before her as I met some of the local students in our rural area. Ninety-eight percent of the time when school and teachers were brought into any discussion, you could count on her name arising. "Boy, is she mean! She is a slave-driver! You don't want to fool around in her class!" These comments and many others, all consistently negative, preceded an induction into any of her classes. You would have thought you were going into an army boot camp to hear the students tell it. Frankly, most of the kids who talked to me were afraid of her.

I'm sure that she didn't want to make that impression on Hermiston's student population. I believe that she was as sensitive to how people felt about her as anyone else. Perhaps she was even hurt by the perception that she was hard and mean.

Mrs. Brown was one of those vanishing breed of educators whose concept of education was that students attended school to learn. It was not a time to play, goof off and fool around. Foolishness, silliness and clowning around had no place in the learning process in her judgment.

Now, Lester was born with a clown's heart. Laughter and foolishness was as characteristic as breathing. Getting a laugh was the reason for living, It was inevitable that these two opposing forces would collide.

I can see now that a veteran such as Mrs. Brown had my type spotted from the first. My initial congenial deportment, based upon the reports of Mrs. Brown's reputation as a stern disciplinarian, soon eroded as apprehension inexorably yielded to genetics. Anytime she was out of the room, I had center stage and a captive, responsive audience.

Timing and alertness were essential. The start of each day's class afforded maximum opportunity for clowning, as she always personally took the attendance record to the school office. This was done immediately after she had made the grammar assignments for the day. We were expected to work on that lesson quietly during her absence. The door to her classroom was left open when she left so that she could audibly monitor any activity .

Her absence inevitably triggered the same response in me. Why? Please tell me why everything seems to be funny when laughter is inappropriate or out of place? All that I know is that foolishness happens. And do you know that those other beggars in class, who were unwilling to climb fool's hill themselves, would encourage and solicit me by looking my way with abetting grins?

And so in short order giggles and snickers would keep the monkey on his stick and I would do my thing. Don't ask me what. I don't remember the specifics. A clown just does what pops into his mind, and then it effuses, it flows. Some of you clowns who read this understand it, while others are shaking your heads in wondrous disbelief.

Then the trick was to listen carefully for her ponderous footfalls, for Mrs. Brown was as physically intimidating as psychologically. My guess is that she would hit 200 pounds easily, so she wasn't given to sneaking up on anyone. The building sort of moved as she did, By the time she

arrived at the classroom door, we were all studying up a storm, and I was the most intent and involved hypocrite of the bunch.

One of life's best-kept secrets is how adults can tell when children are guilty. Do you suppose that kids are not as good at hypocrisy as their parents? I hope not, but I'm afraid that it's true. It is a learned trait and we have to work at it to submerge innocence and guilt in robes of deception. My guess is that Mrs. Brown quickly assessed the presence of a class clown, though she didn't know the identity, and set her traps. She had been around the block a few times before I came on the scene and, I can assure you, I was outclassed (pun intended).

I breezed into the classroom on this fateful day full of fun and way short on premonition. Mrs. Brown was no where in sight, and the rest of the class were seated and quietly chatting awaiting the bell for class to begin. Here was a golden opportunity for showmanship and everyone was witnessing my grand entrance.

We sat at tables in Mrs. Brown's English room six to a table with lots of room to study without distracting our classmates. I breezed up to my chair, pulled it out with a flourish, and in one smooth, coordinated arc, swung my right leg over the back of the chair and sat down without so much as a swoosh or a plop. It was so smooth and coordinated that athletic embellishments came to mind as I accepted the admiring glances of the class, especially the girl's. But before I could compute the ominous significance of lowering heads and subdued snickering, I felt a hand in my hair.

There was an insistent, upward urgency to it, and I obediently followed the direction of its force. It wasn't a shocking jerk. It was an embarrassing, torturing, arduous, lingering rise to infamous recognition. Slowly. Impressively. Drag this out. Let everyone see the funny boy.

All ascendencies have an apex. When this one reached my full height, there was more, It was like, "Yes! Yes! The class wants to see more." Now, not a word was being spoken, but these inarticulated words were coming through to all of us loud and clear. "See Lester. See Lester squirm. Look, look. See what happens to clowns. Oh, see and look, Look and see."

The lesson was only half taught. There was more to come. The same hand causing all of this upward pull now powered me around to view the unsmiling face of a very angry Mrs. Brown. She expertly removed my glasses (it was obvious that she had done it before, and talk about coordinated!), laid them on the table and soundly slapped my face, And I mean the tooth-jarring kind! Please don't ask how many slaps. The misery was in the publicity, not the application.

Her only words were, "Now, young man, you just see if you can sit down like a gentleman". I could and I did. I declare to all that this experience jarred me to my genes. For some reason, I didn't feel nearly so foolish in Mrs. Brown's class anymore.

There is a sequel to this story.

It was spit-wad season. I don't know whether there are still "seasons" at schools today, but there used to be. There were seasons when you wore certain kinds of clothes, There were seasons

when you wore your clothes in a certain kind of manner. There was hopscotch season and paper airplane season and softball season and jacks season and jump-rope season. The two that held special interest for me was the marble season (when every kid who was anybody went to school with bulging pant's pockets) and spit-wad season. This was that season, and the boys of daring would secrete their rubber band (real rubber) weaponry, at home and at school, in accommodating pant's pockets. It was strictly against school rules to have a rubber band in your possession, so it was necessary to sneak them out of your home and into the classroom. There are, of course, much worse infractions of school law than spit-wad shooting, but it was, nonetheless, against the rules.

Obviously you only did this when the teacher was out of the room or had his back turned, There was one exception. No one, but no one, shot spit-wads in Mrs. Brown's English classroom. That included me, Especially me. She had made a believer out of me with the "gentleman" episode. If she had seen one spit-wad in her room, there would have been an inquisition paling and murder trial, and we all knew it. Education was serious business to Mrs. Brown.

There was a specific manner in which you entered her classroom. No incoming student entered the room until it was entirely cleared of departing ones. Incoming students lined up outside of her door on the right.

This particular day found me close to the front of the line awaiting the clearing of departing students. It's the gospel truth that I had no intention of using my rubber band in her classroom, but it was in my pocket for later use. Some uncoordinated jerk way back in the line chose the very moment Mrs. Brown came to the classroom door with the last outgoing student to launch his missile. That hapless ball of paper rolled to within inches of Mrs. Brown's feet. We all viewed the offensive intruder in stunned silence.

She snapped, "To whom does this belong?". Nobody breathed a word. Here was a spit-wad without a country, so to speak. There it sat, alone, pitiful, and disowned in Mrs. Brown's doorway. "Alright, she decreed, we'll find out who". And she began a thorough search of every boy's pocket. It was judgment day.

Listen. You didn't have the Constitution or the Bill of Rights or the ACLU to hide behind in Mrs. Brown's classroom, There were no reading of rights or calls to counsel or appeals processes there. She was prosecutor, judge, jury and hangman all in one person, And she didn't need the principal or your parents to help her. If there ever were need for a matriarchal diety, Mrs. Brown would have been a prime candidate. Every student who ever attended her classes learned more about the judgment day from her than from any preacher.

There was no sense in trying to hide the truth from her. When she came to me and instructed me to empty my pockets, among other treasures, there was a rubber band. Not the rubber band, but what did it matter? I hadn't brought it to school for any academic purpose. There was a bit of consolation in the knowledge that the pressure was off the spit-wad. And some unknown kid behind me was simultaneously breathing easier and in my debt. I never knew who it was, but he was safe. I was guilty in a way. I am not vindictive by nature and never was a scrapper.

This time I knew what to expect. I was a seasoned veteran. I didn't relish another dose of her medicine, but you didn't mess with Mrs. Brown. This time she told me to remove my glasses, and she fanned my face with a sequence of slaps that equaled lightning strikes.

The only damage was to my pride. Don't kid yourself about my so-called self-esteem suffering. That's pure nonsense. Neither my teachers or my parents adversely affected my behavior by corporal punishment. The elements of concern and love and personal interest in my development was right there with the stern discipline. Rather than any discipline I received adversely affecting me. I shudder to think what the result may have been without it.

I don't have personal knowledge of one of the hundreds of school friends and acquaintances winding up on the wrong side of the law. I do know of scores of them who are teachers, community leaders, homemakers, doctors, lawyers, preachers, farmers, factory workers and business persons who are a credit to their generation and communities.

Two years in Mrs. Brown's English class gave her students more than adequate preparation for further academic pursuits, as well as lifetime linguistic and journalistic skills. For me personally, high school and college related courses were a piece of cake, and it didn't take ten or twenty years for me to realize it.

Between my freshman and sophomore years of college, I purposefully made a trip to Mrs. Brown's farm home on the Buttercreek highway. Her response to my profuse expressions of appreciation was classic: "You're very welcome, Lester. I knew that you would make it." One more over the hump. One more on the way to a productive life.

Then there was Mr. Mean's health class, He was alright, but as different in teaching and discipline from Mrs. Brown as night and day. I'm sure that I must have taken some knowledge out of that class, but I cannot recall one thing. What I do recall is the day he brought a table up to the front of the room and called me up to sit on it. Over my head he inscribed on the blackboard the highly enviable title of "Class Clown". I had finally arrived and was receiving the recognition for which I had so long prepared. I tried to make a joke out of it and sat there for some time grinning like the idiot I was, but after a few minutes of not knowing what to do with my hands and facial expressions, became considerably restless and embarrassed. Mr. Means ignored me and instructed the class to do the same, which they did, and they went right on with the lesson. Clowns without audiences are a sorry lot. In answer to his question that I might be able to behave myself, I assured him that I could and crawled off my perch rather ingloriously. Both methods of treatment with the two different teachers worked effectively, but I have to confess that I learned a whole lot more from Mrs. Brown.

A really remarkable event occurred in Mr. Means room that was as unforgettable as it was funny. This time, I was definitely not the center of attention. Mr. Means was the school principal as well as one of the Junior High teachers. Because of this, there were times when he would be called out of the classroom for some rather lengthy periods of time. Generally, he could foresee these long absences and would arrange the lessons accordingly, sternly warning dire consequences if there were any breeches of propriety.

This particular day was one of those occasions when we all knew that he would be gone for a considerably lengthy time. Soon there was considerable whisperings among the boys and it was all about everyone in the class going down the fire escape.

The fire escape entrance was in our second-floor room. This was a deliberate plan so that Mr. Means, as school principal, would be in the strategic location to move the students in the upper story safely out of the building in case of fire. The drills were set up that way, and we had periodically gone through the paces of getting to his room from any where upstairs, except the actual sliding down the fire escape. Every boy in the school longed to go down that fire escape, and perhaps some of the girls, but that was strictly forbidden.

This one was the type that was entirely enclosed and appeared from the outside like a long tube going all the way from the second story of the building to the ground. Many of you have seen them, and unquestionably looked like a lot of fun.

This was the last week of school for the year, and evidently (though I hadn't heard of the plans) some of the boys were determined to slide down the fire escape. What they didn't know, nor did I or anyone else, was that someone had let the cat out of the bag, and Mr. Means knew all about the plans and had, in fact, arranged to be out of his room as a part of his scheme to catch them.

So this was the purpose of all the buzzing and scheming going on that day. Even though I wasn't in on the planning, all of the boys were asked if they were going along. It seemed to me that I had been in enough trouble already. None of the slappings or Mr. Mean's "class-clown" setup had reached home, and it seemed to me that this just might be the straw that broke the camel's back. I hesitantly and shamefully informed them that I wasn't going down the chute. All of this was in an atmosphere of much teasing and charging of cowardice and being chicken. What made it worse was that the only other kid who was "chicken" was the littlest and scrawniest of the class. I felt like the lowest kid on earth.

When it was decided that it was time to go, the boys all lined up and opened the forbidden, panic-barred, double doors. The girls were all standing around admiringly, and Dale (the other boy) and I kept our seats. You young men and men can understand the horrible strain this was making on my manhood. I would decide to go with them, and then decide not to, but ultimately chose to be a chicken, I guess.

When the "daring, brave boys" started on their fast trip down the chute, all of the girls, and Dale and me too, went to the south windows to see them come out at the bottom. They were coming out alright. Right into the waiting arms of Mr. Means and some other teachers who had been recruited to help him snag them as they shot out. I don't need to tell you how quickly my atmosphere changed. Was I ever one happy kid that I had "chickened out". And I was to be happier.

Mr. Means brought every one of those boys back up to his room and lined them up in front of the class, The other teachers who had participated in the "sting" were in attendance. What happened next could not occur today, but I watched it and would have laughed uproariously if it had not been out of place.

He instructed every boy to grab his ankles as he stripped out his belt in the presence of us all. Then he proceeded to give every bent-over kid a resounding whack on his posterior. Do you know that some of those boys started bawling? How brave they were! I wouldn't have cried out if he had beat me silly after having made all of those boasts about bravery and who was chicken and who wasn't, And in front of all those girls? No way. But they did, and I was rolling on the inside. The whack wouldn't have been nearly so humiliating as the publicity. Besides the whack, they all received poor behavior marks for the year. I suppose they have told that story to their buddies and children and grandchildren over and over, but left out the bawling part, of course.

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Chapter 4 STORIES FROM WESTLAND

In 1941 we moved from the Keller turkey farm to a ten-acre farm of our own. There was no problem between the Kellers and my Father, but he was able to get a civil service job at the "Depot", so he took it. Our farm wasn't much in some people's eyes, but we children all sensed, and shared in, the thrill our parents were experiencing in having a place they could call their own.

The house facilities compared similarly to those we thought we had left behind in the logging camps, but at least we knew how to function in such an environment. We heated and cooked with wood. There was no floor carpet and no nice kitchen cabinets. Inside plumbing was limited to a single cold water faucet in the combination kitchen/dining room/bathroom, for that is where we all took our Saturday night baths in the number three wash tub with water heated on the wood cook stove. Everything was comparatively Spartan, but we were together and very happy. I look back on the years spent on this farm as the very happiest ones of a very happy childhood. These days of living and growing up on our own farm was immensely fulfilling to me and it produced many of my life's greatest pleasures. No one could ever persuade me that you have to have the nice and the fancy and the comfortable to bring happiness.

Westland is a vicinity roughly five miles south of Hermiston, Oregon and generally included the area that used to be served by the old Westland grade school. Our farm was another mile and a half from the schoolhouse and about four miles from the town (now nearly all gone) of Ordnance. During the Second World War, and during my time in the area shortly after the War, Ordnance was a very vigorous and bustling small town in its own right, complete with a super market (by that day's standards), movie theater, a good number of gas stations and many other small businesses.

A brief mention of the Umatilla Army Ordnance Depot should be made. Comparatively few people today realize how vast and strategic and important this ordnance depot was. During the war years, and for some time afterwards, it was one of the largest, if not the largest, munition storage area on the West coast. Thousands of people worked there. Many of my relatives did, including my father. The depot was laid out in a grid of thousands of "igloos". An igloo was the affectionate name given the individual, underground storage facility for bombs, shells and other munitions. If you were on the ground level, you would witness these igloos simply as thousands of humps or

mounds on the desert floor as far as the eye could see. They actually stretched from horizon to horizon. From the air, the depot in its entirety looked exactly like the rest of the countryside: sand and sage and jack rabbits. Any flying craft of the day would have had a hard time knowing what or where to bomb. That was the whole idea.

One of these "igloos" could blow up, and a good number of them did with attendant loss of lives, and not cause any of the others to be detonated. When one did blow, all personnel went up too. Such is the price of war, even for those back home, far from the front lines. Some of my family's acquaintances were casualties. Enough about Ordnance.

I thought you might be interested in the first school bus I rode. At least one of the first. It was an icky orange color and not yellow. We called them "flattops" because they were, They were 1934 to 1937 Internationals and the bus bodies were constructed of wood rather than metal. I can still hear the noise of a thousand squeaks and rattles from those old beaters. My guess is that 40 miles per hour would have been top speed for them going downhill. They looked for the world like a big orange box with windows set down on a long "cornbinder" chassis. The stink of the old leather cushions combined with exhaust fumes was sickening. You had to yell at each other to be heard, you froze silly in winter months, you arrived at school dusty and with your liver half shook to pieces. Other than that, they were not too bad. And some people still want to go back to the good old days? Here's one kid who never gave one longing glance at the passing of the old orange International busses.

The district did get new yellow busses while we were in the Westland area, and our route was assigned one with the best bus driver in the whole world, Jim Townsend. I can tell you now why he got those high marks from me, as I imagine Jim is certainly retired and maybe passed away.

We were right near the end of Jim's bus route, and so I would sit right behind him and we would talk. We developed quite a friendship for his being old enough to be my Dad. His son, Dwight, was in my grade. Jim was a Harley-Davidson man and he would regale me with his fearless, and sometimes stupid (by his own admission), escapades with his Harley. I would listen spellbound as he would relate these hair-raising tales.

Then we would talk buses and bus-driving and cars and mechanicing and anything at all that had to do with motors and driving, It was obvious that we had a special friendship, but I didn't know how special until one afternoon when he stopped the bus about a half mile from our farm. There remained one or two stops before our place and maybe eight or ten students on yet besides my two sisters and me.

We had just let some kids off and were in between stops near the bottom of the hill that preceded our place. There was a bridge over a canal to cross at the bottom of the hill, This was just a plank bridge for one vehicle only and had no side rails of any kind.

Jim set the parking brake and slid over to a student seat and said, "She's all yours, Lester." The man was allowing me, then 14 year's old, to drive this brand new school bus with passengers aboard. My sisters both said warily, "Lester, I don't think that you ought to do it, but I was already

sliding behind the wheel. I am a long ways from being foolhardy, but I know opportunity when it knocks. Jim told me to take it easy and just follow his instructions.

Bear in mind the only vehicle I had ever driven before was a tractor and Gerald's 1½ ton Ford truck in the hay fields in low gear. I had never shifted a gear before in a moving vehicle. I let the clutch out a bit rough as we started, but was able to do a credible job shifting into second. I left it there to cross the bridge and climb the hill at Jim's suggestion, and made it up and over with no problem. I let my friend, Darrel, out at his place as pleased as punch, and he grinned like crazy when he got out. I had to be cool, so I didn't grin back. When we came to our driveway and I had stopped and set the hand-brake, I could hardly believe what had happened.

Jim acted like this happened every day and said his usual "see you all tomorrow" and waved like always. I think that my two sisters had been holding their breaths all of that time, But they started breathing again and discovered that they were all in one piece. I acted like it happened every day too.

I knew that this was highly unusual, maybe even improper, so I determined not to breathe a word to anyone at school. I never did. I certainly wanted to boast a little to my friends, but I didn't want to endanger Jim's job or our friendship.

Some months later when my Dad slid over in his Chevy pickup and told me to drive her, he was surprised that I seemed to know exactly what to do. And I never told him, but just acted like it was natural talent. You have to help parents out some times in their parenting. You have to understand them and enable them. They need to feel like they're doing OK.

Our ten acres was mostly into alfalfa hay, but we also had an acre of fine pasture and grew a lot of sweet corn and potatoes.

One of my personal delights was the three work horses that came with the place. There was a team of mares and one unbroken gelding who was one of the mare's colt. They were accompanied by a full set of harness and enough equipment to plow, harrow and hay. This was special to me because work horse use was only a memory for most farmers of the day. Nearly everybody had tractors (we had a Ford Ferguson and Farmall at Gerald's turkey farm). There was an old iron-wheeled Ford tractor sitting out in one field, and it ran, but it was so slow and heavy that both Daddy and I preferred working with the horses. They were a small team compared to draft horses, but just right for the needs of our small acreage.

Of course, I had to learn from the ground up all about horses and harnesses and horse equipment, while Daddy had grown up using them. The first time I tried to harness them alone, I got the reins crossed some way. After correctly hooking them up to a spike-tooth harrow, I snapped the lines and made that distinctive, age-old "kissing sound" (learned from my father) that signaled "let's go". Instead of moving ahead though, the mares were backing up. The more I hollered "whoa", the more they tossed their heads and backed up. By the time that I realized that something was amiss with the reins, both horses had their hind feet and legs entangled in both the traces and the harrow.

When I released all pressure on the reins, they stopped immediately and I hollered for my Dad, who was in the barn. Together we unhooked the frightened mares and got everything put back together properly. Then we harrowed just fine. There's nothing in life quite like working horses. It's a thrill all of its own. Even though it is obvious to everyone that mechanizing the farm was necessary to a modern culture, it's easy to see how many farmers were reluctant to let the horses go. You can't identify with an impersonal tractor. I've never once seen a farmer put his arm around a tractor (they have no necks), and they simply can't rub and nuzzle.

Irrigating was a lot of fun for me. The reader might get the idea from these statements about fun that all my farm work was. You know that isn't so, but who would want to read about hot days and sweat and sore muscles and tired backs and aching feet? I will tell you what I hated the most and let it go at that. Not shoveling manure. Not hand milking. Not arising at 4:30 a.m. to help Daddy with the chores (he worked away 40 hours a week). Not feeding or hoeing or irrigating or fencing or field work. What I hated most was getting hay leaves and cheat grass beards down my sweaty neck on a hot, summer day.

The worst of all to me was bucking bales onto a slip that was drawn behind a baler, When we turned into the wind, all the trash that the tractor and baler stirred up was deposited on the hapless buckler. Yuk!

Our irrigation was all by ditching or flooding and came from a large canal, through a headgate at the canal and then down a five foot ditch. We shared this ditch with a neighboring farmer and diverted water into our farm by stop boards. Every farmer had certain days of each week that he could use the water, the volume being controlled by a valve at the headgate. A ditch-rider made periodic, unscheduled checks on the head-gates to assure that the farmer was using only that amount for which he had paid.

On our irrigation days, we always followed the same pattern: the crop fields first, then the hay, then the pastures, then the garden and last of all the lawn. This meant that you had to reset all of your ditches and stop boards before turning the water in the next time.

I often slept outside during hot summer nights, even at times moving the bed springs out on the grass. One morning I awakened and was completely surrounded by water. Some of the bedding edges were wet and I had to wade through water to get to the porch.

Daddy arose about that time, and was he ever mad. Through the night, the neighbor thought that he evidently had too much water for some reason. Instead of going clear up to the canal headgate, he just went to our ditch and put the stops in and sent that entire head of water down our ditches in the middle of night. What a mess! We had corn and potato ditching all washed out, the garden was flooded and our lawn looked like a lake. Daddy called the neighbor and spoke a few Dutch words to him interspersed with a few lumberjack terms. I didn't hear, but it must have been effective, for it never happened again.

It still looked funny to awaken on an island when you had gone to sleep on the grass. It wasn't so funny when both of us spent the next few days re-ditching the row crops.

My cousin, Delores, who was three years my senior and a Junior in High school, and I were mud fighting in one of the feeder ditches one hot summer afternoon. If you've never done it, you have one more joy in life to experience. The rules are simple and basic: grab handful of mud from the bottom of the ditch (you are in the ditch, of course) and let fly. I really enjoyed this highly complicated sport with Delores, for she was very athletic for a girl. She could really throw and you didn't have to give her any handicap.

She kept backing up as we "mud fought" and I could see that she was reaching the limit of her tether, for behind her stretched the electric fence that refrained the livestock from getting into the neighbor's fields. When I realized this juicy fact, I pulled out all of the stops and unleashed a barrage worthy of military description. This furious fusillade accomplished my tactical purposes, and she responded in like fashion, totally forgetting about that charged fence. When she stooped over once too often, and way too close, and brushed that wire, her mother heard her yell clear over in Puyallup, I was as powerless as I was convulsed, and she took me down into that ditch with the prowess of a Sumo wrestler.

You needed to have known Delores to realize how funny this was. She was into sophistry of the first degree at this stage of her life -- classical music, correct posture, Emily Post, art and diction and dignity. Brother, her starch instantly disintegrated when she hit that wire, and she didn't regain it until I had been properly throttled. She was a great sport and we went to the house buddies. Boy, would she ever give me the evil eye if I suggested some more mud fighting!

One of the greatest "fights" I was ever privileged to participate in occurred a half mile west of us in a neighbor's watermelon field. Hermiston watermelons were marketed all over the Northwest as the very best you could get. There were hundreds of acres of watermelons within walking distance of our farm. I have literally pitched thousands of luscious, beautiful, sweet watermelons. In the fields, you never ate anything but hearts. Most of the time pickers and packers could get all they wanted to eat from the hearts of dropped melons, but it was an unwritten law in the fields, that you simply picked a melon, dropped it on the ground, pulled out the meaty heart, flicked off the few remaining seeds hanging on and had yourself a feast fit for a king.

This particular incident was in the Fall and a few nights of hard frost had ruined any further melon harvesting. A neighbor kid who lived next to this particular field told everyone on the bus that the melons were just right for a rotten melon fight. I had already participated in a good many fresh melon fights, and they were loads of fun, but resulted in everything involved becoming a sticky mess - skin, hair, clothes, everything it touched. But this sounded like extra fun, and before long a bunch of us farm kids had assembled at this melon field for the rotten melon battle of the century. May I tell you that there is considerable difference between fresh and rotten melons, just in case you might want to try it some time.

We lost all of our feminine "soldiers" after the first salvo. They hightailed it for home holding their noses. These once succulent, meaty gourmet delicacies had deteriorated into balls of putrefaction. One hit and you smelled like a walking gut wagon. This was the shortest melon fight I had ever been in, and in ten minutes there were only two of us left. I have this uncanny ability to internally close off my nostrils. It helps in both rotten melon fights and doing baby diapers. This other kid finally climbed a tree with a big one, but I had seen him. His purpose was to bomb me

when I passed beneath. I picked up one about the size of a small cantaloupe that was still firm and hit his big melon as he held it. That stinking slop flew all over the place, and we both had had enough. My guess is that there were some very unhappy mothers all over Westland that night, and the whole countryside wondered what had died.

I don't know how much fun kids have today, but we had lots of it and no one was hurt physically or morally. I made just about all of the toys my younger brother and I played with. It's nearly beyond belief what kids can do if they have to. "Making do" is much more than the meeting of a need. It develops the hidden wealth of resourcefulness. "Make do" persons are usually "can do" people.

Before we leave Westland, I want to tell you about my 4-H heifer, Beauty. We had acquired two milking cows with the farm and also a heifer from one of them. The folks said that I could call the heifer mine for 4-H purposes, though I didn't really own her. Also, a part of the deal was, that when she freshened (had her calf), she would have to become one of the milkers.

Beauty was just that. She had all of the marks of a Jersey including the tender, doleful eyes. I kept her cleaned and curried and clipped just like our manuals directed, and when the Umatilla County Fair was held that summer, I showed her. We never won any ribbons, but I couldn't have been more pleased if we had. She was a winner to me.

After she freshened and we started milking her with the two older cows, I noticed subtle changes in her. She was still friendly, but with divided interest now that she was a mother. It was sort of like she had to settle down and raise a family, and that I was not alone in her life anymore. But she would still nuzzle me and rub against me occasionally.

Beauty was stanchioned to the right of her mother, and as I milked the older cow one afternoon, she kept moving over against my back. Once was nice, but the second "hug" she gave me smashed my face right into the old cow's side. I couldn't see, let alone milk like that, so with my back I pushed against her and moved her over where she belonged.

In a minute or two she repeated the first maneuver and had once again smashed my face into Genie's side. That upset me a little, and I vigorously and forcefully gave her the point of my elbow right into her ample stomach. It was hard enough that she responded with a great big "oof" and she immediately moved out of my way.

I resumed milking and was congratulating myself about how I had solved that crowding problem, when she gave me an unexpected and powerful kick in the side with her left, rear foot. I flew clear over the gutter and onto the barn floor, with the milk stool going one way and the half-filled milk bucket with its foamy contents going the other.

My first instinct to lecture her with the milk stool vanished immediately when I looked at her. It is the gospel truth that she had her head craned my way with one, big, black Jersey eye looking at my dilemma through a crack in the stanchion. If animals laugh, this one did. If they don't, I would have if I were in her place.

She learned her lesson and I learned mine, but I'm guessing that my side hurt longer than her stomach. Daddy wondered why there wasn't so much milk that night and I just kept quiet. With three cows, we had enough milk for our family, the pigs, the cats and sold cream to the creamery.

For a semi-arid climate, our area had lots of wildlife, and I kept asking my Dad if I could use his 16 gauge shotgun for hunting. I had a Marlin .22 rifle that I had earned as a prize for selling Cloverine Salve, but you couldn't get quail and pheasant and ducks with it too well. I don't know why he kept refusing my requests, for his shotgun was a single shot and was far from elaborate or expensive. Then one Saturday a strange pickup came into our drive, and an old cattle trader I had seen at the sale yard from time to time crawled out. He and Daddy stood around and shot the breeze for awhile, and they kept looking and gesturing out toward the pasture. After a bit Daddy hollered at me to come over. When I did, old Bill hauled out of his pickup a beautiful, nearly-new 410 gauge shotgun with a tubular magazine. Daddy didn't have any extra money, but he had swapped Beauty's bull calf for it and I had a shotgun. I received much pleasure from it.

There was a strict sense in which the bull calf wasn't mine, but maybe this was my father's way of thinking me for all of my work on the farm, Everything he did was with me right there alongside him. We chored together and farmed together and fenced together and butchered together. Fathers teach sons so much, especially when they work together. My father wasn't a saint and was hot-tempered and impatient, but he taught me solid values of fair play and hard work and honesty and integrity. He never gossiped about any person and was loyal to a fault when you were worthy of such loyalty. But get out of the way if you betrayed or deceived him or his!

This is a good place to tell you about the case of the "missing boy". The fun of this story is heightened by the no-nonsense attitude of my Dad. Living, to him, was serious business, and there wasn't time for fun and games. I used to feel a bit slighted when other dads were taking their sons hunting and fishing and camping and I was home working with mine. Notice that I said "a bit". It wasn't a traumatic experience. I just noticed the different relationships of others. There were also many of my close friends who were farm boys, and their lot was just like mine.

It was a gargantuan task to raise and care for four children, three of whom, by this time, were teenagers. He did this on a single salary. Mother never worked one single month out of our home. One of the most poignant memories of my father is seeing him at the kitchen table with paper and pencil, figuring and figuring and figuring. "How do I make the coming paycheck buy everything that we need?" The only extra income was the little derived from cream, eggs and rabbits. Boy, did we have rabbits for sale! But that's another story.

Frankly, I don't know how the folks managed as well as they did. I experienced wearing patches to school and attending with holes in my shoe soles. Our lunch buckets were just that. Where do you suppose my generation came up with that term? We carried our lunches to school in lard buckets and syrup buckets. That is, until the girls had to have "paper sacks" to maintain their dignity. It didn't matter if it were brown, wrinkled, stomped on and rescued from the trash. Listen. Girls would fight for their paper sacks! If you were well-bred, you had a paper sack. If you were feminine, you had a paper sack. If you were anybody at all, you had a paper sack. If you were alive, you had a paper sack.

I've got some secrets on my two beautiful sisters, though. I can certify that they wore the ultimate in ladies undergarments - lingerie by Larro and petticoats by Purina. For those of you who still don't know, that's flour sack underwear. Folks, that was the beginning of designer clothing, for it was almost impossible to bleach out all of the lettering that the flour companies put on them. Flour sacks bailed a good many of us out of hard times. But, back to the case of the missing boy.

Sometime during the last spring and summer that we were on this farm, I persuaded my parents to let me fix up an old tool shed for my bedroom. Until that time, the girls and I had shared the upstairs. Because of some remodeling we were trying to do, and never accomplished before moving from there, the inside stairway had been removed and we three were gaining access to the upstairs by climbing up a ladder and through the east window. No hay! And my sisters would have been 18 and 21 by that time. Not one of the three of us should ever complain about what we have and don't have now, that's for sure! So, when I asked, and my parents agreed, to move to the tool shed, I don't remember either of the girls shedding tears or requesting me to stay upstairs. Now the two of them could each have a bedroom - half the upstairs each separated by a couple of blankets! I'll guess that neither of them has had so much square footage in a bedroom since! And what bedrooms they were! Air conditioned (when you opened both windows); individual restrooms (chamber each); walk-in closets (the entire bedroom was your closet); indirect lighting (windows on both sides of the house); running water (if you ran to get it and ran to bring it back); privacy and security (you could either pull the ladder up through the window, or kick it down); and best of all, Southern California furniture (orange crate dressers). Hey. They weren't that bad!

Can I repeat that we were really a happy family. Things don't bring happiness. Love does. Contentment does. Unity does. Loyalty does. And togetherness does.

So I moved everything from the front of this dirty, oily old tool room to the back part of it, and mother helped me scrub and sweep and clean it all up. We covered the inside, bare boards with cardboard, just like we did the outhouse, and then brought out my bed and clothes and California furniture. Sport, our part Lab dog, moved in with me. Mother didn't like the dog hair on the bedding, but tolerated it. I didn't mind except for the cockleburs that knot-head chewed out during the night.

Every morning I would awaken to the snap of the coal oil lantern, as Daddy lit it after removing it from the peg from which it hung on the porch. There was no electricity in any of the outbuildings, including my tool shed bedroom and the barn. Any night work was accomplished by lantern light. So, the snap of the lantern cage that held the glass was my alarm clock. Sometimes I would be awake before Daddy came out of the house, but if not, I would be at the sound of that snap. I would lie in that warm bed with old Sport until he came and opened the tool room door and called my name, "Time to get up and do chores, Les."

One morning I was awake long before he came out of the house door and my foolish genes had been functioning overtime, When that happens, it is necessary to relieve the pressure. I crawled out of bed and put on my pants and shirt, shagged Sport out and placed the two pillows I had under the covers to make it appear that I was still there. Then I waited until he came out and lit the lantern and crawled under the bed. I could hear his footsteps cross the porch, come down the

path through the yard, cross the driveway and step up on the small plank platform in front of the tool room.

When he didn't get my usual answer to his holler, he opened the door and stuck the lantern in, There was still no movement from that "sleeping form" and I was about to bust my sides. When there was no response from his second holler, he came to the bed and shook the pillow's "shoulder" and jerked the covers back. By then I was roaring away uncontrollably. I thought that I was in for it for sure. If that had been my Mother, she would have crawled down under there and tickled the daylight's out of me, but Daddy never said one word and left for the barn. My guess is that he was mournfully questioning God, wondering what he had ever done to deserve a clown for a son. We fed and milked in silence. What do you say to a knot-head?

My poor Daddy. I realize that somebody of this "partnership" had to be serious. Then, maybe, one of us needed to lighten things up a little? It's so easy for adults, including me, to take themselves way too seriously. Perhaps one of a child's major purposes in life is to remind adults that the sun did come up today.

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Chapter 5

MR. ELLINGSON'S CANNERY

This was a rather interesting operation. Our daughter, Miriam, was asking us just recently if there were still custom canneries around, and we did not know of any. My guess is that if there are, they would be in farming communities. Another reason for their scarcity or demise might be because of the high cost of liability insurance.

Mr. Ellingson was the father of our school superintendent and was a kindly, stoop-shouldered old gentleman. The building that housed the Cannery was directly across the street from the Hermiston Creamery. The Cannery only operated a few years, and I was privileged to work there awhile with Mr. Ellingson.

A custom cannery was similar to any commercial cannery in that the end result was having fruit and vegetables in metal, sealed cans compared to home-canned goods in glass jars. It differed in that the produce was brought and prepared by the owner on the premises. A custom cannery didn't deal in any aspect of the goods itself, only in the sealing and processing.

There were three sizes of cans that a customer could select, 001,002 and 003, and they were industry standardized. Not too many used the smallest size, which was the size of a soup can, as they were the least cost efficient.

Customers could bring in anything they chose to preserve in a can, but the majority of it was garden produce and fruit. The preparation was done entirely by them, as well as any flavoring or seasoning.

There was a large, well-lighted, squeaky-clean preparation area filled with long rows of cutting tables. Nearby were numerous sinks for cleaning, rinsing and blanching. The Cannery had nothing to do with either the method or quality of preparation and packing, and there were plenty of signs throughout the working area disclaiming any company liability for spoiled produce. The risk was entirely the customer's and any can that didn't seal was his loss. Obviously, there were sometimes when our sealing machine malfunctioned and caused a can to spoil, but 99% of the time if there were spoilage, it was because of improper preparation. Anytime it was obviously machine caused, the Cannery didn't charge for that can, but the goods loss was the customer's.

When a customer came in to prepare his produce, the Cannery assigned him a batch number, and this was stamped on the bottom of each can along with a description of its contents. An example would be 209 CORN, or 091 APRICOTS. That's all the can would have on it. These cans were in every sense as good a quality as you could buy off from any store shelf, but without the fancy labels. They were superior to home-canned in that there was a longer self life, they stacked much easier and they wouldn't break. They could still have the advantage of their own home-grown garden goods and also be able to prepare and season it themselves. It seemed to be the best of everything. The local women packed (pun intended) the place out through the summer and fall months.

That was the customer's part. Then came ours.

The capping machine was fun and simple to operate. The operator, either Mr. Ellingson or myself, would feed the cans into this rotating capper, and it would do its job and spit them out the back onto a conveyor. The only critical part of this job was to make sure that the lid size was correct for the can being capped and that there were adequate lids. Then the cans were ready for the canning process. Each customer's batch was grouped with other customer's batches of the same food variety until there were enough for a cooker load, There were few products that could be mixed as both time and temperature varied. As every home canner knows, the softer the variety, the shorter the processing time, and vice versa. Corn took the longest.

The Cannery had three pressure cookers, all in a row and separated from the cutting rooms, the storage area and the office because of the extreme danger involved. Both steam and hot water were used to charge the cookers to great amounts of pressure. Because of both higher temperatures and pressures, processing time was shorter than a home cooker would be. It was a hot, dangerous, critical job.

These cookers were 24 to 30 inches around and stood about four feet high off from the floor. You could load them with one to three baskets of cans, and the loading and unloading was accomplished with a chain hoist. A full cooker could hold from 200 to 300 cans, depending on the size of the can being processed.

When loaded, a heavy lid was hoisted onto the top of the cooker and bolted and screwed down with twelve to fifteen large, wing-nut type devices. Then you turned on the steam and water and monitored the pressure rise, When the appropriate pressure was achieved, a timer was set and the pressure was constantly maintained by valves. One of us was always with the cookers and no one else was allowed inside when the pressure was up. There was lots of time to keep the cooking

room clean and tidy. In this, Mr. Ellingson and I got along well, for we both liked a neat and tight ship.

Unloading differed a bit in that we donned rubber aprons and boots because of the trapped water that cascaded off from the myriad lids. The baskets of cans were placed on dollies and wheeled to the storage area and stacked on shelves to await the claiming of the customer.

The main reason why I am writing about Mr. Ellingson's Cannery is what sometimes occurred in the storage area. Customers could pick up their canned goods anytime after a day or two, but, as you can imagine, with the busyness of summer, and with the nature of canning being for a future use, most goods were in storage for a good long time. Then there was the matter of paying for the cans and processing. Some cans were there for a year or longer. The Cannery owner can't eat all of that stuff, and it couldn't be sold, so if it occurred that cans were left for long periods of time, you just called, and called and called.

There were two occurrences that would indicate a spoilage of goods. The first was a pervasive, offensive odor. When there was a stink in the warehouse, Mr. Ellingson and I would begin the sniffing process, following our noses until the spoiled can were discovered. Ruptured seals were preceded by bulging until the seams gave away. If there were one in a batch, you could almost always find more. Then it was necessary to remove the split, spoiled cans, clean up the mess that usually had spilled on any lower batches and then the shelves themselves. Then the cans themselves were cleaned and the batch number noted and the amount of bad cans placed on office records.

Sometimes the spoilage built up enough pressure to actually explode the cans. This happened a number of times while I worked there and it was always hilarious, It was invariably corn that exploded, When it did, Mr. Ellingson would respond like a disaster was in progress, and we would go flying to the warehouse. It was so funny to see this old, white-haired gentleman who was characteristically laid back and droopy-eyed, jump and run when explosions started in the warehouse. It was the only time he got out of low gear. It never made sense to me, because what was done was done, and our moving out of shuffle wasn't going to change one thing. But I would jog along with him with an earnest, serious look on my face to combat the danger in the warehouse. When in Rome.

This kind of spoilage was easy to spot, for all you had to do was look for corn. Cans would be scattered in a corny disarray, and the stink of spoiled corn permeated the atmosphere. Again, it was true that where there were one, there would generally be more. Other cans would be bulging at the ends and seams, and we would play bomb squad in the attempt to get them out of the warehouse before they exploded. Mr. Ellingson feared this for some reason and was all business until every potential "bomb" was discovered and removed. I got a big blast out of it.

On hot days after we had really been putting out and had finished a particularly arduous task, the boss would spring for an ice cream bar. He would get out his quaint little coin purse and fish out a dime and send me across the street to the creamery. You could buy the biggest "ice cream on a stick", he called them, for a nickel, He had a peculiar habit of holding the treat by the bar itself instead of the stick. I loved the ice cream, but looked forward to the spectacle each time of

watching him disdain conventionality by ignoring the stick. Don't ask me why. I never could figure it out. If you think it isn't so strange, try it sometime.

He was a fine old gentleman and I really enjoyed working for him.

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Chapter 6

GOD CALLS ME TO THE MINISTRY

To my knowledge, the Lord began working in my life when I was nine. One of my life's biggest regrets is that, for whatever reason, I didn't or couldn't stay true to Him from that early point in my life. I know that some persons have. Some of them were even younger than nine. But from the age of nine until I was eighteen and a sophomore in college, my walk with God was an on again, off again experience that was certainly unsatisfying.

I can never remember a time when I didn't want to be good. I wanted to be a Christian. I never experienced refusing or pulling back from God. The pleasures of sin were my problem. They kept pulling me back and down. I thank God that my parents taught us children that there are no gray areas with God -- only black and white. Because of this, I never learned how to rationalize. When I was living in sin, I hid it, for I was ashamed of it, but I never once questioned that it was sin and that it was wrong.

One goal I have in setting down these writings is to refrain from too much sermonizing. I am concerned enough about this matter of rationalizing, however, to deviate briefly and say that deceiving ourselves destroys the entire foundation of coming to know God. If we can ever get to the place, in our minds, where we can truly believe that God doesn't mean what He says about sin, we have started walking down the pathway to self destruction. That journey leads to a dead conscience and ends in Hell. Deceiving other persons is hypocrisy. Deceiving oneself is reprobation.

This is certainly no attempt to make my sinning more acceptable or less punitive, It is neither. What I am saying is that I knew what I was doing; I knew that it was wrong; and I knew that I wasn't right before God while I was doing it.

The Church of the Nazarene sent Home Missionaries into our logging town in the mid 1940s and began holding revival meetings in the community hall. It should have been called the dance hall that it was, but it wasn't.

Nazarenes of those days expressed their religion more than we do today. You may not prefer the saints of God singing and shouting and praying and testifying and preaching loudly and emotionally, but these dear people did, and some in the community were so displeased that they responded by throwing rocks and pine knots against the sides of the hall and punctuating them with mocking "hallelujahs" and "praise Gods". I clearly remember that. It was that impressive.

It wasn't too long before we were helping these stouthearted saints, along with Reverend and Mrs. Franklin Brown, the newly-appointed pastors, build a small, but accommodating, white, wood-framed sanctuary. It was in this little chapel, set upon a prominent east hill, where God first spoke to my heart.

I have repeated this story all through my ministry, for it needs to be. I felt more conviction in that service as a nine-year-old than ever after that. This sets forth at least two certainties: children can know definite conviction by the Holy Spirit, and that conviction is undoubtedly the loudest and most impressive at the first. Any way you look at it, the church does well to evangelize children, and children do best to obey God the first time He talks to them. There is no better time.

Reverend D. Van Slyke, a converted heroin addict, was the evangelist, and when he preached on Hell that night, I thought and felt that I was an immediate candidate. I went to the altar in front of the sanctuary and knelt down and repented of every sin I could think of. That burden of sin rolled off from my heart and I felt as light as a feather.

A wonderful transformation occurred! Mrs. Brown, our pastor's wife, was far from my idea of a raving beauty. She was considerably overweight, dressed ultra-conservatively, was very ancient (from my perspective), grimaced and wrinkled her nose every now and then, and worst of all, had a big, ugly mole on her face with unclipped hairs growing out of it. In short, she wasn't attractive to me in the least.

When God forgave my sins that night and I stopped praying and opened my eyes, who do you think was right there in front of me? She was smiling and praising God. All of the unpleasant physical features of her face were still there, but I declare that it had a heavenly shine and an unearthly glow that drew me and blessed me. She took me in her ample arms and I felt that I was in the embrace of God. Sister Brown never did look odd and funny after that.

I have already inferred that my walk with God didn't stay on course, but from the time of my conversion I was always in church. The house of God became the center of our family's existence, and I am indebted to those good Nazarenes, to the faithful pastors and Sunday school teachers and youth workers, and to my parents for keeping me going in the right direction, even though I floundered and struggled until I was eighteen.

Any time that God's Spirit would move upon a service, the speaker could count on at least one seeker. I can't tell you how many starts I made in those intervening nine years of up and down living. As is usually the case, it was down more than up. I would sincerely promise God and myself that "this time" I was going to keep the victory, and it would last two weeks at the longest. Maybe I wasn't enough in earnest. Maybe I needed a strong role model. I really doesn't matter now except I wonder about other youth who are presently experiencing the up and downs.

There was no question in anybody's mind about my intentions to live for God. When I was "up", it was 100%, There was no half-heartedness in me at all.

My pastor, Reverend D. L. Goss, must have seen God working in my life even before I did. We were to have a youth emphasis weekend at our church, and the dear man scared me when he

asked me if I'd preach Sunday night. Frankly, the idea of preaching hadn't been seriously presented to my mind. But I agreed, correctly supposing that he sensed something I didn't.

If my life depended on it I couldn't tell you what subject I talked about or how long it lasted. What was indelibly impressed upon my soul was that preaching was to be my life's work, I was fifteen. I was not settled in my walk with God. I had no idea what the preaching ministry was all about. But God had spoken to my soul and laid His hand upon my life with a call from Him. The fact that three young people sought God at the altar that night seemed to seal that call. I have never seriously wanted or tried to do anything else.

When we moved from Seneca, Oregon to Hermiston, there was no Nazarene Church there, so we started visiting churches. It seemed to be a bit like Goldilock's discovered porridge -- some were too hot and some were too cold -- mostly too cold. One Saturday we were driving around town looking at churches and saw this basement church that didn't even have a structure on it. When Mother read "Pilgrim Holiness Church" on the sign, she said "I think that it's a tongues church". We call them charismatic today. "Since we haven't tried it, let's go there tomorrow". That is how we found the Pilgrims (Wesleyans today). They were our people from the first service, They had the fire, and that fire still burns in my heart as I write these lines. We don't have to cool off and get lukewarm spiritually. We'd better not! It makes God sick!

I struggled with the acceptance and rejection problem that is common to new and young Christians, This is especially painful for youth who are already experiencing multiple changes in their lives that relate to self-image and self-worth. The pressures at school to conform had as much affect on me in the 1940s as it does the youth on the 1990s, and I judge that it has always been so and will always be.

With the insights and perspective of over 35 year's pastoring, and having been privileged to raise two fine daughters and one fine son, my conclusion is, and has been for a good long time, that the only possible way parents can overcome the tremendous peer pressure their children encounter in school is to have a strong, loving, praying, understanding family unit combined with the same kind of a church family. Kids need to have something solid that they can come back to when they rebound. They need a solid home and a solid church.

I can remember instances where I was ashamed of my home and church families. I recall instances of avoiding encounters with church people when I was with my school chums. I remember being embarrassed during street meetings our youth society was conducting downtown Hermiston, especially when guys from school who knew me walked by snickering, I was clearly struggling with the cross of Christ and hadn't really cut my ties with the world.

The dear people who have endured my ministry over the years have heard me say on numerous occasions that I had two great passions in my life before Jesus completely won my heart at the age of eighteen. They were girls and sports. I am not sure of the order of importance, and it really doesn't matter. Young men can be enslaved or blessed by both, but they must place them properly in the conduct of their lives. The only story I will relate about my torrid romances, (most of which occurred only in my mind) is of my first love. She was our next door neighbor's daughter named Nina, and she was beautiful beyond description. I fell for her hard and professed my

undying love for her over the fence one day by telling her that I wanted to whisper something to her. When she leaned over, I kissed her on the cheek. Instead of some romantic response, she patted me on the head and smiled at me. I felt more like a puppy than a paramour. I see that I was pushing it a little, I was in the first grade and she was in the 8th. I guess that Nina didn't want to wait.

Sports consumed me from Junior High days as it did most of the boys that age. The Lord gave me a strong, agile, well-coordinated body that was well-suited to sports of all kinds. Hermiston High at that time was a three year secondary school and when I was in High School, I wore a three year letterman's sweater. It was possible, but rare to wear four stripes on your sleeve. One of my best friends, Alan Pedigo, was good enough to accomplish that, and so were his other two brothers, Martin and Bobby. Those boys had athletic ability to spare. Martin eventually became a coach.

Any following stories are for the sake of interest and in no way is purposed to be self-aggrandizing. The conclusion of the telling of them will verify this, for the Lord won my heart and I have never felt that He took anything away from me by not allowing me to follow in the pathway of competitive sports.

My two best friends all through school at Hermiston were Alan Pedigo and Victor Kimmel. We were all farm boys and good enough to letter in just about every High School sport. We would get together at one or the other of our farms occasionally and work out basketball plays together even when we weren't together at the school gym. Because of this, we were soon winning most of our school games, but it was not so good in that the other two guys on the team felt left out a lot. We were sensitive to that and worked on it.

One time Vic and I had broken some minor training rule and Coach O'Conner said that we couldn't play at Walla Walla that Friday night. We were both starters and really felt badly about it.

With permission from our mothers, Vic and I hitchhiked to Walla Walla, paid admission to the game (Ugh! New experience), and sat down way in the back of the bleachers. We wanted to see, but didn't want to be seen. That wasn't too smart with two purple and gold letterman s sweaters in a sea of green and gold.

The longer the game went into the first half, the worse Hermiston was getting beat. We almost always beat St. Pats. It wasn't long before we were spotted by some of our team mates on the bench, and I could see the ripple effect as it got down to Coach O'Conner. He sort of looked up and right back down and scowled.

I don't remember how much we trailed at half-time, but I do remember what transpired when the buzzer signaled the end of the first half and the teams headed for the locker rooms. The coach started after them and then abruptly came clear across the gum floor and stood right under the top bleacher where Vic and I were sitting. All he said was, Kimmel and Boone, get down and get suited up." Believe me, it took no urging! What puzzled me was why they had brought our suits along. And we did win the game.

One time, just at the close of our school year, there was an invitational track meet at Pendleton. It was to be a three-way meet between Walla Walla, Pendleton and Hermiston. The three communities were historically arch rivals and within fifty miles of each other. Our coaches and team were all eager to participate in the meet. The problem was that the other two schools were still in session and Hermiston wasn't.

Five of us, who were all three and four year lettermen, got together and appealed to the coaches to find some way for the Hermiston track team to be represented at the last meet of the year. They assured us that going as a team was out of the question. There could be no bus, no coaches, no school insurance, no official auspices and no recognition as a school-sponsored activity. "BUT", the track coach said, "if you five guys want to go on your own, you can use school equipment, but that is all." That was enough of a nod, though off the record. It wouldn't improve either team or individual standings, and there could be no ribbons, trophies or records established.

Competition is one of mankind's strongest motivations. We immediately decided to go for it and pooled enough money to take one of our parent's cars.

We had one big hurdle to cross (pun intended). A conference rule at that time was that any single competitor could only enter three events in any one meet. My usual events were the shot put, the long jump and the high hurdles, but I had competed in the past in the high jump, the 440 and the 220 dash. With only five of us, we could not fill all of the events if the limitation were to apply.

Upon arrival, some of us asked the officials about the possibility of our team members entering more than three events. After conferring they gave us permission to enter as many events as we wanted. That was a mistake on their part, for we all promptly did just that. All five of us, sort of the "cream of the Hermiston track crop", entered every event except those that we absolutely could not function in. For instance, there was just no way I could get my 185 pound carcass very high in the pole vault. Neither did one of our small runners try to put the shot.

We were five very busy boys that afternoon, getting from one event to the next without forfeiting our turns of competition. After just a few events, there was no doubt in anyone's mind about the outcome. The consolation to the other two schools was that, though Hermiston won the meet hands down, we couldn't be recognized as such and had nothing to show for it. But did we ever have fun! I don't think that I was any great shakes for the team, but those two Pedigo boys aced every event that they entered. They made the rest of us look good. A person does tend to do better when he associates with those who excel.

There is a page out of my "illustrious (though brief) sports career" that had a considerable impact on my treatment of other persons because of it.

Because my father transferred to the Corps of Engineers at the McNary Dam on the Columbia River in 1950, my folks sold our little farm and moved the family to McNary, Oregon. I was really upset about this as the move placed us in the Umatilla school district. We were just at the start of the basketball season with our first game two weeks away against (you guessed it) Umatilla. My whole world had fallen apart.

My first day at Umatilla (Umatilla and Hermiston are five miles apart) High School was agony for me, but one bright spot was, that to this smaller school, I was a celebrity. They suited me up as a starter for the very first practice and I thought that this might not be so bad after all. Basketball is basketball. So all of that week I ran plays with the Umatilla team and came to the Thursday pep assembly halfway reconciled to my fate of facing my Hermiston teammates in black and orange instead of purple and gold.

The Umatilla gym was filled with the customary cacophony of individual class yells, feminine screams and intermittent pep band music. Into all of this frenzy the head coach called out the individual team members one by one. He held me back until the very last of the starters for the next night's game.

Now I had been doing something every day that, upon reflection, was as stupid as it was understandable. I had worn my letterman's sweater to school in Umatilla as faithfully and proudly as in Hermiston. In the 1940s and 1950s, if you had a letterman's sweater (they were as heavy as a coat and I had paid \$20.00 for it in the late 1940s, That was half a week's wages for many men), you wore it, not only to school, but everywhere. It was the ultimate popularity status symbol for boys. I want to comment more on this later.

On the large chenille "H", signifying Hermiston, were little emblems of a football, a basketball, crossed bats, a tennis racket and little shoes with wings for track. These identified the particular sport in which the athlete had earned his letter. There were some on my letter. Then on the back of then sweater was the large, fierce face of a Bulldog, the School mascot. I'm not trying to bore you with insignificant details, but this is essential to the story.

When the coach called me down to the gym floor amid all of the hollering and yelling, I must confess that it was a heady experience. Little did I know how quickly all of that could change to horrible humiliation. He had preceded calling out my name to be recognized by going through a lot of baloney (I recognized it as such at the time) about what a great guy I was and what I was going to do to those Bulldogs the following night. That wasn't too smart.

But he really showed ignorance when he stated that there was just one thing wrong with me, and asked me to turn around. Unsuspectingly I obeyed and as soon as my back was turned to him, he grabbed that big Bulldog on the back of my sweater and roughly tore it off and handed it to me. I can't remember one other thing that happened the rest of the day. I was more hurt and pained than angry.

When I came home and showed my parents what had been done, they were as upset about it as I. Mother was pained more for me than herself, but my Dutch daddy hit the roof, There was no question about their loyalties being the same as my own. They knew that I wanted to play with my teammates as well as graduate with my class.

They chatted together a bit and told me that if the Hermiston powers-that-be would approve of my attendance there, I could drive the family car the five miles back and forth, as Daddy walked to work. I not only received the School's approval, but discovered one of my friends was in the same fix, and we car-pooled so that we were only driving our folk's cars every other week.

An unusual thing happened because of all this pain. (I know that such happenings may not be painful to us adults, but it certainly was to me at that stage of my life). Friday night at game time, I suited up for Hermiston and had the time of my life playing with my old teammates and beating the black and orange pants off from the Umatilla team.

I've written all these sports stories partly for the sake of interest, but that's not the main reason. The real reason is yet to be told.

It was the first football game of my Junior year (though I wasn't playing on the football team) and we were to play Pendleton, Hermiston's arch rival then and now. What happened that night is one of the reasons for these writings about some of my life's experiences. God talked to me. He made Himself real to me.

As afore-mentioned, though God's call was upon my life, I could not seem to stay in a good experience of salvation, I was up and down and more down than up. Through the preceding summer I had made some fresh commitments to God that I had purposed to keep and had been trying hard.

The bright lights were bathing the football field in their eerie manner and in a few minutes the first big game of the season would start. My mind was obviously on all of the hoopla that attends ball-games, certainly a long ways from God and the church.

I could still take any person to within fifty feet or so of where a darkness and heaviness settled over me that was more significant and impressive than it was frightening, It was as though I was all alone on that football field. Don't ask me how I knew, but I knew immediately and definitely that it was the Lord. I couldn't explain how I knew any better today than if I had tried forty year's ago, but I knew it was Him. And I sensed what He wanted. This was happening on the football field. Sports was the love of my life. I knew instinctively what the Lord wanted and I promised Him on the spot that I would not participate in competitive sports anymore.

My friends, the heaviness and darkness lifted as suddenly as it had appeared. I want to praise the Lord for His goodness and kindness to me. He is a wonderful Savior! He would never take something from one of His children if it were not good for them. And He always has something better in its place.

I have no answer for why the Lord required this of me. I don't know what life would have held for me if I had gone my way instead of His. Anyone in a situation like this could make wild guesses that would be a waste of time. What I do know is that God doesn't make requirements of us that are unnecessary or unreasonable. Jesus came to make us happy and not miserable, and I've been happy in His way.

I don't think it's possible to overemphasize the importance of obedience and yeildedness to God's leadership. If we want to know God, we will want to stay tender and sensitive to His dealings with us.

This was a clear signal to me, and I obeyed immediately and completely, I told a very exasperated and understandably perplexed coach that I would not be participating in any aspect of the sport program that year. He tried to talk me out of it, but my mind was convinced that I was doing what the Lord wanted and stuck with it. I sealed the matter finally by taking the forty hour a week job at the Union 76 station.

My teammates really ragged me, but I had the pleasure of taking carloads of them to the Dairy Queen for milkshakes with the money I was making. They were playing ball every Friday night, but couldn't buy a milkshake or a hamburger.

Participating in competitive sports of any kind is a very heady experience. I've never experienced an equal in life to the rush it brings. Hearing your name yelled by a score or a hundred or a thousand fans produces an emotional high unprecedented for many of us. There is nothing else quite like it for appeal to human pride, It is hard to keep the more important matters of life in perspective when a person is rather unnaturally constantly made prominent for whatever reason.

Something happened the first day I wore my letterman's sweater to school that helped me clearly see the fickleness of popularity.

Until I began wearing it, I was just one more poor farm kid from Westland, But a marvelous transformation occurred that first day I came to school wearing that new sweater with is prominent "H" on it! The cheerleaders, who were at the top of the feminine pack of high school celebrities, smiled at me and called my name and stopped to talk. Can you imagine that? I was the very same kid today as I was yesterday when no one recognized me or called my name.

From the very day I became a letterman ("jocks" they are called today) I was a somebody! Before that I was a nobody. I can promise you that I didn't buy it for one second. If I were given to anger in situations like that, I would have seen red. What shallowness! What insincerity! Thank God, my parents and my church had taught me better than be suckered into such deception. The Lord saved me from the dangers of the thin veneer of human popularity.

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Chapter 7 FINDING JESUS REAL TO ME

There is a lot of difference in making a profession of faith and knowing Jesus Christ. Making a decision to accept Jesus as Savior may or may not bring a person into a personal relationship with Him. I realize that my saying these things will raise some eyebrows, but I just happen to know that it is true. The truth is that personal salvation from sin must engage more than a seeker's mental and emotional faculties.

I don't know why my soul was unsatisfied with my professions of faith, my oft repentings, my many trips to the altar for forgiveness of sins. What I do know is that anything and everything I had tried didn't cure me of the sin business.

There is no question in my mind that I would have completely abandoned religion, God and the church IF it hadn't been for three certainties: (1) There were a few people in my life who obviously knew God and had found a deliverance and confidence and victory I didn't have. (2) My life was dominated by cruel powers that were degenerative and destructive. (3) There was an inner pull in my soul towards something that I didn't have, but desperately wanted -- a drawing, a yearning and a hunger was there.

Reality was the key to this quest of my soul. I am open to the possibility that everyone may not require such reality, but something in me needed it then and needs it now. Such an inner demand for certainty was good and, at the same time, potentially dangerous. What I know is the God Who saw my heart and its earnest desire did not fail or disappoint me.

I was at this time, and had been for over a year, a ministerial student at Colorado Springs Bible College. After abruptly leaving Owosso Bible College because of my sister's 1951 brush with death at home in Oregon, I had enrolled for the second semester of 1951-1952 at CSBC. This college was closer to home and two other youth from the Hermiston Church were students there.

I had been struggling over a number of issues in my life at this time, all of which only intensified both the spiritual discontent I was experiencing as well as an increasing yearning for a confidence and reality I didn't have.

I can't identify with Christians who tell about all they gave up to follow Jesus. All I had to surrender wasn't worth hanging onto. I was miserable, unfulfilled, struggling and heartsick, If there ever were a latter-day Moses standing on a decadent Nebo and peering with longing into a verdant Canaan, it was I.

What I write about now is so sacred that I tremble in spirit, This is the first time to commit it to written words, This is the center and circumference of my life. This describes the most real event of all my life. I have nothing without this. Because of this, I have all things for time and eternity. I understand what Paul meant when he said, "For me to live is Christ."

I beg anyone reading this to refrain from thinking that I just had greater desire or greater determination or manifested greater effort in my search for reality. In fact, I was a defeated, disappointed, disillusioned, bankrupt soul. If an individual ever really needed God, I did. I had tried and tried and tried again, doing the best I knew to appropriate the peace and victory my consciousness sought. I don't know how else I can describe all of the frustrations and disappointments leading up to this point of my experiencing God, but what happened is as clear today as it was on March, 1953.

Something had to be settled. I could not go on this way. I either had to find reality in Jesus for myself -- settled, certain, definite, unquestionably -- or give it all up. It was resolution time. It was judgment day. It was a showdown, not so much between me and the Lord, but between clarity and distortion. Between victory and defeat. Between in and up and down and out. Between hunger and fulfillment. Between knowing and wondering.

I don't know the time of day or the day of the week, but three worlds knows the time. All Heaven knew, all Hell knew, and I knew when I pledged to find reality of personal salvation in Jesus or die in the attempt. In my mind and soul, this was a battle to the death one way or the other. Since I didn't want anyone else drug into this battle scene, I locked my dormitory door, got down on my knees beside that steel-framed cot and began to bear my soul before God.

I confessed every sin I could think of, even all of them I had already repented of a few dozen times before. I searched every nook and crannie of my memory for any act or thought that could conceivably be considered wrong in God's sight. That took a long time. I talked to God about my weaknesses in the flesh, and as He dealt with me, made promises to Him about my thoughts and actions that, by His grace, would never be a part of my life anymore. I meant business, and three worlds knew it. I clearly understood that these pledges I made to God was for all of my life and that only by keeping them would I make heaven my home. I cannot overemphasize how clearly and explicitly God dealt with me in these matters. This God Who sees from the beginning to the end knew where I needed a heavy halter on my humanity and was faithfully preparing me for living my life in rectitude and holiness.

Some readers may find this surprising -- that God would be so specific and demanding about a person's conduct. I assure you that it made perfect sense to me, even at the time, It was these very areas of thought and conduct that had brought me to such a precarious spiritual state.

Sin has everything to do with salvation. Its power and control must be broken. Forgiveness and feeling better is a wonderful release that every person desires, but the soul demands more than mental and emotional relief. We need (and I desperately needed) relief from compulsion to sin. Not the possibility to sin. Even Adam wasn't free from that. I needed something beyond forgiveness. I needed a consciousness of a deliverance.

I believed that I could personally experience this delivering power. Everything I had learned about Jesus Christ confirmed and emphasized His power to deliver. I needed a deliverance. I needed the power of sin broken in my life.

This led me to another need as great or greater than that. I needed to KNOW it. The years of repetitions of trying and failing to find real victory had nearly wrecked my faith. I was unquestionably at a point of extremity. It was now or never, It was do or die.

No one but the Lord and me will ever know the fierce battle that was fought that day. I pled before God with the intensity and aggressiveness of my whole being. I begged Him for an assurance, for a confidence, for an indisputable witness that I was saved. "Just show me, Lord. Just let me KNOW," I said over and over. "I cannot go on like I have, I have to KNOW!"

God was teaching me a valuable lesson, for my soul and my mind was as blank as a moonless and starless midnight. I felt and perceived nothing. Don't ask me what I wanted, for it was nothing specific. I wasn't expecting or demanding any kind of a feeling or manifestation. I knew that His ways were unique. I just wanted to KNOW. My problem was simple and basic, but Oh, so hard to realize.

I wanted God to reveal Himself to me, in whatever manner He chose to, and then I would know. It was clearly putting the cart before the horse. I was unwittingly trying to get God to meet my deep, inner soul need and THEN I COULD BELIEVE IT HAD HAPPENED. God was saving me from a dangerous error -- salvation by works. In my case, the "works" would have been all of my weeping and struggling and agony of soul. Don't be misled here. These were perhaps necessary. Repentance and rejection of personal sins is undeniably necessary. I see and identify them as faith conditioners.

It is necessary for an awakened soul to recognize his sinful state and that he cannot be good enough in himself to save himself. There must be an agony of soul over personal sin and shame that becomes a step to salvation. A deliberate and definite rejection of those sins is another step. But these steps that we must take do not save us. They only lead us to the one and only means of our salvation, We are "saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, It is the gift of God." There is no other way yesterday or today. Finding God is accomplished exactly the same way in an uneducated heathen's heart while he huddles unclothed around a smoky fire as it occurs in a Ph. D's heart as he flies in a supersonic jet.

The Lord so patiently and faithfully led me to this point by leaving me totally without what my heart yearned and pled for. I was baffled as I was physically and emotionally spent. I just couldn't believe that God would leave me in this state of soul and mind! Surely after the most protracted, extensive, comprehensive and vigorous seeking and promising of my many, sincere searches after God, He would not leave me like this -- alone, blank, empty, unfulfilled, nothing. Everything was quiet, but there was no peace. I had confessed everything, but there was no release. I had promised all that He had asked of me, but there was no acceptance from Him. I had turned my soul inside out and laid my life and everything dear and valuable to me before Him, but there was no response. Nothing.

I began to sob and cry to Him, telling Him exactly what I have just written. It seemed that I could not find the way and that there just was no hope for Lester and the reality with Him I so desperately wanted! I still feel the horror of that helplessness and I write these lines nearly forty year's later.

Then I sensed my whole being, all that I was or ever should be, poised on the edge of nothing. There was nothing out there beyond my position of standing. No words were spoken or even impressed upon my mind. God's ways are communicated by methods unrelated and uncontrolled by human means. They transcend our thoughts and feelings. They don't bypass them. They are higher and clearer and surer. I call it the uncluttered atmosphere of faith.

I knew what I had to do, but I didn't want to do it. Everything within me rationally opposed what was expected -- to just push off into that nothingness .

Faith is not reasonable. It does not conform to human logic. Human logic weighs and measures everything. Human logic moves from point A to point B and establishes point C. Faith doesn't make sense from our frame of reasoning. When faith is logically understood; when faith can be explained, it ceases to be faith. Our minds don't understand faith in God anymore than it understands Him, for faith in God moves into His realm. Thank You, Lord!

So, I wasn't reasoning here. I wasn't feeling anything. It was a dispassionate consciousness of simple choice. If God were sovereign exclusive of human choice, He would have nudged me here. Indeed, I wouldn't have even been at this point. He would have simply captured me at some former point in my life. But this was MY choice. I stood on the brink of eternal life with my soul on my hands. Angels in ranks of hushed holiness gaped upon this scene. How do I know? Jesus said that my soul was more valuable than the entire world. It was so valuable to Him that He shed every drop of His blood to buy it back. Its redemption was on account in heaven's vault ready to be disbursed.

I want you to know that God had His hand over Satan's mouth and he couldn't utter a peep. If God couldn't nudge me, Satan couldn't try to stop me either. The choice was mine.

What happened next is hard to place on paper in words. The split second I let go to fall into that nothingness, Jesus took me into His wonderful arms so consciously and so certainly, No experience of all my life was so real and so definite. We call this awareness the witness of the Spirit, There is no way to adequately describe what it means to know you are saved or how you know it. It is deeper than any feeling. It transcends knowledge, it eclipses understanding and beggars description.

This was something different from anything that had ever happened to me before as I had periodically sought God. I did not just feel better because of confession. I was not just forgiven, This was more than only relief from guilt and condemnation. This exceeded the feeling of a heavy load having been lifted off from me, and let me quickly add that I felt and knew all of the above. But all of that I had previously experienced.

The difference at that moment when I stepped off into the waiting embrace of heaven's God was that a relationship began. I KNEW HIM! I met Him. I knew Who He was. Jesus came into my heart and life as a conscious, personal presence. He wasn't just someone to talk about and testify to when others were, or when there was a certain "atmosphere". He didn't just draw near to me when I read His word or prayed or went to church.

I knew Him as certainly as I had ever known anyone. In fact, better than I knew anyone else, He came into my very heart and mind and soul. He filled my entire being with His Person and presence. No other person, however dearly loved, can do that. He will fill and possess as much of us as we want Him to. Only Jesus Christ can LIVE in another person, and He will and He does, This is the greatest experience of a person's earthly existence. We are not whole persons until this happens Something is missing and there exists an insistent, unsatisfied longing until that craving is met in Jesus.

A person can never be the same after he knows Jesus. When God actually comes and lives in an individual's very being, he immediately begins to think and reason and understand that way God does, Though there remains a lifetime of learning about God, the moment a person is truly born again, he knows God and has His nature imparted. The action of a new child of God may or may not drastically change, depending on his lifestyle at the time of conversion, but the thinking and desires of such a person is always changed!

So it was true with me. Since I was in a Bible college with myriad rules of action and propriety, and since I had been desperately trying to live a Christian life, the outer change was minimal to the point of being unrecognizable. But, oh! what a change in my mind, and especially in my desires! My entire value system was inverted. My whole life was turned upside down. For the first time I fully understood what Paul was talking about when he said the things he once loved, he now hated, and the things he hated, he now loved, I was still very much in the world, but not of it.

Three specific, recognizable and lasting changes occurred instantaneously. These things weren't "disciplined" into me, They came immediately upon the fact of coming to know Jesus. It seemed that an inner "flow" had developed simultaneously with my knowledge of Him. It was like something that had been dead was restored and vital and functioning. Something that had been stopped up had been released. There was an opening of communication between God and me. I WANTED to pray. What a difference! Until this moment, prayer had been a duty and a discipline, It had been sporadic at best, increasing in time and intensity proportionate to how things were going with me. I prayed when I was in trouble. I prayed when I was lonely or sad. I prayed when other people were praying. I prayed when I was asked or when it was expected. In other words, my praying was provoked, or motivated.

Now I prayed because I wanted to. A Godward flow had begun in me that was as natural as a baby's desire to suckle or be near its mother. I couldn't explain the "why", but had no doubt about the "what". After all of these years of searching and longing, I finally really knew Him. When you know someone, it is inconceivable to think that you could have the means to communicate with each other and not want to. Relationships demand communication.

Let's assume that you and the person you love the most in this world are in a room, Now we are going to lose our physical means of communication one at a time. So we first lose our ability to touch or feel each other, We can still hear and see and talk. Let's take away our power of speech next. Can we still communicate with eyes and ears? Of course. Next goes the hearing, but though we can't speak or hear or feel, even if our bodies touched, we can continue to communicate with this person we love by eye contact alone. Our world would be silent and feelingless, but we could "talk" to each other by winks and blinks and nods and gesticulations, Now if we take all body movement away, even the blink of an eyelid or movement of the eye, can we still communicate? Certainly. Now, let's close the eyes too, where we would be in a feelingless world of darkness and silence. Do you think that love and communion and fellowship could occur even in that environment if you KNEW that that person you loved were there? I think so too. Unseen faculties would emerge and discover a way to express love and devotion and oneness.

God provides something better than that for His children. He places the "crying Spirit" of Jesus in our hearts calling out to our Father. He gives us spiritual ears to hear and spiritual eyes to see, and even lets us touch Him with the feelings of our infirmities.

Discovery is my second highest life goal. Knowing Him is the highest. My appetite to know is insatiable. Finding out anything about everything consumes and intrigues me. So I am the inveterate question asker. I am the incessant student. I will teach, but I have to learn.

This appetite for knowledge rises to its highest purpose and discovers its greatest potential in pursuit of Him. Learning of Him and His ways is truly satisfying. You never get a heavenly hangover from knowing too much about God. Feasting on the Lord always sets well with our spiritual digestive system and we leave His table reluctantly, often disdaining the call of lesser earthly demands.

I am still talking here about desire. I wanted to pray. From the first moments until this present time, talking to Jesus has produced only an increasing, constant desire to spend more time with Him. My life has been a very busy one. By temperament I am a two-steps-at-a-time person. Wasting time is wasting life in my judgment. If, there is something to do, let's do it, If there is nothing to do, let's find something to do. I am a "hands on" kind of a person.

But spending time with Jesus IS an activity. Our highest ambitions and noblest goals and greatest endeavors and most significant plans and most aggressive activities find supremest fulfillment in company with Him. He will match your deepest profundity and exceed your closest scrutiny and keep pace with your sublimest ambitions. It's like a tennis match. You can burn your best volley over the net to Him and He'll return it without breaking a sweat, and then you'll be busting your shoelaces to get that ball. He's such a wonderful Savior! As long as you scramble, He'll tell you that you played a good game.

The second immediate change that occurred at my conversion was an insatiable desire to read the Bible. To any thinking person this is all related in that there is a hunger to know God. If you love someone, you want to be with them and you want to discover everything you can about them. You want to know what they like (and dislike) and what makes them happy (or sad) and what you can do to please them.

When I started loving my Deloris, I wanted to find out everything about her life, past and present. There is a small, farming community in South-Western Kansas that actually became my second home. Meade, Kansas became the location of special interest to me because of the importance to the one I loved. I wanted to know her father and mother and brothers and sister. I wanted to meet her grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins. I wanted to visit the ranch where she grew up. I wanted to walk over the same paths and driveways. I wanted to see where she played and worked and grew up. I wanted to go inside the country school where she learned to read and write and spell. I wanted to see and experience what she touched and lived with. Don't think that I'm being overly sentimental or detailed here, for it is every bit true. Each of you can vividly recall similar desires. The fact is that we all have intense interest to know all about the "things" of a loved one. When another person becomes precious to you, everything about them, past and present, holds powerful interest.

Each reader of these lines has some little possession that would be totally worthless to any other person, but you wouldn't sell it for any amount of money. This is a simple, but powerful, illustration of how valuable the "things" of a loved one are to each of us.

Why shouldn't God's "things" hold incredibly fascinating interest to those of us who love Him? Discovering His ways and thoughts and attitudes and interests should prompt us to constant,

vigorous investigation. I am personally absolutely amazed at how willing God is to impart and share Himself with us.

It's like a free supermarket! You just go in and get the biggest old cart you can handle and start loading up! The selection is beyond description and there are no limits! You can pile on peace and contentment and forgiveness and gentleness and encouragement and fellowship and strength and understanding and confidence and assurance and direction and victory and blessing to your heart's content and stay as long as you like and take it all right along with you without paying a nickel. That's grace. It is free and unearned and unreciprocal. God never comes around telling you about all of the things He has given you and how much you ought to appreciate it.

The word of God reveals His ways and will. Any person who has a heart for God will naturally investigate the source of greatest and most accurate information about Him. There is an unmistakable drawing, an attraction, to God's word. It's wisdom, insights and encouragement and advice and comfort and guidances are endless in scope and availability. A Christian just never gets enough.

The third immediate and outstanding result of my coming to know Jesus was somewhat two-fold, but inseparably related. My entire life has been consumed, from that experience and moment, in an intense, constant passion for lost souls. There was this sobering, burning, insistent burden of soul for lost people. This fire has never burned low, even in the midst of my changing life and a thousand possibilities of redirection and detours.

How could this happen? How could the focus and direction of my life be so completely altered and reversed? How could my nights and days be suddenly dominated by passionate concern for others when it had previously been revolving around self-desire, self-gratification and self-concern? How could self-interest become so totally absorbed in somebody else's spiritual needs that the thoughts and activities that had been bringing such interest and pleasure were nearly forgotten? It's the miracle of being born again. I see it today as a greater miracle than when it happened. I understand it less now than when it happened. The glorious truth is that it happened. I like the old gospel song, "I Was There When It Happened And I Ought To Know".

I didn't learn to be an intercessor in prayer. I didn't learn to have a burden for the lost. It wasn't the result of teaching or training or discipling. It occurred the day I met Jesus. It was like He put some of His heart into mine. I felt the efficacy of Jesus' precious blood poured out to redeem every lost soul. I heard the cries of the lost, It was like I could perceive the agony and weeping of the doomed and the damned. Why hadn't I ever heard them before? I still hear their wails and carry that sound upon my soul.

In God's eyes, there is only one supreme value. If anyone listens to the heartbeat of Jesus, it a cadence of preoccupation. Heaven's system of worth is so singular that there is just one stock in trade; one blue chip; one commodity; one investment; one measurement. A human soul.

A human soul is of such incalculable worth that God gave His only sinless Son to repurchase it. Jesus loved the human soul so much that He became sin for it. The Holy Spirit loves the human soul so much that He condescends to live in the hearts of those who will allow Him.

"He emptied Himself" is a thought so sublime it defies comprehension. Such is the cost of God's substitutionary Gift and the price of man's salvation.

To truly know Jesus is to have a broken heart over the lost of the earth and the sins that have them bound and headed for Hell, And the converse has to be true. If so-called Christians do not share in Jesus' passion over the lost, they do not know Him.

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Chapter 8

IT REALLY DOES PAY TO PUT GOD FIRST

Does God really care about kids and teens, or do they come in second to the needs of adults? Does He answer their prayers and does He work miracles in their lives?

As I sit here in my living room chair looking back over nearly six decades of my life, there are numerous special and unusual occurrences that I certainly would term "direct, divine interventions". The reader may or may not want to call them miracles. All I know is that I was aware of God's control and timing, not just now in retrospect, but right at the time.

Why I have been so impressed with God's special manifestations to me is that my life and ministry has been rather bland from an "ecclesiastical success" point of view. I would be considered a very average Christian minister to anyone outside of my immediate peer group, and still God has chosen to flavor my life with some very humanly unusual experiences.

This has to mean that our God is just as special in His concern and assistance to one person as to the other. It only proves what I have believed and maintained over a lifetime -- He has no pets. He doesn't arbitrarily select some of His followers to whom He will especially bless and reveal Himself.

His word is true, however, in that if any of us will "draw near to God, He will draw near to us". (See James 4:8) Any Christian who has a heart for God will certainly know more of His heart and ways and thoughts.

God has been a Father to me in the truest understanding of the term. His dealing with me from our earliest moments of relationship has been on an instructional level that I could comprehend. Never once have I felt overwhelmed or intimidated or embarrassed by the lessons He was teaching me.

I cannot term God's classroom as "hard". My experience with His lessons has been, "His yoke is easy and His burden is light". What I have learned in company with Jesus is that "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy". (See James 3:17)

This is not to imply that my life has been free from conflict and controversy and correction. Quite the contrary, in fact. I have endured my share of disappointment, heartache and pain. But without exception it was entirely the result of (1) my own humanity, failures, weaknesses and downright stupidity, or (2) the same things encountered in my relationship with other persons, nearly always those closest to me.

God's involvement with me has faithfully been that of a fixer and not a spoiler. He has been in the background waiting to patch me up after the devil and his crowd finished mauling me around.

No, God is not an intolerant taskmaster or a cruel slave-driver or a judgmental glarer. He is, in fact, the most patient, understanding helpful teacher a person could imagine, and everyone who really knows Him will instantly agree.

The following stories are true and unembellished. They are not "improved and updated versions". They don't have to be. Dear Friends, God doesn't need press agents to make Him an image and He doesn't need cosmetic facades or dramatized costumery. He is great in "aprons and overalls". He is wonderful in depth and detail. He is genuine under the micron microscope. He tests out true 100%. Praise His name.

A big question in my mind is why so much of God's special working in my life has concerned employment. My guess is that it has to do with (1) the specific needs at that time in my life, and (2) my temperament and personal spiritual development. He always relates to us on our level of thinking and understanding. No person, including our loving parents, is more interested in our development and worth than our Lord.

I must have been sixteen when God opened my first "Red Sea". I would like to see more of us believe that it is God's hand at work in our lives instead of calling resolutions to needs and problems "good luck" or circumstances or coincidences.

We lived six miles from town on a small farm and so my jobs away from home were generally farm related. Fifty to sixty cents an hour for hoeing weeds or picking watermelons or potatoes or haying or irrigating was alright, but I longed for a "real job". I wonder now what that meant in my mind, but my guess is that a "real job" was any kind that was removed from the farm.

When I heard that Shorty at the Union 76 Service Station had an opening for a man, I applied for the job. Everybody in our small town knew Shorty and we talked more about ball games (I was a three-year letterman) than lubing cars and pumping gas. It was obvious that he was going to hire me when he asked me when I could come to work. We had already decided that the hours of my shift would be from 2-10 p.m. to fit into my high school schedule. He had already asked what my waist and shirt size were so that he could order the "whites" (nearly all service stations in the late 40's and early 50's had white uniforms).

But he narrowed his eyes and looked a bit uncomfortable as he said that I would need to work weekends, including Saturdays and Sundays. Shorty knew that the Boone family faithfully attended church.

My heart nearly stopped beating and my breathing was shallow. I knew what I had to do, but I wanted that job so badly! There really was no choice to be made. It was just the shock and disappointment of having something so desirable and so close to becoming suddenly lost.

I remember so clearly the look on Shorty's face when I told him that I couldn't take the job if it required Sunday work. I have forgotten his verbal response, but I'll never forget the facial expression. It said, "Lester, I can't believe this! Do you know how many kids would love to have this job? (A dollar an hour was a man's pay in those days). How stupid can you be? Lester, I took you for smarter than that. You're a chump!" The look was a combination of incredulity and disdain. I felt it all, down to the bottom of my soul.

Myriad emotions clamored for analysis amidst a cacophony of mockery and confusion. "Is this the result of trying to live for the Lord? Does it pay to obey His commandments? Is the church correct in requiring its members to observe the Lord's Day by worshipping and resting? Is the church too strict in its prohibitions about buying and selling on Sunday? What kinds of jobs are essential and which ones are not? Will Shorty and others think that I am a fanatic? Will I be able to get another good job that doesn't require Sunday work?"

All of those miserable six miles traveled back home were filled by a deepening depression of mind and soul. Upon arrival I tried to go quietly to my room, but Mother saw the hurt and dejection and soon had pried out the painful truth.

The passing of forty years has failed to dim the memory of my Mother's wisdom and counsel. Undoubtedly she was not fully aware of how crucial this trial was or how important her response was.

She could have depreciated Shorty. She could have bowed to the pressure of a deeply disappointed son and minimized the importance of keeping the Sabbath holy. She could have taught me right there how to rationalize. She could have undermined the commandments of God, the church and the preacher.

I have witnessed all of the above and more in similar situations throughout these pastoral years. The attitudes of Christian parents have far greater effect upon their children than their words. It takes a special kind of wise and gentle courage to let a hurting child experience spiritual growing pains. It requires special vision to recommend patience and waiting in lieu of a quick fix.

Mother's advice was unhurried and thoughtful. "Leave it in God's hands. It always pays to put Him first. He may have a different and better way. God can work it out if you'll just trust Him."

I knew that she was right, but I can still feel the pain of that disappointment. At that point it was zero. Zip. Nothing. A total loss. How could anything good possibly come out of this?

Youth are resilient. They bounce back rather quickly. In a few days I was whistling again and the missed opportunity had faded completely from my mind, So much so that a phone call from

Shorty two weeks later caught me by surprise. "Are you working anywhere yet, Lester? If not, the job is yours and you can have Sundays off."

Prime Ministers or Presidents could not have persuaded me that God had not intervened -- that this were merely coincidental.

Getting the desired job was incidental to what this experience did for my beginning confidence in God. It was secondary to the proof that it pays to wait on God and leave situations to His will and timing.

My faith stock was basic, but valid. My trust investment was small, but growing. My confidence in God was only a sprout, but it was a strong and healthy plant.

This story gets worse and then it gets better, and it all surrounds my Christian witness.

Including Shorty, the service station manager, three men worked with me. All of them were married and older! From the beginning of my employment there as "low man on the totem pole", all of the worst and dirtiest jobs became mine. All of them told me what to do. I had three bosses, not just one. Three chiefs and one brave, so to speak. I largely understood this arrangement, being the newest and youngest, and accepted the unofficial "pecking order" with good grace, outwardly, at least!

It was soon apparent, however, that there was more than mere age and lack of experience prompting the underdog treatment. Mondays began to emerge as the unofficial "haze Lester day". Even though they all knew that I had been at church Sunday evening with my family, questions would be asked about the girls that I had been out with the preceding night and suggestions made about what we had done while we were alone.

When I became greatly embarrassed all three of them would laugh and declare that I had to be guilty or I wouldn't be embarrassed. When I didn't even know what to say and couldn't respond to these to these untrue and unfair accusations, I would just leave and go find something that needed done. Then they would really guffaw and say, "See, I told you what kind of a guy he is. Oh, Lester, I thought that you were a Christian and didn't act like that. Just wait until I tell your folks."

God eventually helps us Christians develop a tough hide to this kind of unfair ribaldry, but at that time, as a youth trying to serve the Lord and still being very sensitive to what others thought about me, it nearly tore me apart inside. There didn't seem to be anything that I could do or say that would refrain this upsetting teasing. It was almost as though I were a target being shot at for their merciless enjoyment.

I could see in later years that God was training and refining me. That He was teaching me to draw from His strength and solace. That He was putting steel into my soul. That He was conforming me to His image.

Isn't it wonderful that God is as involved and interested in the development of youth as He is adults? That's a praise point! How patient and understanding and faithful He has been to me!

This kind of hazing was sporadic and would seemingly adjust to how busy we were. It was like, "If there s a need for entertainment, we can always tease Lester about his dates (which were non-existent).

There was other fun at my expense and that was telling "dirty" stories in my presence. There was no escape from this as our work was confined to one small sales room, two lube bays and the outside pump island. So the three of them would take turns telling dirty stories of describing lurid details of real or imagined sexual encounters and then cackle uproariously with such comments as, "Come on, Lester, you know that's funny. Come on, now it's your turn to tell one. Oh, wait, we d better look and see if the preacher might be coming. It's O.K., the coast is clear".

Many of you reading this understand fully. What can a young person say and how can you possibly react to such hazing and torment? You can be sure that my heart goes out to youth who must endure this kind of treatment on the job or at school.

A large part of this particular part of pain comes from what is called transferred guilt. A person in such a helpless situation feels guilty (1) because he has no immediate or appropriate answer to the accusations, or (2) simply because he is accused. Just the weight of the accusation is a heavy burden to bear. The more fingers that point, the harder it is to throw off the shadow of guilt, even if you know that it is entirely false. This is one of Satan's biggest sticks and he uses it regularly and effectively in his efforts to discourage Christians and cause them to give up their testimonies.

I wrote earlier that matters. became worse before they improved. Jesus came to my relief in a sudden and completely unexpected way. It left me emotionally "open-mouthed", and I wasn't the only person left gaping. Right here I want to say that Jesus Christ doesn't treat His children shabbily, regardless of how it may seem that way at times. Jesus WILL come through for us if we'll just hold steady and stay true and give Him some time! Cut him some slack, so to speak.

Something must be said here about our work atmosphere or what follows won't have the impact that it should. Except for getting all of the dirty jobs and the painful hazing, it was really a joy working at the Union 76 Station! There was continual pleasant treatment of the customers, courteous and fast service of their vehicles and a constant flow of good-natured banter between the four of us as we worked together. It was a generally light-hearted, fun-loving, jovial environment that made "Shorty's place" the station to take your car for fast, dependable servicing, and I fit right in to that kind of a workplace setting! There was always chatter, laughter, humming and whistling accompanying the clank of hose nozzles and wrenches and the distinctive hissing of the lubrication guns.

When I arrived at work this particular day, however, I immediately sensed that something was wrong. You could have been in Joe Burn's Mortuary. Really! Besides the quietness and the somber countenances, Shorty's car was on the left-hand lube rack. Shorty's car was never at the service station. His wife, Fern always had it, but here it was!

There was no, "Hi, Lester, How's it going?", today. Instead Shorty's first strained words were, "Would you come help me finish up on my car, Lester? We've got to leave for Denver as soon as we can." No explanations were given and I jumped in to finish under the hood while Shorty went quickly in to the sales room desk. Neither was there any comments from either of the other men who were servicing a customer's car in the other lube bay.

I had barely finished with Shorty's Plymouth when he quietly stepped to my side and laid his hand on my shoulder. Not a boss's hand! A fatherly hand! Every person knows the difference. It is interesting how different touches can be, and the unspoken message that they can convey. I knew that something different and unusual was forthcoming, but had no hint of how it was going to personally affect me. Remember that I was sixteen and lightly esteemed, and the other two men were 21 and 35, both married and long-time employees!

Shorty quietly said that he wanted to see me in the office and proceeded to shut the sliding door that separated the sales room from the lube room. That door was never shut. I don't think that it ever had registered in my mind that there was a door there.

Once inside and isolated, he told me with tears welling up in his eyes that his father had suffered a heart attack and was not expected to live. They were leaving immediately for Denver to be with him and his mother. Suddenly the kid who walked with God was on center stage. Shorty needed something that I had and he lacked. He was like a vehicle going downhill without a steering wheel and no brakes. Like a ship without a rudder or anchor in a storm.

Christians aren't needed or wanted much in this old world that is no friend of grace, but on those occasions when we are, it is immensely encouraging to have what, more correctly, Whom they need. I can't remember the words I spoke, but I do remember the look in his eyes. It was the look of yearning and fear changing to hope at the mention of God's care and help.

We are His eyes. We are His hands. We are His touch. We are His arms that reach out and lift and encourage and blesses. Let us never forget that He will use young hands and arms and voices as surely and quickly as those mature and experienced ones.

What came next was a shock -- one of those really wonderful kind of shocks that we warmly welcome and "endure" from time to time. Shorty said, "Lester, we'll be gone for two weeks. I haven't had a vacation in years and Lee (the station owner and, incidentally, the mayor) told me to take off two weeks. You'll be the station manager while I'm gone. I want to tell you straight out that I'm doing this, even though you are so young, because both Lee and I trust you. Money has been consistently missing from the till and we know that you haven't taken it. One or both of the other guys have. You can do this. If you need anything, just call Lee. And don't let either of the other guys give you a bad time. I have already explained this fully to them." Then he gave me about an hour's crash course in service station management "Balance the day's receipts with the cash register tape. Read the pumps (how many gallons were pumped) at 4:00 p.m. each day before you leave for the evening. Stick the tanks (with a long, slender, numbered stick made specifically for our tank volumes) at 7:00 am. each morning." That meant that I would be opening the station and working the manager's shift. This was possible as it was then summertime. I was to place the day's receipts in a cash bag and lock it in the safe until the following day when Lee would come by

and take it for deposit to the bank (leaving enough in the till for making change). He showed me where the loaded .45 automatic was for use on robbers. Until then I didn't know there was a gun on the premises.

All of this was rather heady stuff for a sixteen-year-old, but I was so caught up with the enormity of my sudden and new responsibilities that there was no time for elation or preening.

The following two weeks could hardly be described as a "piece of cake", but all went smoothly, and by the time that Shorty and Fern returned from Denver, rested and smiling over his father's recuperation, I rather liked the idea of management.

God helped me to be wise and proper in succeeding days and experiences. What meant more to me than the honor and trust that Shorty placed in me, was the blessed result of a new respect and no more hazing -- ever. That trial was over and the Lord had significantly increased my confidence in His faithfulness and goodness.

I not only worked there until leaving for college at the age of seventeen, but had acquired valuable job experience that led to a number of other good and profitable service station jobs.

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Chapter 9 THE MAN WITH THE ANGRY, RED FACE

It was August of 1951, I had just turned seventeen and was on my way to college. Owosso, Michigan was a long, 2,800 miles from our Oregon home. Middle class people like us didn't travel much like we do these days. We had never been on a vacation. Only the well-to-do took vacations. I had never traveled more than one or two hundred miles at any one time. I had seldom crossed a State line and had never seen the Pacific Ocean, some 200 miles to the West. By today's standards, I was a hick, a country bumpkin.

A young married couple with whom I had worked in the past (the man, that is), was driving to Minneapolis to visit his parents and invited me to accompany them that far on my way to Michigan. It's strange that the only memory I have of that trip is of Bud stopping the car to warm the baby's bottle. They were glass in those days, and he would carefully position it on the engine manifold and continue to drive down the highway a bit and then stop and remove it. If it was too hot, his wife would just hold it out of the window and let the air cool it. Smart Bud.

I experienced my first train ride from Minneapolis and was amazed at Chicago's skyline, how huge and different the big city was and all of the trains and people at the Grand Union Station. I can still feel the relief experienced when we got out of there. I think that I am still a country boy at heart.

I didn't know a single person at Owosso and arrived at the college campus two weeks early. This was on purpose so that I could have time to find a job before classes started. This was before the days of myriad scholarships and grants and student loans. The two methods of getting a

college education in 1951 was to have an affluent parent or else work your way through. My guess is that 75 - 80% of all students at this small Bible college was working to pay for their college education. It was not the easy way, but possible.

My plan was to start job hunting the very next morning (which was Saturday). There are any number of ways to find a job, but I only knew of one. I can still hear my father telling about his looking for work during the Great Depression days of the early 1930s. Only he was married and had two little girls to care for.

Among the many sad and interesting aspects of his "depression stories", the part that stuck to my mind, and that surfaced on this occasion, was that he would ask every farmer and business person for a job until he found one. He would take any job that was honest.

With that single admonition in mind, I left the dormitory as soon as I thought stores would be open and walked to the first business establishment in downtown Owosso and asked them if they needed any help. I asked at every one without exception unless they were liquor stores or if it were obvious that they were open for business on Sunday-.

As I started on the third block without even a good prospect, there was a considerable cloud of doubt that had settled over my mind. By this time I had applied at twenty or thirty different businesses. There was no thought of giving up, but my earlier enthusiasm was waning.

As I worked down the street, zigzagging from one side to the other to get into every store, a large, imposing sign stood out from all of the rest. The closer I came to it the easier it was to determine that it was a very large appliance store. I came to know that Colvin's Appliance Store was not only the largest store of its kind in Owosso, but in actuality serviced the entire area of south-central Michigan. Subsequent delivery trips for the store would take me all over the area and even to Flint and Detroit. But I'm getting ahead of the story.

When I had failed to nail down a job as of yet and when I saw how huge this furniture and appliance store was and when I saw all of the cars of customers parked in the front, I nearly passed by the big double doors and go on to the next business. What refrained me was the silent example of my father saying, "Don't pass up anyone. Ask everyone".

As I entered the store, I nearly backed out for the second time. It was literally filled with customers and salespersons all talking at once. It was more like a circus or a county fair -- far removed from the slow-paced, small-town stores I was used to. As I slowly ventured into this melee of people and trying to find someone who looked like a boss or an owner to talk to, I realized that everybody was so busy that they weren't paying the slightest attention to me.

Then I saw a customer service desk at the left rear of the store where three very busy office girls worked under a big sign proclaiming INFORMATION. One of the girls responded to my query about employment by pointing to the man with the loudest voice in the store.

He was red-faced and agitated and surrounded by three or four people. He would give instructions to first one and then another and they would scurry off to do whatever he had directed.

It reminded me more of a drill sergeant than anyone else. For the third time I strongly considered bagging the whole approach, but overcame the thought again.

I stood quietly for interminable moments waiting for him to run out of people to send here and there and recognize me. Just when it seemed that neither would occur, he abruptly spun around facing me and asked irritably, "Well, what do you want?" Since I had ventured this far into the maw of the lion, I may as well ask for a job and get blasted out of the store.

At the mention of any possible job openings, he roared, "Can't you see how busy we are today? I don't have any time to stop and talk to you."

As he began to turn and give some more orders and in the split-second that I was intending to beat a hasty retreat, the Lord clearly put a bold idea into my head and I blurted it out without even thinking. "Sir, if you are so very busy, it looks like you really need some more help." He jerked his head around with a surprised look and hesitated just a second or two and said, "Say, you re exactly right. Follow that skinny man right there". He then proceeded to holler at him and said, "Take this young man with you. He's helping you today". He hired me on the spot and didn't even know my age or name.

The indicated man, who was the service department manager, and I delivered furniture and appliances all after noon as hard as we could go. We would load a ton and a half delivery truck with stoves, refrigerators, washing machines and deep freezers and then delivered them all over town and into the countryside. Then we would come back to the store with the trade-ins we had picked up and repeat the process. We delivered three truck loads of furniture and appliances in five or six hours.

About the second or third trip to the store, I noticed Mr. Colvin, as I came to know him to be, watching us load and unload. The good Lord gave me a strong back, a quick mind and smooth, coordinated reflexes, and that Saturday afternoon Colvin's Appliance received 100%.

When the last trade-in was unloaded and the delivery truck swept clean and properly parked for the weekend, the store was closed and most of the employees had gone for the day. Mr. Colvin chatted briefly with the service department manager and then came right over to me. "How do you like the work, and what's your name, Son?" I assured him that the work was just fine and gave him my name, adding that I was a new student at Owosso Bible College and would need part time work to pay my way through school. He told me that both he and the department manager was very pleased with my work and said that I could have a job with him as long as I wanted one, and they would fit working hours to my class schedule.

My feet just wouldn't stay on the ground as I walked back to the dorm that night. How very timely and effective was God's special help. His timing is split-second and just at the right time. No one could ever persuade me that God didn't place that sudden thought into my mind. I know He did.

Another interesting incident occurred to me while working for Mr. Colvin that revealed early on in my life just how powerful political and financial influence can be. I wasn't particularly

happy then or later about what happened, but it happened without my prior knowledge and so fast that there really wasn't much I could say or do to change it.

I was delivering some store merchandise alone on this particular day, and, for the first time, had to go right through on Main Street.

There are any number of noticeable differences between Eastern and Western cities in the United States, and one major one is how traffic policemen stand right in the middle of intersections directing traffic. I was obviously fascinated by having to watch both a traffic signal and a patrolman monitoring the flow of traffic. By contrast, our farming community of Hermiston, Oregon didn't have a single traffic light while I was growing up there.

I needed to make a left turn at a given intersection, so I pulled up in the left lane, turned on the left directional signal, waited for the light to change, for the intersection to clear and made the turn. The turn was nearly completed when I heard a loud, shrill whistle and a very authoritarian voice yelling, "Pull that truck over! Didn't you see that 'no-left-turn' sign?" I hadn't and it was exactly where he was pointing. I was so intent about watching unaccustomed traffic and signal changes that I had failed completely to see a very big and very obvious "no-left-turn" sign.

That man actually arrested me on the spot (no handcuffs) and told me to drive with him to the police station. He impounded the truck, asked for my license, became very irate when he discovered that I didn't have a chauffeur's license (no one had said I needed one) and proceeded to write me out a citation. Then the desk sergeant said, "We'd better call Mr. Colvin." I thought, "Here goes my job", and I could vividly recall this irritable, red-faced, yelling man who had hired me some week's ago.

All that I could hear of this conversation to Mr. Colvin was the arresting officer making me out to be a Mafia figure over the telephone, but very abruptly he hung it up. "He'll be right over", I heard him say to the desk sergeant, in a considerably subdued voice. Then they let me sit in silence and apprehension.

In about three minutes the street door to the police station opened with a vigorous shove and in came a very angry, spouting Mr. Colvin. For all of the attention paid me, I could have been one of the chairs upon which I was sitting. He didn't so much as look at his hapless driver. "What in the world is the matter with you people! This is ridiculous! Don't you have more to do that harass my drivers over a silly left turn signal!? He's a new driver and new to Owosso." Then he simmered down a bit and asked, "Now, what do you want from me?", as though he were the violator. "Nothing, Mr. Colvin. Since he is a new driver and this is a first violation, there will be nothing, Mr. Colvin." And he tore up the citation in our presence. "You can go, Son." And though he didn't come right out and say it, the atmosphere towards me was so changed and so congenial that I was expecting at any moment to hear a brass band and receive a key to the city.

I was amazed! And was I ever relieved. Mr. Colvin merely told me to continue my deliveries and winked at me as he left the station. I found out later that he was a city father and up to his eyeballs in city government.

While it was not out of the ordinary to give a newcomer a break, the power of money and position was the obvious reason for my getting off the hook. To this day I don't know whether I ought to feel good or bad about the experience.

There is more to the Mr. Colvin story.

Before relating that, however, there is another point of interest. His son, Bill, who was the co-owner of the business, was the exact opposite of his father. Bill, Jr. was slow talking, slow moving and totally unflappable and unexcitable. Bill and I worked a lot together, got along famously and really enjoyed one another's company.

I was constantly amused at the marked difference between the temperaments of the two men, father and son. Mr. Colvin was always in a stew and was a shaker and mover. His way was to "get a bigger hammer and do it NOW". Bill would come around after the fur flew and pick up the pieces and mop up the sweat. They were a great team and I learned much from the two of them about how every operation needs both types of individuals to get things going and keep them going.

Out of all our experiences together, one stands out as one of my most memorable in all of these years. Bill and I were on a call to find and correct a gas leak. These were days before natural gas had come into that part of Michigan, and so all gas was propane. You'll have to remember that fact as this story progresses. The pressure that propane comes into a home isn't as great as natural gas.

We came to this house and, after being let in by the lady of the home, went directly to the basement where the smell was coming from. There was a heavy, pervasive odor which made the discovery of its source of leakage very difficult to pinpoint. The method of discovery was simple: you used your nose and moved along the length of the line sniffing until it was located. This we did for fifteen or twenty minutes without success. Both of us were getting a bit frustrated, because it was generally a simple matter to find a gas leak in a basement. Under a house without a basement was considerably different.

Remember now that Bill's movements were typically slow, so you need to see this quiet man moving along slowly, hands in his pockets, saying nothing, just sort of blinking his eyes and sniffing, sniffing, sniffing. So when he simply stated, "Well, there's one sure way to find that leak," I looked around seeing what that way was, and just momentarily caught sight of his taking his hand out of his overall pocket. In the same motion he unceremoniously flicked his cigarette lighter and there was an instantaneous, powerful explosion that rocked the house and could be heard all over the neighborhood. I didn't even have time to open my mouth, much less cover my eyes or ears or whatever you might want to do in the way of preparation or protection.

"Well, there she is", Bill drawled, and casually placed his cigarette lighter back in his pocket as we both viewed a small, blue flame issuing from a section of gas pipe. Our faces were black and our eyebrows were singed (both of us wore hats, so our hair was spared) and the lady of the house was yelling bloody murder at the top of the stairway. Bill simply told her that we had found the gas leak. As I am quite a ham myself, I never said a word and acted like I did this every

morning before breakfast. We marked the section of pipe and Bill told me to go outside and shut off the propane so we could repair the leak. I did and we did. What a guy.

And then came one of those intersections of life that changed its course for me; away from Owosso College, from Michigan and Colvin's.

We were about six weeks into the first college term and I was in "high clover", to use a farm term. To me, the experiences and atmosphere of a Bible college was next to heaven. The company of other young men and women whose interests were primarily spiritual was the exact opposite of high school relations, and I was growing by leaps and bounds.

Then early one morning about 1:30 am., rapid, insistent knocks by the dean of men on my door awakened me out of a deep sleep. "There's an emergency telephone call from your Mother for you, Lester". It was obvious that Mother had been crying as she told me that my sister, Joella, had been critically injured in a work accident and wasn't expected to live through the night.

Upon asking if I should return home, she said that it was no use and that she would call back when they had made definite plans for a funeral. These were facts of life that were far removed from youth and vigor and happy and carefree living from day to day. I knew that I was going home, but refrained from telling her because I knew that the only way home to Oregon was to hitchhike, to which I knew she would never agree.

I told the dean of men what my plans were and he agreed that I should be with my family, but registered obvious concern about the hitchhiking. Forty year's ago this was a common method of travel and didn't have the risk factor that it does today. Even so, 2,800 miles is quite a distance for a seventeen year old to hitchhike.

You can imagine that there wasn't much sleep for the balance of that night, and by breakfast my plans were all made. I would travel light with shaving supplies and one clothes change. I would stop by Mr. Colvins and let him know what was happening. I would get my \$13.00 out of the bank and head for the West.

All went according to plan until I told Mr. Colvin what had happened and that I was heading for Oregon. He asked an obvious, but personal question, "How are you going to get there?", and I showed him my thumb. Then he became more personal and asked me how much money I had. That surprised me a bit, but his face was uncharacteristically soft and his eyes showed genuine concern, so I told him that I had \$13.00. He spun on his heel and quickly opened a cash register, pulled out \$25.00 and laid it in my hand. That would be like about three day's wages now. His only comment about it was that I could pay it back someday, and that he wouldn't let a son of his start out hitchhiking to Oregon with just \$13.00.

I didn't know what to say, so simply thanked him and left while both of us fought off welling tears. I did pay Mr. Colvin back and thanked him in a gracious letter for his kindness and concern. Many brusque, brash and irritable people have hearts of gold.

The 2,800 mile hitchhike trip to Oregon is a story of its own.

* * * * *

Chapter 10 THE 2,800 MILE HITCH-HIKE

I left Owosso, Michigan about 10:30 a.m. and had absolutely no idea what lay ahead of me. All that I knew for sure was that my sister was either dying or dead by this time and that I was going home.

My Dutchman father had modeled and developed a strong degree of independence in me and I am indebted beyond repayment for the initiative and resourcefulness his example instilled. There was not so much as a shadow of doubt about whether I would get to Oregon as I walked out to the highway and stuck out my thumb.

I need to repeat that hitchhiking was a very common mode of travel in the 1940s and 1950s, certainly wasn't illegal and usually not risky. Many men did not own automobiles. Out of all the years I attended high school, there were only three seniors who had cars. Nobody else did. Walking, bicycling and hitchhiking were the primary means for youth to travel. Generally speaking, motorists (especially men driving alone) were as inclined to pick up hitchhikers as walkers were to thumb a ride.

A fine man picked me up immediately and I told the first story (of which there would be dozens) of who I was, where I was going and why. Nearly all of those kind persons who gave me rides were sympathetic and helpful. The exceptions make this story exciting.

Something needs to be said about my "game plan". Whether it was the best choice or not, the reader can judge. I reasoned that the shortest way home was not the most direct route, which would generally be old U.S. 30 (Interstate 80 presently). I determined that I could make the best time by going the routes between the largest cities. The idea in my mind was that this would guarantee the most traffic. This was either good judgment at the time, or the Lord greatly helped me along the way, or both. I walked up the front sidewalk to our Oregon home in just three and a half days of hitchhiking. I don't believe that Greyhound could have brought me home too much faster in October of 1951.

So this plan developed into an approximate itinerary of going first to Indianapolis, then to St. Louis, then to Kansas City, then to Denver, then to Salt Lake City, then to Boise, then to Portland and from there to home in Hermiston, Oregon, 191 miles up the Columbia River. We will see that there arose a few interesting changes along the way.

It was nighttime somewhere in Northern Indiana and I had just been dropped off by a kind stranger in a rural area. A car screeched to a halt beside me and a friendly voice floated out of his window over the ubiquitous glow of a cigarette. "Hop in, son", the voice invited. The back door opened and I could vaguely see the one man who sat in the back seat. Most cars didn't have those marvelous interior lights we are so accustomed to now.

They were obviously out for a good time, all three of them smoking and laughing and enjoying one another's company. I had no sooner shut the door and set my small bag on the floor when one of the guys passed me a bottle. "Have a pull, son", the driver said, and I was instantly alert. This I did not want. All of them were drinking, including the driver, and as quickly as that fact emerged, so did another: we were driving fast, very fast. I had climbed in with three drunks.

When I informed them that I didn't drink and discovered that they weren't overly disappointed, one asked me why I was hitchhiking so late in the night, and I told them. We had only been barreling down the highway for a few miles when the driver paused in the raucous banter to ask me how far I was going. Boy, what a break!

Just ahead of us was an intersection with a single, dim street light hanging over it. It's truly difficult to explain to this generation how wonderfully lighted our present environment is. The nighttime fifty years ago were very dark by contrast. Streetlights, car lights, flashlights, houselights and office lighting were all dim in comparison. But that poorly lighted intersection looked like a fit sanctuary to me.

"I need to get off at that intersection right up ahead", I told him. "Well, you sure didn't want to go very far", answered the driver suspiciously. "That's where I want to get off", I assured him. You can imagine the great relief I experienced when I was safely out of that car and on solid ground once again in one piece. Upon reflection, I am not exactly certain that their motives were entirely humanitarian.

I stood right under the best of that dim highway light so that drivers could easily see me and had another ride before too long.

The first discovery I made about big cities and hitchhiking was in Indianapolis the first day out. People don't tend to pick you up much in town. Perhaps this is because they are generally not going too far. This results in much walking, and, for the most part, I walked through Indianapolis, St. Louis and Kansas City.

Two rather interesting situations developed in St. Louis. The first had to do with their expressway. To me it was just one more wonderful sight of many afforded by big cities. The street upon which I was walking led into this big, concrete hole and started getting deeper and darker. Neither of these facts were particularly disturbing, as there were periodic, dim lighting, at least enough to see where one was walking. However, the proximity of the traffic and the narrow "sidewalk" brought considerable anxiety. This silly sidewalk was a mere sixteen to eighteen inches wide and the trucks and busses would nearly hit me as I tried to stay on that "little biddy" sidewalk. And all of the horn honking! It did finally dawn on me that I might be the object of all this cacophonous blaring.

About the same time that this realization occurred, I heard a honk that was behind me and wasn't moving. Upon turning, I saw this cabby motioning to me to come and get into his taxi. He said, "Jump in and I'll give you a lift."

Then he informed me that I wasn't supposed to be down there. "Didn't you see those large warning signs and lights at the expressway entrance?" I assured him that I had not. He said, "I have driven a taxi in St. Louis for twenty years and have never seen a person in that expressway." It has been said that God watches over babies and dummies, and I am chagrined to admit that I didn't qualify for the former. I deeply appreciated the kindness of that taxi driver. He didn't have to take all of the time and interest necessary to turn around and take a dumb country boy out of harm's way, but he did.

St. Louis has the distinction of providing the only scare of the entire journey.

I was greatly fascinated by the width of the Mississippi River. Having spent part of my life enjoying the great Columbia River, both in viewing it and swimming in it, great rivers were not that unique, but the Mississippi is a wide, sprawling one compared to the Columbia's comparative narrowing necessitated by the restrictions of the tall shoulders of the gorge.

Frankly, I was paying attention to the majesty and greatness of the river and not in the least to my surroundings. I was simply following the U.S. 3's Highway signs through another big city as I walked and walked.

Suddenly, at least it seemed that way to me, I was across the river and on the waterfront. At that time at least, the west side of St. Louis appeared to be like any other waterfront area. There were boats and loading docks and houseboats and small waterfront shops and taverns and taverns and more taverns.

The men who were sitting on old chairs and crates eyed me warily as I walked along in a manner that plainly said, "You are a stranger", and their looks just as plainly said, "You are not welcome here". Even a country hick who is accustomed to the friendly treatment of strangers could read the signs of hostility.

Just as that comprehension began to register a silent alarm and commensurably hone my senses to a state of high alert, I saw a huge scar-faced man eyeing me with unusual interest! He was paring his fingernails with what we in the West would call a skinning knife. These knives had five to six inch blades, are very sharp and, I can assure you, I had never seen anyone pare or clean his fingernails with one.

There wasn't any body movement from this man or any of the other half dozen or so who were lounging in the deepening afternoon shadows. It was the atmosphere. No one was talking and all eyes were moving first to me, the ignorant stranger, and then to the big bozo with the big knife.

My direction of walking would quickly move me closer and within a few yards of an intersection with "Scar-face". There were no buildings or groups of persons beyond that point, just a high bank or levee. It was an ideal, isolated place for a quick, concealed mugging.

Instinct alone directed my choice to jump over a low street barrier and sprint across six or eight lanes of busy traffic to the opposite side where there were no taverns or low-life loafers just

waiting to prey upon some hapless and ignorant pedestrian. I breathed a big sigh of relief and purposed to be more observant in the future.

Kansas City was the next stop. You will pardon me while I once again pause to thank the Lord for the kindnesses of scores of persons who picked me up along the highway and brought me closer to my destination. I am so thankful.

Once again it was walking time, but after awhile, I was at the western outskirts of Kansas City, Kansas.

I had plenty of time to view the damages of the horrible floods that ravaged this entire countryside in the Spring of 1951. We had read about them in Oregon at the time of their occurrence. Still fresh in my memory was the terrible Vanport, Washington flood of 1948 that had literally carried the small town close to Vancouver down the Columbia River. It was nearly unbelievable to see scores of abandoned Kansas City homes with clearly visible dirty water lines close to the roof eaves. Thank the Lord for the many hydroelectric dams that now greatly reduce the possibility of such destructive floods.

I remember that an airport was off to my left and I watched the multi-colored lights sweep from one direction to the other. I usually experienced a bit of apprehension as night fell, not because of the darkness itself, but because of the natural leeriness drivers have about picking up hitchhikers in the dark.

A pickup stopped and a fine man, who was a carpenter, took me a few miles until he had to turn off to his home. He gave me a dollar and I was both touched and surprised. He was a black man and accounted for the sole cash assistance received on the entire trip.

He lived in a suburb of Kansas City, Kansas, and by that time it was completely dark and I could see open highway ahead by the thinning of street lights. I had no sooner positioned myself under the nearest streetlight when a cream and brown, sport model Chrysler stopped and the rider's door opened. A very pleasant, smiling man said, "Hop in, son."

In answer to his questions, and for the "umpteenth" time, I recounted the reasons for my hitchhiking. In retrospect, I can see how he instantly determined that I was unattached and expected by no one that night.

Almost immediately he pulled this fancy, new Chrysler into an unlighted parking area. When I politely asked him if this was as far as he were going, he replied with considerable sadness that he needed to talk to someone who would try to understand him. He said that he was a schoolteacher and immediately began to complain about his wife's disinterests and coldness. As he moved smoothly into her unwillingness to meet his sexual needs, he placed his arm over the back seat.

I have used this experience, and my response to it, all of my life, and will continue to do so. Liberals from a hundred political, social and so-called "human rights" organizations can argue

their philosophical positions of "gay rights" all they want to, But they will never be able to change my mind about the natural and basic differences of the sexes.

You need to realize that I had never knowingly been around homosexuals, and I hadn't even so much as heard the term. I couldn't have told what so-called homosexuality was if my life had depended on it. I knew more than my share, informed AND misinformed, about sex, but very little about the perversion of it.

It further needs to be explained that, by both family and religious training, and to a certain degree, temperament, it was natural for me to listen, with concern and sympathy, to any hurting person. So up until this perfect stranger placed his arm over the back seat, I was neither suspicious or apprehensive.

But when he made this move and started to slide over towards me in the seat, I instinctively knew that something was not right. It was as real a warning as if someone had suddenly turned on glaring lights or set off a loud alarm. No person could ever persuade me that men feeling amorous towards other men is natural or normal. Nature and the Bible and common sense disavows and condemns homosexuality in men and women.

Just as instinctively and instantly as an inner, insistent voice told me that this was improper, a second and third emotion emerged. The second was anger, not fear, for I felt that I had already been violated. The very brass of this guy coming on to me! I was aroused by passion, but not of any sexual nature. The third emotion was that of self-preservation. I didn't know for sure what his intentions were or if he had any weapon, but I knew what mine were.

My intention was to get safely out of that car and my weapons were two handy fists and agility. I weighed 185 pounds and didn't carry a pound of fat. I had been moving furniture and appliances (including pianos) and handling 125-pound propane tanks six days a week.

I grabbed his arm with my left hand and jerked it down vigorously and in the same motion grabbed the door handle with my right. As these sudden and surprising (to him at least) moves occurred I said to him in an icy and steely voice, "You leave your hands off from me. I'm getting out." I grabbed my bag with my left hand and opened the door to get out, all the while keeping my eyes on any movement he would make. I couldn't see a gun or a knife, but I was prepared to duck, run or whatever may be necessary.

His response was as weird as it was surprising. He just sort of wilted and said, "Oh, come on. Please. I need you. Please get back into the car." I slammed the door and walked away warily to a nearby fence, watching for him to start the engine and try to run me down. Instead of that he was draped over the steering wheel and crying.

I began walking down the highway realizing that if he came after me, I could quickly jump the fence into the haven of a friendly field. Soon I heard the motor start and he turned back towards the city. One wonders how many boys and young men this parasite had used over the years because they were more intimidated or less courageous or less physically endowed. The situation is hundreds of times worse today.

The remainder of this trip is rather anticlimactic by comparison, but still interesting.

An Air Force Captain, who was a self-proclaimed jet pilot, picked me up in Cheyenne and we went double truckin' down the pike. There is quite a climb between Cheyenne and Laramie, and the higher the elevation we achieved, the colder it became until we were in snow and ice, which was the result of a storm the previous day. This sky jockey didn't slow his Buick down a bit and, besides driving too fast for the highway conditions, passed slower, sensible drivers on curves and hills.

I had done my share of racing cars and "seeing how fast she will go", but it seemed to me that he was pushing both the limits of skill and reason, and I must have shown it in some fashion. He said, "What's the matter? Am I driving too fast for you?" In answer to my mumbled "maybe", he observed in a cocky wonderment, "Man, oh, man! Up where I fly in jets, this is a snail's pace! You ought to be with me up there!", and he gestured heavenward. There is simply no answer to the rationale of lunacy, so I relaxed and let come what may.

By the time we arrived in Laramie, weather conditions had deteriorated further, and it was snowing and blowing. And this was in late October! I had to walk a ways to the western edge of Wyoming's state capitol and stood in considerable misery with night approaching. I didn't have the clothing for winter weather.

I can still see this beautiful, new, green Pontiac pull over just ahead of where I was standing. I climbed into warm luxury. The young man at the wheel greeted me just as warmly and I once again gave him the reason for this long journey. He was a bit surprised that I had already hitchhiked such a long distance in such a short time, and then observed, "Boy, if we had only known." Here was his story.

He had flown to Detroit to pick up his new Pontiac and was driving straight through to his home in Sacramento. I could have ridden with him nearly all of the way if we had each known. But that would have certainly "beiged out" this story, wouldn't it? Right then I decided that I would be wise to change my route plans and ride with this fine young married man to Sacramento and then hitchhike up the coast to Portland. He agreed that this would no doubt get me home sooner.

We hadn't driven too far down the highway until he suddenly said with a yawn, "Do you know how to drive?" This caught me by surprise, but I assured him that I could. He said that he hadn't had any sleep except for short cat naps since leaving Detroit and was really bushed. Can you imagine this man turning over his new Pontiac to someone he had known less than a half hour? We changed places and all he said before he zonked out was, "Wake me whenever you get sleepy."

I don't recall how far I drove while he slept, but I can assure you that I never became sleepy. Here I was driving a beautiful, brand-new Pontiac on the straight, lonely stretches of Wyoming and Utah through a, by then, star-studded night and on my way home. As long as I had to be where I was at that time of my life, It just couldn't come any better to a seventeen-year-old. When he did awaken and took the wheel somewhere in western Utah, I "passed out" awakening

only when we passed through Reno which was ablaze with light. How strange to see a city as bright as daytime with artificial lighting in the middle of night and crowds of people milling about.

I awakened once again briefly when we came upon a bad accident about 4:00 a.m. and promptly went right back to sleep.

The voice of my kind benefactor gently eased me back to consciousness and I can still picture the first objects that came into view. Palm trees were gently waving in soft breeze enfolded in a panoply of rich sunshine. I had never seen a palm tree before. After all of these years I am still impressed with the incongruity of leaving Laramie, Wyoming at nightfall in a blizzard and awakening the next day to waving palm trees in California.

The trip up the coast through Portland and on to home was fast and uneventful.

There were two big surprises, both of them blessed. Mother was shocked to see her son stride up the front sidewalk three and one half days from her telephone call and I was surprised to discover that my sister was still alive and expected to recover.

God has been so good to me.

* * * * *

Chapter 11

A TWENTY-FIVE HOUR SHIFT

The following is another story where the Lord suddenly placed a very unusual thought in my mind that brought me another badly needed job.

I was home for the last time to stay and was between my freshman and sophomore years of college. In conversation with my folks, they had told me that Bernie, a casual acquaintance of mine (everybody in town knew Bernie just like they knew Shorty), a good friend of Shorty's from Union 76, and also an avid high school sports booster, needed a man at his United Service Station. It was located at what locals knew as the Stanfield-Echo Junction on U.S. 30, was brand new and didn't have another building within sight anywhere. It was really isolated.

My father drove out and told Bernie when I could be home and he agreed to wait the few days before hiring anyone. The reason for the job opening figured strongly into why he was interested in hiring me. It again centered around my, and my family's, Christian lives and good character. Reputation isn't all important, but it is important. What the unsaved world thinks about Christians bears greatly upon our eventual influence with them.

I drove out to talk with Bernie the same day of my arrival home from Colorado Springs, Colorado. (By the time my sister had recovered sufficiently to be released from the hospital, it was too late in the term for me to return to Owasso Bible College.) Because other youth from our local Hermiston church were students at Colorado Springs Bible College, I entered there at Christmas-time in 1951 for the second term.

Here was the story of why Bernie needed a new man and why he was particularly interested in hiring me. Remember that he and Shorty were good friends and he obviously knew of the circumstances that had prompted Shorty to use me as manager of the Union 76 station some year or so ago when he had to be gone.

The junction upon which this new service station was located was on a direct route between Boise, Pendleton and Portland. Bernie and one other man had been running the station twenty-four hours a day. It was unique and way advanced in its concept of having no service area for lubing, tire changing, washing or light mechanical. The attendant was only responsible for selling gasoline, oil, filters, fan belts, tire tubes and a few other basic automotive items. There were also pop and a limited array of snacks. We're accustomed to this today with convenience stores, but in 1952, this was an innovation year's ahead of its time. High volume, low-priced gas sales was supposed to make the owner a profit, and evidently it did UNTIL

The preceding employee ran off with some money.

Bernie worked from 11:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m. when the other young man relieved him and worked from 11:00 p.m. until 11:00 a.m. the following day, seven days a week. This enabled Bernie to take the previous day's receipts home with him when his shift was over and then bank them when the banks opened at 10:00 a.m. Then he could drive the eight miles to the station and relieve the night man.

There were two catches to the set-up. One was that the gas tanker deliveries from Portland came into the station on the night shift. Buying directly from the tank farms at Portland and by having large enough station tanks to accommodate a tanker truck and its trailer, the owner was able to sell gas considerably cheaper than any other station in the entire area. We sold colossal quantities of gas, and everyone running the Boise-Pendleton-Portland corridor soon knew about the United Station.

The other catch was that the tanker company owners required cash payment -- hard cold cash -- which required the night man having this cash on hand when the delivery was made. We're talking about \$1,300.00 cash in 1952, which might be like eight or ten grand today. No checks. Currency.

The morning after a certain delivery night, when Bernie came to work, there was no night man, there was no tanker delivery and there was no \$1,300.00. He just took off with the delivery money and never even bothered to lock the station door. It had been wide open all night. They did catch him and gave him a few year's free lodging in Salem, but not before he had blown in all of that \$1,300.00.

So, it was understandable when Bernie and Leo, the station owner, showed considerable apprehension in the hiring of a new man. This was particularly evidenced in the owner, who not only lived out of town, but didn't know me from Adam. Bernie became irritable and embarrassed as this man rather rudely, and even suspiciously, asked question after question about my dependability and honesty. He was clearly displeased with my age and then rather abruptly stated

that the only way he would let Bernie hire me was if I would put up a bond equal to the delivery money.

That did it. I just arose and told them both that I didn't have that kind of money. When Leo suggested that my father could go the bond, I had been on my own too long and wasn't about to ask him to do that and told them both so. I didn't realize that bonds could be purchased for a fraction of the bond value. I don't think that I would have gone that route if I had known. It seemed to me that my credibility was the issue, so I arose to go to the car.

Bernie got into the act then and rather heatedly told Leo that he knew me and my family and that we were long-time residents here and that we were (in his words) church-going people. He continued by saying that he would vouchsafe me, and that if I took any money, he would personally pay it back. I doubt that he had that kind of money.

Leo then said that he could hire me on that basis and soon got into his big car and left. Once again, a good and honest and consistent life had paid off. You can be certain that this knowledge was not lost on me.

Then the other shoe fell. There was no problem with the pay. It was fair and standard for the day. But when we came to the hours of the shifts, the same issue of Sunday work arose. I was to assume the other fellow's night shift of 11:00 p.m. to 11:00 a.m. seven days a week. This station never closed.

Once again my faith was being tried and it looked like another good job, that I really needed for college this fall, was going to be forfeited because of not working on Sunday. I told Bernie as kindly as I could, after he had just gone to the mat for me to get the job, that I just could not work on Sunday. People today young and old seem to think that the pressure to work on the Lord's Day is greater and that standing up for keeping it holy and special is a greater trial to our faith and commitment now. I don't see how it could be. I know that I went through the fire at least four times in my lifetime on the issue, and I want to say, that the Lord not only blessed my soul and increased my love and devotion to Him, but in every case, the resulting employments were better in every way.

Anyway, when I told Bernie that I could not conscientiously take the job if I had to work on Sunday, he really looked crestfallen and said pathetically, "Lester, I would work both Saturday and Sunday if I could, but that would mean twenty-four hours straight for him and then would have our shifting all messed up for the following week." Of course, I could see this would not work.

We were both really baffled and saddened when a sudden, way-out thought popped into my mind. Once again, I truly believe that this was an immediate impression brought to me by the Lord. It seemed so both at the time and as I have reviewed it over these many years. There is a definite difference between natural, human resourcefulness and an impression from the Lord. We can't always sense the difference, but there are times when we recognize the stamp of the Divine. This was one of those instances.

I said, "Bernie, I have an idea. It is only a suggestion and I am not asking you to do it just for me. It might be more than you are willing to consider, and if so, that's alright." I can still see the brightening of his face and the lightening in his eyes. Bernie was a blonde, curly-headed, quiet-spoken, easy-going kind of person. He was a really nice person and everybody liked him. He said simply, "Well Lester, let's have it."

I said, "What if I came to work at 11:00 p.m. on Friday night and worked straight through until 12:00 p.m. on Saturday night. Then your week-end shift would be from 12:00 p.m. Saturday until 12:00 p.m. on Sunday night?" That would give me a twenty-five hour shift and him a 24-hour shift. Do you know that that dear man hardly hesitated as he took me up on this rather unusual deal. He not only agreed quickly, but seemed genuinely relieved. It was obvious that he really wanted me to work with him.

And so we went through the entire summer that way. There were brief periods of time every night when both of us could cat-nap. Generally the hours from about 1:30 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. were very slow. Sometimes we could catch 45 minutes to an hour at a time napping. I don't know how Bernie survived that summer, but I certainly was enjoying it greatly.

Though the traffic thinned during those wee hours, it never entirely stopped. Lots of people traveled through the cool of the night during the summer heat. There was little automotive air conditioning then.

Bernie brought in an Army cot that folded easily, and when the wee hours approached, we would open it and place it behind the snack bar. We always locked the outer door to the sales room when we napped. It worked out very well for both of us, and there never arose a problem or any complaint from either Bernie or Leo, the owner.

A tanker shipment would arrive every week to ten days, depending on how much gas we were selling, and Bernie or Leo would tell me the night I came on at 11:00 p.m. where the bank bag was with the \$1,300.00 was hidden. This was before the days of those neat, little floor safes that are so common in all-night businesses today. Generally they hid the bank bag behind the filter socks. For those of you who wonder what a filter sock is, early oil filters were permanently affixed to the engine block. Instead of throwing the entire filter away, as we conveniently do today, you unscrewed the filter shell, took out the old filter insert that everybody called a sock, and replaced it with a clean one with its new gasket. Making sure the gasket was properly in place was critical. A throwaway filter with its gasket in place is just one more wonderful improvement that we take for granted today.

I want to deviate long enough to tell you about the filters "that made preachers cuss", at least that is what service station attendants called them. I never did cuss, but at that time I wasn't a preacher yet. On the early 1950s Oldsmobiles, the oil filters were about eight inches long and four inches around and lay right alongside the exhaust pipe. It was nearly impossible to remove that filter without getting your hands burned, the degree depending upon how long you wanted to wait for it to cool. Many a GM engineer was buried with appropriate epitaphs under the chassis of Oldsmobiles those years.

You can imagine just how quickly a lone service station attendant would have been held up if it had been known the amount of cash available and when it were there? His life and limb would have certainly been at risk. We had no weapon as at the Union 76 Station, and all of us felt that, in this situation, it may create more of a threat to safety than a deterrent. Secrecy was our best protection.

Bernie must have tipped off the police about the fact that we periodically had large amounts of cash there, for the Oregon State Patrol checked in with me several times each night. They would pull in during those quiet, wee hours at any time of the night, at varying times, and see if all were well. It gave them a break, and certainly was a great relief to me to see those cruisers pull in. Before a week or two had passed, I knew all of them and we became good friends. They sort of took me under their wings, I guess.

My favorite was a runt of a fellow who I called the Banty rooster. He wasn't cocky, but was certainly plucky. One night every trooper who pulled in was laughing about how he single-handedly (troopers worked all alone in these days) took down three guys whom he had stopped and were trying to rough him up. When he came in, I asked him about it and he just grinned and said that he got his hat and trousers dirty. I pressed him for details and asked him if he used his service revolver. "Oh no, he said, "I just sapped them up al little," and he pulled his sap out of his back pocket. I understand that they are "cruel and unusual punishment" today, but this little trooper taught some crooks how to behave that night, and I have no problem with their saps. It is a wicked little instrument, barely eight or nine inches long, with lead buckshot tightly sewed into soft, black leather. I can tell you that I was glad to have this little trooper on my side.

Our station was a bit extraordinary, for at that time we were the only all-night service station between Boise and Portland. Even the Pendleton stations closed at 11:00 or 12:00 p.m. because of the thinning traffic in the wee hours. It wasn't unusual for grateful, night-driving motorists to pull with just "fumes" in their gas tanks.

A very challenging aspect of this station was the number of people who would need gas, but had run out of money. At that point you had to enter into a bartering situation and pit your ability to evaluate their items of trade against the gas and/or oil that they needed. The rule of thumb was to always make sure that what they left was double or triple the gas cost. This was not taking advantage of a person's plight. The station was neither a second-hand store or a pawn shop. We had to get cash for the traded item, and neither of us had much time to peddle items that the traveling public had "pawned off" on us after working 12 hour shifts.

The idea was to guess what a pawn-shop price would be, because that is where this stuff usually ended up. I never tried to rip people off who were down on their luck, but my first obligation was to my employer. You can imagine some of the scenes as people expected a retail value on their things when we would only consider a pawn value for them. Generally, when I explained this, people would simmer down and accept it.

I always felt sorry for people who ran out of money before they reached their destination, especially when they had little children, but any deal I made that didn't equate the amount of the purchase came out of my pay. That makes you a careful trader. We always told them we would

hold their stuff for a week, but as hardly any were locals, none ever returned to redeem anything the summer I worked there. As nothing ever came out of my check, the trades I made must have been OK.

Twice during that summer in those wee hours of morning, drivers came up close to the sales room door with suspicious intent. As the pump islands were considerable distance away, there was no proper reason for a car to get that close. I always kept the lights off in the sales room when I cat-napped, because I wanted to see out without anyone outside being able to see in.

I kept a powerful flashlight and some tire irons right beside the cot. The first car to try this awakened me by the close engine sounds. The beam of a flashlight shone into the salesroom and I threw the beam of our big flashlight through the window and right into this guy's eyes. He took a leap for the car and he got out of there fast.

The second time I was awakened by the headlight beams of this car. Instead of stopping parallel to the station and the pump islands, this driver came directly at me at right angles. It almost appeared that he intended to ram the building, but he stopped four or five feet from it. I was scared and the adrenaline was pumping, but I grabbed my favorite tire iron and came up from behind the confection case fast and vigorously. I really didn't have a specific plan of action beyond that burst of offensive challenge, but it seemed to work. Two men were out of their car and nearing the door when I made my surprising move. They nearly broke their necks and the car doors scrambling to get back inside, and then they peeled out of there squealing their tires on the concrete and then throwing dirt and gravel to the highway.

These experiences were considerably unsettling, but it was part of the territory and I just had to rely on instinct and intimidation. The Oregon State Patrolmen's spasmodic, nightly visits were greatly reassuring in this regard.

The closer it came to September, the more excited I became to get back to the books and newly formed friendships with Christian young people. My Dad and I had found a newly-painted, green 1940 Chevrolet two-door for \$300.00, and we went together to buy my first car. (I paid for it). That old beater looked really great, but the straight six engine had 200,000 miles on it with all of the main bearings shimmed. The mechanic who sold it to me told me to baby it and it would last a long time. She took me loyally to Colorado Springs and through my sophomore year of college.

I never saw Bernie again and by the time I came by the station a few year's later, it had a new manager, had enlarged, and there was a new, busy cafe that had been built right to the east of it. That said to me that no one else had to ever put in lonely, fearful night shifts with no other persons around.

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Chapter 12 FROM RAGS TO RICHES

The Lord helped me to pay for every penny of a five year college education. My father gave me a loan of \$75.00 to get me there and I was able to pay him back shortly for that. There were no scholarships or grants or loans. The willingness of employers to hire college students and fit work schedules around their classes must not be discounted. Many fine and thoughtful people did help me through college by providing jobs. I thank the Lord and them for these opportunities.

Because of the experience received from both Shorty's and Bernie's station, I was privileged to assist two new Colorado Springs service stations with their grand openings. The first was only for a week or two, as I recall, and I knew this when I was hired.

In those days a grand opening was a really big deal with festive, fair-like atmospheres and rock bottom, low gas prices to lure the public into the station.

Service was every bit as important as sales, and many people in the 1950s would pay higher gasoline prices, if need be, to receive friendly, fast and courteous service to their vehicles. This sounds utopian today, but the following describes the typical treatment that every customer received at the service stations I worked.

The first treatment was "hustle". The second was actually an accompaniment of the first, and that was smile and be pleasant. If the customer were a regular, you knew their names and used it. If not, the customer was "ma'am, miss or sir", young or old, jalopy or Caddie, 50 cent's worth or a fill-up.

When you had discovered whether they wanted regular or premium gas and how much, you started the gas (if you had a shut off on the nozzle) and went to the front and popped the hood. Nearly all vehicles had the hood release in the grill work. You checked all fluid levels: oil, water, battery, automatic transmission and power steering, though the last two were just coming into the industry, so that was not so common. While you were under the hood, you quickly inspected fan belts, and gave a quick squeeze to the radiator hoses. If oil was needed, you took the dipstick around to the customer and showed them the level.

You always carried four items with you: a clean rag for the windshield; a dirty rag for the oil check; a flask of windshield cleaner (one place I worked had them air-charged); and a tire gauge. Some stations washed the windows all of the way around and some only the windshields. At Union 76 we did them all unless the customer was too busy and didn't want to wait. Generally by the time the gas nozzle has shut off (if it were a fill-up), you would be done with the windows and under the hood. Then the air pressure was checked in all four tires and you were ready to take the customer's money. We didn't vacuum the interior floors, but there were a few stations who even did that.

If you were working alone and other customers were waiting, it was important to recognize their presence and patience as tell them that you would be with them as soon as possible. It is amazing how just a word or two of acknowledgment would change frowns to smiles.

Cleanliness of restrooms, station premises and uniforms were also critical to customer satisfaction. At Union 76 we tidied up the restrooms after each use. I confess that I miss all of that courtesy and personal attention today.

I have to relate the flip side of the usual, careful attention we ordinarily gave our customers. A regular came in one day for the works: lube, oil change, and interior and exterior cleaning. As this was before the days of coin-operated car washing, if you wanted someone else to do your car washing, it was done in a service station. When done, a car was nearly what we call "detailed" today. Not quite as extensive, but nearly -- for two bucks, if you please.

This was my job and I gave it what I thought was the usual, careful treatment. It was always such a pleasure to see the pleased and happy looks and hear the positive comments as customers picked up their "clean and sparkling as new" car. Paychecks are necessary, but satisfied and happy customers bring a great deal of pleasure to business people.

This old gentleman climbed into his clean and shining Chevy coupe and looked around a bit and then climbed back out. He said with sort of a smirky smile, "Hey, you guys, come here a minute. I want you all to see something." All of us dutifully crowded around his opened door and looked at the front ash tray where he was pointing. There were three items in it: cigarette butts, two dollar bills and a note stating that the two dollars was for the attendant who cleaned out his ash tray. We had all been missing it as we cleaned his Chevy from time to time, and he purposed to either reward the fellow who thought to empty and clean it or teach us all a lesson. We got the lesson, and I lost the two bucks tip. That was two hour's pay.

Even though I was the guilty party at the time, none of the others laughed at me, for we had all been missing the customer's ash trays, front and back. You can be sure that every customer's ash trays were dumped and cleaned from then on and equally sure that there were no more ash tray tips. Big deal.

The second new service station I worked in and assisted in their opening was innovative in that its tanks were above ground. This was a first to me and I frankly don't know how they got around State laws.

When I hired on here, it was with the understanding that I wouldn't have to work on Sundays. In fact, the owner said that the other guys would be happy to have the extra time. I was again pulling the night shift so that I could carry a full college credit load. When the station manager told me at a later time that some of the other men were tired of working every Sunday and wanted their Sundays off too, we went over our agreement once again and, I assumed that all was well when I heard no more about it for considerable time.

It was wintertime in Colorado and when I came to work this particular Saturday afternoon, the boss said that he needed to talk to me in the office. He stated plainly that the other men wanted a strict rotation arrangement established where all of us worked our weekends without exception. When I asked him again about our original agreement, he became really abusive and angry and stated the I was scheduled to work tomorrow (Sunday) and that I would have to take turns like everyone else.

I was surprised and hurt that he would go back on his word, but guessed that he was being pressured from the other men and so refrained from pressing the matter any further. After swallowing a time or two, I told him as kindly as I could, considering the emotional stress and disappointment of the situation, that I would have to quit then. I assured him that I would fill this night's shift, but that I wouldn't work on the Lord's Day tomorrow. He said, "If that's the way you feel about it, O.K.". He left with a huff and I was left with a big bundle of disappointment, anxiety, fearfulness and perplexity. What was I going to do now? Here it was wintertime and I have this school bill to pay and no job. The nighttime, the cold and the spitting snow outside matched my mood exactly. I cried and was upset at the Lord and asked Him over and over, "Why, Lord? Why did You let this happen? You could have intervened."

In my hurt and loss and discouragement, I was foolishly blaming Him. You know, I'm sorry to admit that this isn't the only time that I have unwisely blamed God for life's heartaches. I have grown up enough to stop that, but I still have trouble, in the heat of loss and trouble, asking "Why?" when the wounds are open and raw and bleeding. There is a sense in which I have more growing to do there, but there is also a perception that God has given me that is a bit heartening. Our humanity is never going to allow us the luxury of not needing God's comfort and grace. The blessed Holy Spirit was specifically given to us as a Comforter. This has to mean that we NEED comforting; that we will, in fact, never accede to a state in grace where we can somehow live above the knocks and bumps of the flesh.

But, you know, God never once has answered me when I am bawling and squalling and blaming and wallowing in my misery and hurt. He has never once laid a comforting hand on my hot, heaving shoulder. He never once spoke words of encouragement to me while I was struggling and straining and carrying on. But every time that I became quiet and soft and tender and yielding and came to bow humbly before Him, HE ALWAYS HAS PICKED ME UP IN HIS STRONG EMBRACE AND SOOTHED AWAY THE ANXIETY AND TURMOIL. I've heard the "still, small voice" many times over the years and tears, but always after the wind and the fire and the storm. Thank You, Jesus!

This is what happened in that Time Service Station salesroom that night. God didn't tell me what He was going to do. He never had to. He just gave me a deep, unexplainable, inner peace that everything was going to be alright. Friends, God's promissory notes are better than money in the bank, and His peace is more dependable than houses and lands. GOD'S GUARANTEE IS HIS PEACE. Let's try to always remember that.

As long as I live, I will "see" an eighteen-year-old preacher-boy who is trying to pay his own way through college; who has just been told an hour or so ago in the dead of winter that he has no job; who has just experienced one of those horribly fierce battles of faith; who is all alone with family 1,300 miles away and no friends near; sitting quietly with his feet cocked up on a desk; fingers and thumbs placed together in tandem up on the chin and mouth like we do when are thinking or daydreaming. It was in every way like a quiet after a storm. There were no customers and it was a still, quiet night.

Into that reverie came the shrill, strident ringing of the station phone. Out of all the time I had worked there, the only phone calls were about station business. No call had ever been for me personally, and certainly none from the Bible College and not at that hour of night.

"Lester?", this rather strange voice said. "This is Hubert Jenewein." Now, you need to realize just how special this was. Even in a small Bible college, seniors have little to do with underclassmen. Not because of any particular personal social reasons that are often encountered in secular college. You're not in the same classes and clubs and social circles. Hubert was married and I was single. We attended different churches. He lived in a mobile court and I was in the men's dorm. Other than both of us preparing for the ministry in the same Bible College, we really had little in common. I just never knew Hubert very well. I don't think that he even knew where I worked and more than likely had to ask some of the guys in the dorm. Remember that he called me this night while I was at work, and I didn't know him well enough to know where he was working.

The next words he said just about brought me up out of my chair. He said, "You've been on my mind all evening. For some reason I've just been impressed with your name over and over." Dear Reader, I'm not making a bit of this up. I don't have to. The wording of what was said may have varied a bit, but this is what happened in essence. What a wonderful Lord we serve, Who has our address and is always on time.

Here is why Hubert was calling. He was soon to be leaving ministerial training to pastor a church. His boss was so pleased with his work that he wanted Hubert to recommend another Bible College student to take his place. You must realize that there were no doubt a score or two young men whom Hubert could have chosen to recommend. Many of them were better known to him and certainly some of them personal friends. Quite possibly, some of them were out of work at that time of the year. Why was he calling me who, as far as he knew, had a job and was on it right then? The answer had to be obvious. God had started talking to Hubert about me even before I knew that I was going to need a job.

Anyhow, here he is saying to me over the phone that he knows that I have a job here, but he just couldn't get me off from his mind and had to at least give me a call.

I think that both of us were rather astounded at the timing in all of this. Also that God was so strongly impressing me upon his mind. He went on to tell me about the job, but what did it matter? It was clear that the Lord was engineering this, so I just said yes.

Now, think of this. #1 - I would go to work on Monday. That means that I wouldn't even miss an hour's pay. #2 - I would spend two weeks working with Hubert learning the job. #3 - I would be earning 25 cents more an hour. That was a 20% raise. #4 - I would work the same hours as Hubert had which was tailor-made for a college student and there was no Sunday work! #5 - I would have no boss, but would actually be in charge of my own department. #6 - I would have my own vehicle. Let me say again, that God doesn't treat His people shabbily.

This is what I would call a "cream-puff job". Columbia Furniture was one of the most exclusive, ritsy-titsy furniture stores in Colorado Springs. It catered to an elite and exclusive clientele. My work was nearly exclusively in affluent neighborhoods and homes.

My responsibility was the drapery department in this fine store and the only person who worked with me was in interior decorator who recommended and sold draperies, wall hangings and wallpaper. My sole job was the installation of new draperies and repairing or replacing existing ones. I could have almost worn a suit and tie on this job. My Chevrolet panel was nearly new and was emblazoned with garish lettering proclaiming me as an employee of one of Colorado Spring's finest. It was my personal rig and nobody else drove it but me.

Sometimes I would nearly have to pinch myself a make sure that it wasn't all a dream. God did it. Of that I have no question. He was right on time. I know that it doesn't always just work out like this, but it happens enough for His children to know that He is always watching out for us, even when we can't see Him. It's often hard for us to wait on Him, but whenever we do, the results are always delightful, uplifting and so precious.

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Chapter 13

THE HEALING OF DELORIS' BACK

Our relationship as life partners began in a Bible college chapel service. A ladies trio was singing with particular unction and effectiveness. I had noticed this same blessing on other occasions when these three young ladies would sing. As the Spirit of God especially moved upon them while they ministered in song, I prayed in my heart, "Lord, I want one of them for my wife. It doesn't matter which one." Upon reflection, it seems that such a prayer was considerably presumptive, for I had no way of knowing if any of the three would look my way. The point is that this was the desire of my heart. My prayer was my preference.

Many people might consider such a prayer silly, immature and downright stupid, but those who have a heart for God would see it as both practical and sensible. God truly read the desire of my heart, as He always does, and warmed it accordingly. I had no "impression" as to what His plans or choices might be in the matter. Neither was there one of the ladies who rather "stood out" from the other two. The truth was that my heart was crying out more for what these young women portrayed and represented than any physical or temperamental aspect.

I am fully aware that what I am saying here is skeptically received by most, even church people. But since it happens to be true, any other statement on the matter would be misleading.

Young people, both men and women, can truly have a heart for God. They are as capable of possessing and pursuing high spiritual values as any adult. Youth can experience spiritual depth. In fact, many Christians yearn to recapture the zeal and hunger of a walk with God that they knew as youth. There is no reason to forfeit it.

This is a proper place for a related, personal testimony. Both Deloris and I have experienced, by His enabling grace, a consistently increasing walk with the Lord. There have been no flat spots or backslidings or temporary desertions from the faith. Grace is an incline, and we

have climbed the golden pathway, hand in hand and heart to heart, with Jesus as our constant Guide.

Nobody is more human than we. The above is no wild claim to a perfection of decisions and wise acts and proper moves and excellent service. This is no self-proclaimed monument to the "excellence of our humanity". But I would be a first-class liar if I failed to state unequivocally that we Christians can have a one hundred percent love and devotion to our God. We can experience a perfection of desire to please Him always and want never to hurt or offend Him.

In the light of this, why should it be thought strange or unnatural for two persons with such high, personal spiritual goals to carry it into their courtship relationship? I can only say that it occurred to and with us. I have offered all of the above so that the following observations about the healing of Deloris' back would be understood.

We were into excellent revival services at the church where we attended. Every night people were having the deep needs of their lives met. Many other Bible college students also attended this church and it was common for many of them to remain around the altar praying with seekers after older folk, as well as other students and others of the church, had become weary. It seemed that it was generally the same core of young people who were the last to leave. I have witnessed this same special concern and compassion about seekers and those who tarry with them throughout my ministry. There are always those few who remain, and they have a special reward, as was the case this night.

A faculty member was required to be in attendance as long as there were both young men and women present. Reverend Lyle Tullis was the one with us this night. I see this as significant because of his strong position on divine healing and what was to occur.

Deloris was born with a unnatural curvature of the spine. It bothered her periodically all through school days, but became increasingly worse as she entered young womanhood. It became more obviously a serious medical problem as she entered the job market in high school and college. The constant pain became so great that she was forced to seek medical attention. This resulted in X-rays that revealed the curvature problem that the doctor said she was born with. He ordered a very expensive back brace for her and she had to wear it to work to realize any relief at all. Then she had to sleep on a heating pad at night. Even with these medical measures, pain and its attendant hindrances to job performance were constant.

Though she is a non-complainer by temperament, this affliction was so severe that many of the girls in the ladies dormitory were aware of it. One of those was my sister, Joella.

This particular night, in the afterglow of a very long, and ultimately victorious altar service, many happy, peaceful souls were praising the Lord for His goodness and grace. It was that kind of an after service that no one wants to go home. Oh, to see more..

What most of us men didn't know, but my sister and some of the other girls did know, was that Deloris had been experiencing nearly constant pain in her back and she had been unable to

relieve it by any means at her disposal. Joella stated that she felt that we should gather around her and anoint her and ask the Lord to heal her back.

There must have been ten or twelve of us there, both young men and women, including Brother Tullis. We all gathered around Deloris at the altar and began to pray. Thank God for the vigor, enthusiasm and stamina of youth! Someone suggested that I anoint her with oil and we all began earnestly beseeching our God to touch and heal her back. Do you think that God was listening to a bunch of young people? You'd better believe it.

The struggle was in her faith. Temperamentally, she loathes being the center of attention. "Why would God want to do such a wonderful thing to me? Who am I to expect Him to supernaturally heal my back?" Most of us know how simple an act it seems to be to trust for someone else, and how hard it is at times to take that same step of faith for ourselves.

One young preacher boy already seemed to have the witness that God had indeed heard our prayers and done the work. He staked out his claim by walking around the perimeter of that large sanctuary, gently waving his handkerchief and softly repeating, "The work is done. The work is done."

By this time, Deloris was both emotionally and physically spent, and was leaning against my sister for support in a subdued manner. There was somewhat of a lull in our praising, as I recall. Another young man challenged her faith with one of God's promises, and you could see the apprehension in her countenance drain away as she forgot about everyone around her and placed the weight of her burden into the strong arms of her Savior.

I will carry the image of what happened next to my grave, for I was kneeling right in front of her on the opposite side of the altar. Her precious body trembled like an Aspen in a Colorado breeze as Jesus touched and healed her back. That happened two or three times. I didn't count. Nobody did. You can never be the same when you are an eyewitness to something heavenly like this. It is life changing to participate in an unnatural, other-worldly experience. It's humbling to observe something that is humanly unexplainable.

The specialness of this experience, then and now, is only heightened as the religious community at large takes a dim view of so-called faith healing. Modern day showmanship, dramatic trappings, highly charged emotional atmospheres, long-line impressiveness -- to say nothing of frequent chicanery and downright deception -- has properly made skeptics out of most of us.

In contrast, this was simple, non-professional, raw recruit, "meat and potatoes" faith. The only motivation here was heart-felt, Centurion-like concern over a stricken comrade. It was as innocent and child-like as it was spontaneous. No one was engineering or dramatizing or embellishing anything. Nobody was trying to get something to happen.

It was obvious to Deloris and to all of the rest of us that God had done something special for her, but it was so hard for her to believe that God had actually made an immediate correction in

her life-long infirmity. All of us were trying to uplift and encourage her. The atmosphere was electrifying and heavenly. There were happy tears and continual rejoicing and abundant praises.

One young man encouraged Deloris to trust her heavenly Father like she would her earthly father and this seemed to be the final link in that night's chain of faith. Her personal atmosphere cleared and everyone there could see the resultant confidence and peace.

I have been the privileged witness of a good number of divine healings, and will comment on them at a later time in these writings. I do not understand the hows and whys of God's workings in this case or others. They all have been different enough to be unique. There is just one constant among many variables: the Holy Spirit will accomplish any divine operation in His own special manner. This is a major reason why I am skeptical of what I call "assembly-line healing". After you see one, you have seen them all.

My experience in walking with God and watching Him work is just the opposite. His ways and means are unique enough to bear the stamp of the Divine and distinctively separate it from human resourcefulness or chicanery. Patterns are human inventions. God's ways are wonderfully unique and unlimited in variety. A natural question in the mind of a true follower as he anticipates God's hand at work in any given need or situation could well be: "I wonder what He is going to do this time?"

Perhaps a side-note to the healing of Deloris' back will underscore this reasoning.

In the afterglow of this heavenly manifestation, I asked her in a quiet moment if it would be alright for us to begin dating, and she readily agreed. Contrary to what some might consider improperly mingling the flesh with the spirit, this was the level of Divine involvement that we both desired in our relationship. It had been obvious to me for some time that her primary desire for spiritual excellence matched the intensity of my own. I write these lines because they are true and not as afterthoughts or "golden year" embellishments. Two people can place God at the center of their lives at the very start and keep Him there. And they can realize increasing fullness of both spiritual and physical enjoyment and pleasure without tarnishing or forfeiting it.

This is a good place to leave my personal testimony regarding moral purity between the genders.

It is enough for me to say, having at least normal intelligence and being a well-read, informed individual, that I am perfectly normal regarding human sexuality. I know what normal is!

God clearly spoke to me when I was definitely converted as a teenager, about my conduct with the opposite sex. I was to refrain from touching the erotic areas of any person except my wife. God made this plainer to me than I am placing in words. Don't think that God has any qualms about being specific:

I want to make five observations about this prohibition that the Lord placed upon my life:
(1) It was specific (as already affirmed) (2) I perceived that such a circumspect life was possible
(3) Just because it was spelled out and required of me, didn't necessarily mean that I had the right

to require it of others (though it took me a while to clearly see this, and, though I've certainly recommended it) (4) I realized that it was for my best and also for the best of others (5) I never once felt that God was being too hard on my humanity.

God helped me to walk in this light all through our courtship. He has also helped me, by His grace and to the glory of His grace, to be true to Deloris, over these 38 years of marriage, not only physically, but mentally as well. He made it clear to me early on that so-called fantasizing with any other person was violating my promise to her to be faithful to her. I'm not talking here about the presentations of "what-ifs" that come to all of us, nor about the suggestions and temptations of impure thoughts that Satan brings to every human being. I mean the allowance of re-creations of sexual acts being carried out in our minds. God has helped me, and can help all of us, to be victorious on a thousand battlefields.

We can be human and be holy. We don't have to allow the supremacy of animal passions. We can be loving and sensitive and warm in a spousal relationship, while both persons involved loving God with all the heart, mind, soul and body.

As an epilogue to the healing of Deloris' back: She never wore her back brace another time. The Lord had truly touched her and corrected the curvature problem.

She carried and bore three children with no more back discomfort than any other mother.

She has a number of ailments common to persons her age,, but not any that relate to her back. Praise the Lord!

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Chapter 14

IT'S WELL THAT GOD DOESN'T ACT UPON OUR COMPLAINING

Shortly after Deloris and I were married in December of 1953, I began working at a small factory that manufactured small electric motors. Until then, I had been able to survive financially with part-time jobs and working for the college for 35 cents an hour. I have frequently wondered about the person who stated that two persons could live as cheaply as one. He must have meant "two persons hibernating". If this person had said that two persons. living together could accumulate more junk than two living separately, I could believe that.

Universal Electric (later to become a subsidiary of Western Electric) must have needed workers badly, for when it was my turn to be interviewed by the personnel manager, he showed immediate interest in me and my work record. The problem was that none of the job openings he had left fit my experience. He laid aside position after position after asking, "Do you do this? Do you do this?" Negative. Negative. Finally he said, "What does your father do for a living?", to which I replied that he was an electrician. He immediately responded, "Wonderful. Wonderful. Here we have an immediate opening for an electrician's apprentice. We'll hire you for that. You've surely picked up a smattering of wiring from him." I wondered from which star he had dropped,

but didn't say anything. At that point, I didn't even know you put black to black and white to white. But who was I to argue?

Since it seemed that I was to be an assistant, I supposed that meant working under an electrician, so away we went. Not to worry. The first few days were spent shortening light cords. Really technical, challenging stuff. The man showing me how to be an electrician (shortening light-cords) had a Master's degree in electrical engineering and his father owned an engineering company back East and had paid his way through a technical institute to learn the business and work in it. But sons don't always follow in their father's plans, and you may determine my instructor's temperament when I describe him to you. Unshaven, shirt tail out, boot laces always untied, and a roll-your-own cigarette dangling perpetually out of his mouth. He was a free spirit long before the hippie culture arrived. It just occurs to me that maybe he started it. I may have unwittingly brushed with history in the making.

You couldn't help but like the guy. He was as laid back as a ray of sunshine and as imperturbable as the dawn. He was easy to work with and loads of fun, but I certainly didn't learn much about electrical wiring as we meandered through this factory shortening light cords. The powers that be evidently saw my discontent and soon moved me to operating a turret lathe in the production department.

I learned many, many valuable lessons during the year or so that I worked at Universal Electric. The one on the turret lathe was with considerable mixed emotions.

The way these small motors, roughly about one-sixth horsepower, used for fan and air-conditioning, were manufactured was unique, at least I had never seen a motor case designed in this fashion. The field body of the motor was formed by 3 1/2 to 4 inch round laminates stamped out of steel and fused together, making a field some 1 1/2 inches thick. Obviously, there was a hole in the center for the rotor to be. I don't want to bore you with details, just tell enough to explain why they needed a lathe.

Two end bells were affixed to the shoulders on this field, so that they, with the field, became the outer shell of the motor. When these were buffed out and painted, they looked nice and functioned well. The raw field had to have those shoulders cut out so that the end bells could slide into place. Hence the need for turret lathing.

It was explained to me that there were three of us operating this lathe twenty-four hours a day. My shift would be the graveyard one (12:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.) and we were expected to turn down 125 fields a shift. I was understandably apprehensive working with a quota and never having operated a lathe before, but they assured me that I wouldn't be expected to reach the quota for a few shifts. Again, not to worry. I was entering the hitherto unknown world of goof-off. I was also soon to discover that ambition and hard work and doing one's best was a negative in many people's eyes. I became a boat rocker before I knew what that was.

Something needs to be said here about factory terms. A quota was how many pieces of any manufactured part needed to be processed on a given shift. This was vital to meet shipment requirements. These quotas were posted in every department at given locations. The first thing you

did before starting your shift was to inspect the quota board. There were three color designations. The red list had to be processed this shift, and was called by everyone "the hot list". When those red quotas were filled, we moved to the blue and then to the yellow. Blue and yellow items were needed, but didn't have to be done that shift.

So that quota for the fields to be turned down by each of the turret lathe operators was 125 per shift. I could see instantly that this figure had been unchanged on the quota board for some time.

At any rate, an experienced lathe operator showed me how to set up the lathe and operate it. He showed me how to sharpen and replace the bits and how to measure the depth of the cut into the shoulder of the field. This was my first experience working with measurement tolerances in the thousandths of an inch. I knew instantly that this was going to be more fun than work, which it was.

To this day, I don't know why we are like we are, but I have always enjoyed working hard and fast and efficiently. It is in my genes and very bones. It has never been something reasoned or decided upon as a course of action. It certainly hasn't been to get attention or to make other workers look inefficient, slow or lazy. And throughout my life, it has been a source of pain to be viewed by others as perfectionistic, intimidative or just plain exhibitionistic (a show off) when the real reason has honestly been intuitive and temperamental.

Do you know that the first shift I worked, not only new to this job, but never having spent a minute on a turret lathe before, my tally at the end of the shift was 137 pieces? Do you know further, that I innocently thought everyone would be overjoyed?

When the day man came on to relieve me, I should have "smelled a rat" when he suggested, upon seeing my tally, that I not overdo it; that I didn't have to break my back. While he wasn't my supervisor, he was the day man, the longest on the job and was an experienced machinist. I can see now that his suggestion was more than that.

The next night when I relieved the swing shift operator, his advice was similar. You don't have to work that hard. They don't expect us to kill ourselves. That second night I turned down 175 pieces and was really feeling great. My foreman was almost unbelieving when he saw my tally and was liberal with praise. The day man came in and was ominously quiet when he saw it. It was obvious that he didn't share the foreman's appreciation. It still didn't get through my thick noggin that fur was being rubbed the wrong way.

It came through loud and clear when I came to work the third night and saw the quota raised for all of us to 150 pieces per shift. The swing man never said anything, but if looks could kill... That third night I turned down 225 fields and hadn't hit my stride yet. And, wouldn't you know it, the following day our quota was again raised to 175 fields per shift. By then, the cat was out of the bag in a number of ways. These operators had been coasting and, it appeared, by mutual agreement. I had unwittingly stirred up their nest and destroyed their little goof-off conspiracy.

While I am super sensitive about making people unhappy with me, laziness and deceit are intolerable. This life has stamped my conscience with the conviction that an employer should receive an hour's work for an hour's pay. Anything less than that is stealing as certainly as

removing some bills from his wallet. And just because someone else, or even everyone else, in our workplace is doing it doesn't make it right.

Four direct results came of all this: (1) the quota for fields turned down by lathe operators was permanently set at 175 per shift. (2) I was appreciated and recognized by my superiors. (3) I was loathed and avoided by the other lathe operators. (4) I was very quickly promoted to a better and higher paying position.

The job title was Material Handler and in the Heavy Stamping department. This one challenged every innate desire I had for hard, fast work, and I loved it.

There were four heavy stamping presses and usually three of them were running. My job was to keep the steel stock supplied to these presses and keep the resultant stamped pieces removed from under the presses and into their appropriate bins awaiting assembly. Only one of these great presses accepted the four inch bands of thin sheet steel from a roll. This roll weighed some 300 pounds and was lifted from off a hand cart onto a spool by levers. It was then threaded upon a feeding table that was on the level with the press I only had to change these two or three times a night. But the other three were fed from tables that matched the height of the stamping presses, perhaps 32 inches high,

The steel band stock that fed these machines were also roughly four inches wide, eight feet long and varied in thickness from, maybe, 20/1000s to 60/1000s, depending on the part being stamped. The material handler's job was to keep these feed tables supplied with this steel stock so that the press operator didn't have to stop his work. Lifting that steel from the cart to the table all night long was no child's job. Then, as aforementioned, the stamped pieces had to be removed. Also, oil reservoirs had to be kept full.

I had only been there a couple of nights before the press operators happily informed me that was the first handler who had kept them going without having to stop and wait. I thought that was what I was supposed to do.

Heavy Stamping was immediately adjoined by what they called the Light Stamping Department, and was connected by an open, six foot doorway. You don't have to ever personally experience this to imagine the horrible noise that these two departments made. There were three heavy presses stamping out steel pieces at a rate of 75 to 125 per minute per press in our department. Then there were fifteen or twenty punch presses in the light stamping. This sounds incredible today, but the only employees to wear ear plugs were those who had a hearing problem of some kind, and then they supplied their own plugs. I'm not exaggerating when I say that, when my shift was over for the night and I came out to start the car and go home, I couldn't hear the engine turn over and certainly couldn't hear it running. You just determined that fact by vibrations. This had its plusses if you were sensitive to squeaks and rattles or if you had a nagging wife. No, not really on that last.

You communicated in these two departments by motions, notes, or moving away from the area of the presses. If you were anywhere near these presses, you could stand as near to a person's

ear as you wanted and shout and still not be heard. Most of us developed acceptable lip reading skills and cut communication to basics.

Unknown to me, none of my cheerful, hard work was lost on the bosses. About two months after starting as material handler, the foreman of Light Stamping quit or was fired, I can't remember which, and they promoted me to this department. It is a fact that they hired two older men to do the work I was doing in Heavy Stamping. I have believed all of my life that sanctified employees ought to be the most dedicated, loyal, hardworking, dependable employees in their work force. Not for show, but unto the Lord. This was as challenging as it was surprising, for I was by far the youngest foreman in the factory at nineteen. More lessons about human nature was forthcoming, especially on the feminine side.

Nearly all of the 200 plus employees at Universal Electric were women. They seemed to be more suited to production and assembly processes. Other than one male material handler, all of the eight or ten persons in Light Stamping were women. There were some fifteen or twenty punch presses, but they did not all operate at the same time. Accordingly, it was necessary for all operators to know how to run each press.

There were some rather important company safety regulations, as you might expect in a factory, that we foremen were responsible to instruct and enforce. I rather quickly noticed the first day on the new job that some of the women were not wearing hair nets.

A punch press is rather simple in design. It has a ram that moves up and down in a vertical motion. This ram is connected on top by an arm moving concentrically on a comparatively large wheel. On the bottom of the ram is one half of a die. The other half of this die is mounted on the base of the machine, positioned at a level where a sitting operator can place the stamping stock, generally thin gauge steel. When she has properly placed the piece to be stamped, a foot lever is depressed and the ram comes down and stamps out the part.

The moving parts to the presses were all well shielded to prevent injury to the operator, but the immediate area where the stamping stock was inserted obviously had to remain open. This was the reason for the hair net requirement -- to keep long hair away from the ram end with its many-edged die.

I dutifully warned those who were not wearing hair nets of both the danger and company policy. The violators were (1) young women (2) well-dressed and groomed, and (3) generally long-term employees. The response from them was smirks, raised eyebrows and tossed heads. I mean no disrespect when I immediately thought about the fillies on the farm. That is exactly how they act. I had sense enough "to let fillies frisk", but I did go talk to the Heavy Stamping foreman, my old boss, and get his recommended opinion. He agreed that I should let them frisk.

The unspoken, undeclared leader of this "band" was a long-legged, redhead who had not only been there a long time, but could really put out the material. She knew how to run those punch presses. I always knew where Charlotte was working by the banging of her press, for it was always banging away faster than anyone else's. This was part of her ploy, and she knew it. These

operators could make or break a foreman and his quota requirements, and they all knew it. It was definitely not in his best interests to unnecessarily make enemies of the fast workers.

There were four or five of these women, who incidentally were the hair net violators, who instinctively followed Charlottes lead. It was a pleasure just to watch these operate. They had a "Marine mentality", a "can-do" attitude, an esprit d' corps, that was truly beautiful to work with. When they wanted to and felt good about matters that night, they could keep the material handler and me both hopping all night to keep up. That was the good part.

The bad part outweighed the good, I am afraid. I foremanned two women crews at Universal Electric. I've also been privileged to work a good many men crews, and I think that you'll definitely know my preference, hands down. Sorry, but that's the truth of it.

Generally, every shift you could count on at least one of these "elite punchers" either (1) not feeling just right for any variety of reasons, (2) on the outs with a spouse or a boyfriend, or (3) in a tangle with one of the others in their group. One way or the other, there was some little, private war going on somewhere in Light Stamping. It was the original "soaps". The grandmother of them all. If they'd had a VCR camera in those day, I could have shot them at night and the networks could have run them the next day. As The Factory Turns, they could have called it. I never saw such peevishness and jealousy and childish competitiveness among adults in my life. It was more like Junior High cliques and snobishness.

They would come to work looking like they were going out or posing for some magazine. Even though I was married and a ministerial student and they all knew it, they would vie for my special attention and try to con me into spending extra time at their "malfunctioning machine".

It was my primary job to change the dies, keep the presses going and thereby guarantee the production quotas. For the first few nights they kept me running to their machines for no good reason, for the most part... (They could call me with a light at their press. You couldn't have heard a bell). When I caught on to their scam and wouldn't run every time they called, then they would get mad at me and huff around and slow down their work.

I would have bagged it except for the other, older women on the crew who were dependable, steady and fine persons. I solved that problem by making sure I had some extra presses all set up for their "slow downs. Whenever they deliberately slowed down and started their little pity parties, I would jump on a press and start banging away on our "hot list". Then the race was on to see who could outdo the boss. Nothing was ever said about this, but after two or three of these exhibitions, the rivalry and peevishness declined to tolerable levels.

With my joking, easy-going temperament, it was only natural that there was a lighthearted camaraderie in the department. But, after a good number of clearly suggestive remarks were made about my references to the "hot list" by this set of young wives and divorcees, I had to stop joking with them and be all business. That was not only difficult for me because of this naturally friendly disposition, but it stiffened up the entire atmosphere. Too bad, but necessary.

When I heard a scream one night over the noise of those presses, you can guess that I moved very fast in that direction. One of my little violators was bent over in her chair, holding her head and crying loudly. The operator next to her had already shut down her press. When I could finally get her to take her hands off from where the blood was coming, (the others headed for the hills) there was a neat little patch of hair and scalp pulled out about the size of a dime. I sent her to the plant dispensary and the nurse patched her up and sent her home. In two or three nights, all of that lovely hair was properly netted without my saying a word, not only in my department, but all over the plant.

I was eventually promoted from the production part of the factory to assembly, and there were some forty to fifty assemblers and inspectors in this department. This was a lot of responsibility for my age and full-time student status, but, perhaps fortunately, it was short-lived.

With only days into this new responsibility, orders for company products fell off sharply and my total shift was laid off. However, the management quickly asked me to stay on at a new job on the graveyard shift. I quickly agreed, for I certainly needed that job. But, oh, what a job!

What I am going to describe is considerably obsolete in nearly every way, but it is true. Anyone who has ever seen a field in an electric motor knows that the windings are varnished. I had never wondered just how the varnish got on those copper winding wires, but I found out how one factory did it. I trust that there's a better way now.

All of the fields with the windings on them came up to the varnish tank and attendant ovens on the second floor. I had noticed this process and the fellows working there when I had the assembly crew upstairs, but frankly was too busy to notice any particulars. But now I was offered the varnish tank and ovens on the graveyard shift. What a letdown after months of climbing up the ladder to a supervisory level. But, it is said, "any port in storm".

Inspecting the system itself offered no hint of the experiences to come. Messes and strong odors certainly were nothing new to a farm lad, but both of those you could easily eliminate by airing or washing. Dried varnish is in a league all of its own. It's very composition and purpose strangely indicates permanency.

The fields were brought up to the tank area in dollies and left. Your only defense from being totally covered with varnish was a long, rubber apron and rubber gloves. Before the actual dipping of the fields into the tank, there was a large cluster of heat lamps to be turned on that would warm, and then maintain the warmth, of the varnish in the tank. Then a three-foot square tray would be loaded with fields. This tray was then hoisted up and into the varnish tank with a block and tackle. It was impossible to keep varnish off from the hoist chains, so periodically they had to be wiped down with naphtha or lacquer thinner. These fields were then left in the tank for a period of time I have forgotten. Then it was hoisted out and the real fun would begin.

I should say before continuing that the oil necessary to produce all these parts from stock steel had to be removed before any of them were assembled. The applications of paint and varnish at later stages of the assembly process could only adhere if the oil were gone. All residuals, including oil, were removed by an acid process, or washing, that was done by one man, all shift

long. The process was termed "degreasing" and was interesting to me in that the acid used to remove the grease and oil had to itself be removed by two other washing processes before the parts were useable.

The baking process starts by opening a large oven and taking out a pipe about an inch in diameter and four feet long. Onto this pipe you load these fields that are dripping and running with warm varnish. When it is full, it is replaced into the oven. The process continues until all rods are full and placed into the oven. Inside this oven is a spool-like, rotation device somewhat like a big fishing reel. The rods are spaced far enough apart to keep them from touching. When the door is shut, a timer and temperature dial is set for the appropriate baking time and the oven is started.

The work was not as physically hard as other jobs I had done here, but it was hot and sticky and messy and miserable. Shirt sleeves and pant legs and shoes were permanently covered with varnish. After all of these years, it still isn't funny, and I can usually laugh at the past as much as anyone. There was simply nothing else to do but throw clothes away after a time. There was not money for more shoes, so I just wiped the wet stuff off as best as I could, and let the rest build up. There was an half inch of varnish on those shoes at the end of two weeks. My shoe toes were so bulbous that they could have easily passed off for clown's.

Into this experience came nightly commiseration to God! I complained and complained both to Him and my new, young wife, Deloris. I quit that job every night, sometimes more than once. You know what I mean by that. The only reason those "resignations" weren't acted upon was that we had bills to pay.

Remember that my graveyard shift had all been laid off. The day and swing shifts were still working. Since they only needed two shifts of varnishing, I was now working swing. How many times I pled with God to let me have a decent swing shift job, but the top people from the graveyard had already bumped others from days and swings so that there was little room for job changes. I really felt that the Lord had left me with a bit of a raw deal, UNTIL

I came to work this particular night and there was one lone car in that vast parking lot. All of the lights were out in the factory, and only one dim light burned over the entrance. The door was locked, so I rang the security bell and was about ready to leave when the door opened and the night watchman said, "Come on in, Lester. I've been looking for you. Mr. Zimmerman said that I should watch for you." Mr. Zimmerman was not only the Personnel Manager, but one of the owners.

In answer to my puzzled look, he said, "The Company lost a huge contract in Michigan today, and everyone is laid off but you and me. We're the only two employees of Universal Electric as of now."

I was understandably in a daze -- a happy one, notwithstanding. Why was I the only one to be working, and everyone else but the night-watchman laid off? From a strictly human standpoint, it could be said that it was because of my good work record and nobody else of all the foremen wanted that sticky, gooey job. But if you know the Lord as I have come to know Him, we know that there was another reason. God, in advance of the outcome, had moved one of His children to the varnish tank. He knew exactly when the layoff would come and what one job would remain.

Brother, you can be certain that I saw that varnish tank in a totally different light that night. Can such a messy sight be beautiful? I can assure you that it can. I sang and wept and thanked the Lord all night. I humbly asked the Lord for forgiveness for my complaining attitude. You can imagine how thankful I was to have a job. Nearly 160 other people had lost theirs that day without warning. No one could ever tell me that God had not specifically engineered that.

I worked there without missing a check until the Lord opened up a good job at Ent Air Force Base.

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Chapter 15 OF SHIRTS

What an unusual chapter heading. But God is interested in shirts. And He is interested in His children's needs, shirts or whatever.

In the telling of this story, I beg the reader's indulgence. My desire is that nothing I have to relate will appear self-serving or a complaint in any way. The fact is that when we started our lives together, and later our mutual ministry together, we had considerably less of this world's goods; than presently. We were not alone. Many were in the same position.

These were cotton days -- the days before the wonderful miracle cloths of dacron and polyester. Many of you my age and older easily recall the necessity of ironing every item of clothing that you had washed, usually the preceding day.

My mother used to wash the families clothes nearly all day Monday. Then she would iron the washed clothes for most of Tuesday. I just want to itemize the typical stages of a wash day for my younger friends.

The first chore was to heat the water, for there were no wonderful hot water heaters just sitting there in an insulated tank ready to use and piped to convenient faucets. Instant hot water is one of life's greatest blessings. Most people of my younger days had an oval-shaped copper or galvanized tub-like vessel with convenient handles on it that would hold eight or ten gallons for heating water on the wood cook stove.

Mother always did her washing in the kitchen close to the stove. As soon as the water was steaming hot, she panned it into the washing machine and then shaved bar soap into the agitating washer. We had electricity some of the time and none at other times. The first washing machine we had was gasoline powered and you started that noisy thing with a foot lever. You kept at this until all of the shavings were dissolved and then added bleach if you were only doing white clothes. In later years, that marvelous soap powder came along. What an improvement! Then you washed the separated clothing and when done, put them through the wringer into the first of two Number three wash tubs rinse water. The first rinse was clear water and the second had bluing in it. I think that this was a whitener. The rinsed wash was then rung dry and hung out on lines to dry. On the wet

days, there were drying clothes all over the house on clothes racks and chair backs and whatever else you could contrive to hang them over. I missed the step of starching, that had to be done before drying. Everything that you wanted to be stiff, such as collars shirt and blouse fronts and bands and facings, had to be dipped into this glutinous clabber with such wonderful aromas.

No good old days for me. Thank the Lord loudly and on the high-sounding cymbals for automatic washers and clothes dryers.

The day following washing day was for ironing. Many of you younger people who wear clothing with the wrinkled look have to be very understanding with your parents and grandparents. In these days of which I write, nobody but "no-good-lazy-bums" wore wrinkled clothing. You would no more wear wrinkled clothing than dirty ones. You ironed just about everything you washed, including pajamas (if you wore them), pillow-slips and sheets, men's boxer shorts and ladies slips along with dresses, skirts and blouses and shirts. If the wrinkled look had been in vogue forty years ago, housewives could have had a day a week off. Think of it and weep, ladies.

Ironing was a big chore, even if the user had "graduated" from "sad irons" to the electric ones. The very term "sad iron" should inform anyone about the nature of stove top ironing. The trick was to use them when they were not too hot and not too cold.

That is enough, I think, to give a younger generation a bit of an idea about differences between washing clothes today and what a tremendous job it was a generation ago. Before my time, housewives used a scrub board to do that job. I always wondered about the fabric life of garments when they were rubbed vigorously over the rough ridges of those old scrub boards.

When Deloris and I were married, I had one white, cotton shirt. How different from today when six or seven hang in my closet and at times there are new, unopened ones in a drawer some place. But at the time, having just one white shirt didn't seem all that restrictive.

Deloris occasionally commented about the convenience of having an additional white shirt, but never complained. Each Saturday she would faithfully wash, starch and iron my one white shirt so that it would be nice for Sunday's rigorous use. We would frequently be out of town filling a pulpit for a neighboring pastor and congregation. It was good experience for us.

You can imagine that such wear and washing and ironing took its toll on my one white shirt. Cotton is unquestionably a comfortable fabric, and has made its comeback in recent years, but the cotton of the forties and fifties didn't wear like the later polyesters.

Soon my white shirt had a split in the back. But not to worry. With my suit coat on, who would be the wiser? In due course a second split occurred, and a week or so later a third. We discussed the situation and decided that we were OK as long as the collar, cuffs and front held out. With Deloris' laundering expertise and my suit coat on, it looked nearly new.

I have no idea how long I wore that white shirt with three splits down the back to church and other "dress-up" places, but it really doesn't matter, and it couldn't have been too long considering its condition. What matters, and the entire reason for this writing is how many times

God has graciously cared for a need just in time. A primary reason for all of this story-telling is to testify to God's faithful timing.

Christmas was nearing and unknown to me Deloris' Mother had asked her what I needed for Christmas. She assured her that I could use a white shirt, and on Christmas day I had a new white shirt. It took no urging for us to unceremoniously discard the old, faithful white shirt.

Now hear a wonderful story of God's faithful timing.

The Sunday morning following Christmas our pastor, Reverend R. W. Wooten, was preaching about how God "tailor-made" our Christian experiences to fit our personal needs and temperaments. It was a major point of his message and he went into considerable detail about how we should walk in the light that God shed on our pathway and not try to shift that light onto another Christian's life and walk with God.

Without a moment's forewarning he said, "Now I'll illustrate to you what I mean. Brother Lester, and Brother Anatole, you two come up here". Both of us were preacher-boys, but there the similarity ended. Anatole Ferlet was French, dark-skinned, with coal-black eyes and hair and VERY small. He might have weighed 125 pounds soaking wet. In contrast, I weighed 185 pounds and wore a size 44 coat and had a 17 inch neck.

We dutifully walked upon the platform to where our pastor was standing before this 200 plus Sunday morning congregation.

Then he said, "Now you two boys trade suit jackets", which we did, or at least, tried to do. My jacket nearly hung down to Anatole's knees and covered his hands in the sleeves, and I couldn't even get his jacket on with Brother Wooten's help.

I don't have to explain to you the sudden relief that was immediately and quietly experienced by two worshippers that Sunday morning.' Nobody else had the slightest idea that if this had occurred the preceding Sunday, the entire congregation would have seen three slits down the back of my shirt. Worse than any embarrassment to Deloris and me would have been that of our dear, unsuspecting Pastor.

Does God care about discomforts and embarrassments? You can answer that.

Many years later we were pastoring a new, small congregation in Wenatchee, Washington. God had blessed our home with two beautiful daughters and a soon-to-be-born son.

Throughout my lifetime of pastoral ministry, God has allowed me the privilege of assisting many other pastors and their congregations in evangelistic services. I was scheduled to begin one of them at a neighboring community church shortly after taking up our pastoral duties in Wenatchee.

While making preparations for this week of travel and nightly meetings, Deloris observed that, "if I were careful", I could make my worn-out white shirts last through the meeting. I "was careful" and we made it, but it was obvious that they were worn out and would have to be

replaced very soon, though neither of us knew how. This is not written to engender sympathy, for neither of us felt deprived or distressed. I have a hard time with whiners of any variety, but preachers in particular, and especially about how poor they are.

My favorite preacher joke is about the one who was trying to invite sympathy for his financial plight and, maybe at the same time get a little "gift" from his listeners, by making the statement, "You know, I am just a poor preacher. ' One listener replied that he knew all about that for he had heard him preach. That is a knee-slapper.

I suppose the main reason I have trouble with that is because preachers are not the only folk who live on the lower end of the income scale. Many others do who are not preachers, and they do not have a built-in appeal arrangement. The only time Jesus referred to His financial needs was when others approached Him about working with Him, and He was trying to get them to see that following Him had no stipulated income guarantees.

So, any reference to finance shortage comes only to testify to God's provision for His servants as a necessary part of the story. It was just a fact that there was no money at that time for a shirt replacement shopping trip. We had no medical insurance of any kind those days, and so I was trying to pay for our third baby on \$35.00 a week from the church and a small supplemental wage from part-time school bus driving. I'll have quite a bit more to say later about this.

This is a brief deviation from the story of the shirts, but needs to be said to God's glory. Over all these nearly forty years of pastoring small churches, and never having been fully supported by them, we have never even been late with a payment of any kind, let alone miss any of them. It can be done. It depends upon how important our Christian testimony in a community is, I guess.

So, we were faced with some very old, very well-used white shirts for the preacher and no apparent way to get any for awhile, at least until the new baby was paid for.

What happened next would be considered strange and unusual by an unbelieving world's standards, but to us Christians, it proves once again both the care and timing of our God's interest in us.

One of the ladies of our congregation called my wife and asked her this question: "I don't want to be nosy, but does Pastor Boone need some white shirts?" If you want to call this a coincidence, you can, but we know that it was the Lord meeting a need.

Miss Cropley told Deloris that she had been wondering about my white shirts for some time and that the previous night she had dreamed about them. Her conclusion was that if she were dreaming about white shirts, it was high time to find about what was going on.

The two of them went down to an exclusive men's store and bought me three white shirts that wore like iron, were styled beautifully and were easy for Deloris to do up. I was in high shirt clover.

That one incident produced a special sensitivity in this dear lady's heart that has ministered to a long list of our personal needs over these many years. We, in turn, have been enabled to fill a few needs in her life of other natures. As I look back over the years with its many experiences of Divinely-met needs, it is easy to see the hand of God at work again and again. Sometimes it was so obvious that we could see it at the time and praise Him for His perfect love and timing. At other times it could only be seen in review.

Even down to this present time as reality dictates a consideration of concluding our professional ministry, God continues to meet specific material needs for us.

I have to admit occasional uneasiness over the lack of even minimal retirement income and a place to live when that time arrives. I wonder "why", when God has so appropriately provided for us in the past. Maybe He wants me write this material for my own encouragement as well as for others.

In the relating of the shirts story, I jumped ahead of the chronological order of things to group them. To get back on track, we need to go back to Bible college days and my janitoring at ENT Air Force Base.

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Chapter 16 FOREMAN'S JOB AT ENT

A good number of preacher-boys from Colorado Springs Bible College had worked, and were presently working, as night janitors at ENT Air Force Base. All of the Administrative offices were in Colorado Springs proper in those days (1950s), and the airfield was east of the city at Peterson Field.

This work was specialized only in that a few of the twenty-five civilian night janitors had to be cleared for Top Secret status as they worked in the "block house", its colloquial designation. The proper name was the Combat Operations Center, or in Air Force parlance, COC. I can tell you now what the block house was, and its function, for two reasons: (1) the cold war is over, and, (2) the Reader's Digest published an entire article some years ago about CONAD, or the Continental Air Defense Command. At the time we worked at CONAD however, we could not even discuss what we saw there with our wives.

Briefly put, CONAD was the nerve center of all combat operations for the entire United States. That meant that any national security operations occurring anywhere in the world was controlled from here and the White House, combined with SAC, or the Strategic Air Command in Nebraska.

It's impossible for people today, who didn't live through the aftermath of Hiroshima and the succeeding nuclear buildup of the superpowers, to realize how fearful the world was of global nuclear war. Thousands of Americans had personal bomb shelters erected in their basements and

yards. My personal attitude was that the Christian was in God's hand and, if it happened, we would all go to glory in a gargantuan bang. It's great peace to be in God's care.

You were thoroughly inspected by two APs (Air Policemen) before approaching a single entrance door that had one-way glass in it. Behind that door was another armed AP who was watching the initial search process occurring outside and kept his eye on you as you were admitted. Then you went through a second guarded door before entering the Combat Operations amphitheater.

It was eerily fascinating to see at one glance, the positions of airborne aircraft anywhere in the United States, whether hostile or friendly. An important aspect of our security training for work in the block house was that we were not to stare at the global plotting board. It was impossible not to look, and the security people knew that, but we were to do our work and leave.

In those days there were three or four WAFS (or Women In the Air Force) called "plotters" who were suspended on varying levels of scaffolding, physically adjusting the positions of all of these aircraft twenty-four hours a day around the clock. Today, it is computerized, according to the Reader's Digest article, and CONAD is buried deep into the bowels of Cheyenne Mountain instead of in a windowless block house.

Except for not getting much sleep, this night janitoring job was pleasant and very appropriate for daytime college students. The shift was from 5:00 p.m. until 1:30 am Mondays through Fridays, and the pay was better than average. We had all of the benefits of any other Civil Service job. The working conditions were inside and excellent and, as most of us preacher-boys were off from farms, we thought that it was a piece of cake compared to bucking bales, plowing, harvesting and irrigating.

The majority of this work was rather easy, but when it was time to strip and re wax thousands of feet of floor tile that, according to customary military fashion, must reflect your facial image for shininess, you stripped down and sweated. It was here that the hard, farm work paid off handsomely for us preacher-boys, and it surfaced noticeably when job performance ratings and promotions came. There were three crews of janitors, and therefore three supervisors over them called "pushers". These supervisors were actually working foremen and were expected to work with their crews for roughly half of each night shift, and then spend the last half going through the cleaned buildings making sure that all work was done satisfactorily, all safes secured and all lights turned out.

It was impressive to all of us that the last six or seven promotions to these three night supervisory positions had gone to Bible College boys. Their work records, attitudes, dependability and initiative was superior. I came to feel like I was privileged to work with the likes of Daniel and the three Hebrew Children on the ENT janitorial crews.

There was an inherent result of preacher-boys being foremen, however, and that was they didn't last too long. As soon as they graduated, they left Colorado Springs for pastorates, so there were periodic openings.

After working at the Air Base for six months or so, there was to be one of these foreman openings because one of the foremen was taking a pastorate. It soon became obvious because of time on the job, hard work habits and leadership material that the selection process had narrowed to another man named Pete and me.

Pete was a hard worker. He was undeniably a leader and was well-liked by all of us, but I had him edged somewhat on seniority. Everybody knew that, and they also knew that we were equal in the other areas, except that Pete was a veteran. The talk was that I should be the one who was promoted.

As I thought about this possibility and talked it over much with both the Lord and Deloris, any truthful reason for even wanting the promotion was that there were sometimes an hour or two at the close of a shift when the foremen had some free time. This was traditionally a time for coffee-drinking, shop-talking and problem-solving OR for working college students to have some precious study time. I was taking both theology and Greek classes at this time and really needed that extra study time.

I can well remember the prayer session when I was able to place the entire matter into the Lord's hands and there came a deep peace as the result. I wonder why we customarily assume that the result will be what we sort of wanted when that special peace comes? I don't know, but we usually do.

A few days before the promotion was to be announced, strange things began to happen. All conversation about the upcoming announcement that had previously been freely discussed around me, suddenly dried up whenever I came into the scene. The three present foremen, who not only were Bible College boys, but who would, with the day supervisor, make the selection for the promotion, began sheepishly avoiding me. I didn't know what these signs meant, of course, but I had the ominous perception that it didn't bode well for me and a promotion and a raise and some free study time.

By routine, all three janitorial crews gathered in the day foreman's office about fifteen or twenty minutes before 5:00 p.m.. This gave Mr. Kneebone, a Cherokee Native American and, while not a Christian, a very fair, intelligent, and fine man, an opportunity to explain the work plans for the night. It was also a time to ask and answer questions relating to personnel problems, civil service matters or administrative details.

The day before the promotion announcement was to be made, the senior pusher, who was not only a Bible College student, but a close, personal friend, said that he had to talk to me. Because of our close relationship, Dick had been selected to bring me the bad news that Pete had been selected over me for the promotion. It was one of those times in my life when I felt as sorry for the person bearing the bad news as for the one getting it. It was obvious that he was both embarrassed and sheepish, and I was soon to discover why.

The main reason that I had been passed over in Pete's favor was because I was a college student. Their reasoning was that since the last six or seven foremen promoted had all been from

the Bible College, and that there had been some negative comments from some of the crew about it, that this was the time to promote one of the crew who wasn't.

I was both understandably disappointed and perplexed. I could, of course, see the reasoning. What I couldn't see was, "Why this time?" Why didn't they follow this line of reasoning the time before, or the one before that when the present foremen were being selected?

The Lord knew my heart and had certainly seen my motive for wanting the promotion. Prestige has never affected me much, and a ten or fifteen-cent an hour raise wasn't going to make a rich man out of me. What I wanted out of this was that precious hour or two of study time.

So, here was the death knell to extra study time, and I was devastated, but never said a word about my feelings at that time, about unfair treatment to Dick or anyone else. When I was alone with the sweeping and trashing, however, I cried out my heart to my wonderful Lord and He didn't say anything, but I knew that He understood and **GAVE ME THE MOST WONDERFUL PEACE IN MY SOUL**. By dinner time, most of the pain and disappointment was truly gone and I could enter into the usual conversation in the usual good-natured way. Everybody knew that I was being passed over and why, but nothing was said, and everyone mercifully left me alone for the rest of the shift.

I have to admit that the hurt and disappointment came rushing back the next day as I attended classes with the guys who I felt had let me down, and I struggled with my feelings towards them. Every time I could find a time alone, I would pour out my heart to the Lord and He would give the needed lift. This has been the pattern of my entire Christian life -- talk to God, not to people. I have never once come to any resolution in a matter from conversation with other fellow Christians, and that includes family members. But many times I have found complete, inner peace in matters that had me confused and upset, by hearing God's voice saying to my troubled heart, "Everything is OK." Grammarians may object to my suggestion that God says, "OK". All I know is that He has calmed the troubled seas of my soul many times with His inimitable "OK", and when God says it's OK, it's OK!!! Praise the Lord!!!

Classes concluded and it was soon time to go to work and face the embarrassment and the inevitable. In all of this I wasn't tempted to feel ouchy towards Pete, who was destined to get the nod this evening for the promotion. My own feelings were in neutral, as I recall. The time of quiet, lonely weeping was over. What was could not be changed, so it was time to carry on, especially in the presence of my buddies and the other janitors. I had a good job and enjoyed the work and my college tuition was getting paid and I was pulling down C's in Greek. I never personally knew any get A's in Greek while carrying a full college load and working forty hours a week. Most students didn't get A's in Greek if they weren't working at all.

When I walked into the office that late afternoon, a strange, embarrassed silence dominated the atmosphere. This is one of those "spots in my life" that will never be forgotten. Nobody said anything for a few, strained seconds. Then Mr. Kneebone said, "Sit down, Lester, We've been waiting for you."

At that precise moment, it occurred to me that Pete, who everybody knew had the promotion "in the bag", was strangely absent from the group. No Pete. Mr. Kneebone raised his head from where he had been staring at his desk, and my three Bible college buddies were all trying to find something to do with their hands and act normal. It didn't take long to discover the reason for all of the strange behavior.

That very day, the OSI (Office of Special Investigation- the Air Force's FBI) had picked Pete up at his home and placed him under arrest. Pete wasn't going to become a foreman. Pete wasn't even in the employ of the United States Civil Service anymore.

Working for Uncle Sam in any capacity requires good references and qualifications. If your work requires a security clearance, especially a "Top Secret" one, you are investigated with a "fine-toothed" comb. Investigators leave no stone unturned in their quest for a discovery of a potential security risk. I found out from my parents and hometown friends that there were OSI people nosing into my personal, and my family, conduct, past and present, all over my home town and community 1300 miles from Colorado Springs. I passed and he didn't.

On his Civil Service application some month's previous, he had truthfully stated that he had been honorably discharged from the Marine Corps. What he failed to record was that he had a dishonorable discharge from the Army Airborne during the Second World War.

Now I ask you. Do you think that it was a mere coincidence that the OSI caught up with him on the very day he was to receive a promotion? I am not even casually suggesting that the sincere request of a preacher-boy for more study time brought about Pete's capture and imprisonment. They would have caught him sooner or later regardless. It's the timing that impressed me then and continues to do so today. It's the will of God being accomplished rather than the will of men that's impressive. It's that God was working though we couldn't see that is impressive. It's how God can take a lost cause and turn it around completely that is wonderful to behold.

So, this night, Lester went to work a broom-pusher and came home at the end of the shift a supervisor. That was special to see what God can do if we will be faithful and pliable and don't get out of sorts with God and man.

I guess that I was an acceptable boss -- at least I received good annual service reviews and didn't get fired or replaced. Nearly all of the men I worked were older than I, and they all knew their jobs, so I just let them go to work and didn't try to tell anyone what to do. Though young, I had had a number of foreman positions before this and had come to some conclusions about bosses and "bossing". It was really very simple. I always tried to treat people working under my authority just like I would want a boss to treat me. In a very few days, however, something happened that had a profound effect on me, both because of how well it worked out, and the wonderful principle I learned about the delegation of authority.

As previously mentioned, all of the men on my crew were experienced janitors, were older than I, and knew their jobs. Two of the men had been janitors here for nearly as many years as my age, and both of them old enough to be my father. One was an old, slow-paced, chunky, friendly black man, named Roby, who was as dependable as a sidewalk. He only had one gear, but you

could count on the same acceptable work out of him forty hours a week, fifty weeks a year. The other was a tall, lanky, dark-eyed, quiet Mexican man, named Rube, who was inclined to race through his work for the first part of the night and coast and smoke for the remainder. I had no particular problem with Rube's way. He did good work and always finished it on time.

All I told these two guys was that they had been there before me and that they knew their jobs better than I did and to carry on. But there were occasions when all of us had to hump when there was (1) construction maintenance, (2) office changes or rearranging, or (3) scrubbing. None of us was crazy about scrubbing, that is, the stripping of old floor wax and application of new, but it was part of the job and we all had to take our turns on the scrub crew.

After a week or two in the new position I asked Rube to be on the scrub crew this particular night. He didn't say anything, but I could see the dislike and anger in his eyes and mouth. He scrubbed that night, but from that time he began doing shoddy work: leaving trash baskets unemptied; ashtrays undumped and cleaned out; and trailings from his broom. I knew that it was an attempt to both make me mad and look bad. I chose to ignore it, thinking that he would get over his anger and start shaping up, but it was not to be.

Obviously, I would have to have this out with him. I felt that maybe he was testing the "new boss", but wasn't sure. Quiet people throw me a curve on the understanding matter. The next night as I checked the men's work, sure enough, here were the same sloppy signs in Rube's assigned areas. I approached him about it and asked him why he had been doing such poor work since I had assigned him to the scrub crew the one night? He became verbally abusive and told me that he would see Nick (Mr. Kneebone) about it.

When I came to work the following night, all three crews, including mine, were gathered in Mr. Kneebone's office. It was obvious that he was in a very sour mood, which was uncharacteristic. When we were all in and seated, he stated that there had been a disagreement between Rube and me, and went on to say that these kinds of disagreements was not good for crew morale and that it made him very unhappy. While he was making these statements, I could see the redness rising from his white shirt collar and my mind was racing at what I had said to Rube and that he was an old, trusted employee and I was the new, very green boss. I recalled the fact that I was not even the first choice for the position, and Rube might have been one of the crew opposed to another preacher-boy foreman. All of these thoughts and more crescendoed in my mind until the redness in Mr. Kneebone's neck filled the horizons of his face. I just knew that I was a goner.

Just then Mr. Kneebone stated angrily and vigorously, "This is how it works here for all of you! Rube, if Boone tells you to kick a window out, you kick it out, and then he'll answer to me about the brdken window!"

In that brief, angry outburst, I learned a bucketful about the delegation of authority. When you give someone a job to do, let them do it and keep your nose out. And when they make decisions, back them up to their subordinates and have them answer to you about the outcome.

I promise you that I have had precious few superiors in or out of the church, back me up to the degree that Nick Kneebone did. It comes as no surprise that He rose to much higher positions in

government. He was, of course right about backing up his foremen, and you can be sure that his three foreman were loyal devotees. Though not a Christian, I would have followed that man anywhere. He was wise and trustworthy.

True delegation of authority requires a relinquishment of authority in that specific area. It also involves a trust of the person receiving that authority.

I left that excellent, fulfilling job to begin pastoring, and carried away fond memories of hard work, challenge, loads of fun, and yes, a few tears.

Yes, loads of fun! Since a few readers might have some interest in a smile or two, I am going to take the time here to bring some to you. These next few pages are going to relate to a part of a person's anatomy that is not widely discussed or explored. It is mysterious in that it has never been observed or discovered throughout millions of surgical operations on the human body. Nobody denies its existence, and it is very large in some persons while almost non-existent in others. Most people have one and, though sometimes it is uncontrollable and causes trouble for its host, it usually is agreeable and functions wonderfully and effectively.

I speak of our funny bone, and want to tell you a little bit about how mine became powerfully active while working at ENT Air Force Base. Sometimes this activity functioned in tandem with the funny bones of others with whom I worked at the Base, but I am not responsible for theirs.

Maybe I could say that I am not even responsible for my own funny bone, since we can transfer our guilt these days to our folks. Perhaps they are actually to blame for the strange goings-on in the wee hours of the night and morning at ENT Air Force Base.

My crew's assigned building was called P1, or Permanent Building number 1, as contrasted to the other two buildings termed T2 and T3, or Temporary. P1 housed the staffs and offices of four General Officers: a one-star General known as a "brig"; a two-star General called a Lieutenant General; a three-star General known as a Major General; and a four-star General with the rank of a Full General. Our full general was the commander of CONAD, or as mentioned previously, stood for Continental Air Defense Command. Each of these generals had the administrative responsibility of an aspect of CONAD, such as Operations, Personnel, Security and so forth. It was rumored that there was more brass at ENT than at any other military installation but at the Pentagon. I don't need to tell you that these officers and their respective staffs were bowed and scraped to and they expected it and they received it. Many bases had no general officers at all, and CONAD had four. For instance, our base commander, that is ENT Air Force Base as contrasted to CONAD, which were on the same base, but distinct military operations, was a full colonel, one grade below a Brigadier General.

It is enough to say that our four-star general, General Benjamin Chidlaw, was the top dog of all Air Force dogs, excluding the General of the Air Force. He was THE man, and I was privileged to clean his office as a lowly janitor, and later make certain that it was cared for as a janitorial overseer.

It was exhilarating to stand in this man's huge, ornate, power-embellished office four stories high (some said five with the basement) and view all of nighttime Colorado Springs in all four directions. No one else was there at that time of the night, and you could smell the rich leather upholstery and bask in the power and affluence represented there and dream the dreams of the young and the idealistic!

One of my predecessors was there one night and no one was on the entire floor as far as he knew. All had gone home for the night. He wondered what it would be like to sit at General Chidlaw's big walnut desk. The one as big as a dining room table covered completely with polished glass, and had his name with four stars etched on a walnut and bronze name plate.

This preacher-boy was to spend the most of his life and ministry in Africa as a missionary in a time to come soon, but for right now!. well... who would know? Who would see?

So, he takes off his grubby work shoes and sits them on rich, deep, plush Air Force blue carpet, and sits down easily in this huge, leather executive chair and hauls his sock feet up onto General Chidlaw's shiny glass-topped desk. With his hands clasped behind his head and tipped away back, deep into this chair of pomp and power, the General comes in alone for some late night work. No aides, no APs, no secretary, nobody but THE man.

People have been canned or busted for much less than this. The General says, "Hi. How's it going tonight?", while he is taking off his four-star coat. My friend made a sick, croaking noise of response and retreated in his stocking feet. Nothing ever came from the General's office, but you can be sure that the janitors never let the preacher-to-be forget it. I heard that nobody else was fool enough to try out the General's chair for awhile.

I was checking his room one night after the janitor assigned had cleaned it, and saw a wonderful sight! General Chidlaw's uniform coat was on the coat tree. He always wore his coat out of the office, but here it was.

At midnight, who would know? Boy, I put on that coat with ribbons all over the chest, and wings and medals and four stars on each shoulder. Then I had to go to the mirror and took a look. I could see my head and that was about all. The General's coat nearly hung to my knees and completely covered my hands. General Chidlaw was a BIG man in more ways than one. And, no, he didn't come into work late that night.

A fun thing that popped in my mind happened when Dick, another foreman, and I were checking our buildings together one night. We did this at times to forestall loneliness. We would go down a hallway and split the sides, thereby halving the time. By doing this, we could complete our room and office inspections in the same time, first his building and then mine (or visa versa) with companionship.

It wasn't unusual for office people, civilian and military, to work late hours to get a pressing matter cared for. Our janitors would just quietly work around them, and we would write this up in our nightly report so that the next day's incoming personnel wouldn't think the office were

uncleaned. More often than not, these late night workers were typists, and the most of them were women.

So one night Dick and I were walking side by side down this long hall in his building (these halls were 150 to 200 feet long with offices on each side), and way down on the other end a shapely clerk came out into the hall and was walking away from us. I gave her a low, but audible, wolf whistle and quickly jumped into an office doorway and collapsed with side-holding enjoyment.

You see, timing is everything in a delicate operation like this. First, I unobtrusively picked up the pace of our walking and he unwittingly matched it and took the bait. Then I had it timed so that by the time Dick realized what was happening, a succeeding step would have moved him away from any escape into another doorway. There he stood alone taking the heat and grinning like a kid in the cookie jar. First he wanted to beat me senseless, but more than that wanted to know how I had arranged it so that he could pull it on some other unsuspecting clod. Some people have no imagination, do they?

Old Dick never said any more about it, but he could never hide a thing. I could see by his eyes and scheming smile that he was just waiting for an opportune time to pay me back. But I never walked with him after that without scoping the halls and doorways. And try it he did a week or so later, but I was safely in "my" door even before he was, and there we stood grinning foolishly at each other out of our respective doorways while some chick stared down a long, empty hall.

When we were scrubbing off old wax, scouring rings were placed on the big, eighteen inch buffers we used. Hot water laced with very potent stripper was liberally sloshed all over the floor area to be scrubbed and, after soaking awhile, was scoured off with the big buffers. Someone before my time had discovered that the job was more quickly done if weight were placed on the buffers. Then someone else found that another person could actually sit on the buffer motor and hang on to the handle. This really worked well for both wax buffing or scrubbing old wax off. It worked so well, in fact, that the supervisors encouraged buffer riding. You could really make those tile floors shine by this method. Obviously, the riding was more desirable than handling the buffer, but we all traded off with no problems that I can remember.

One night we were scrubbing in an office, and Pete, the other man who would be up for the later, upcoming promotion, was riding the buffer I was scrubbing with. Without warning, he reached over in an effort to lift up a cord, and when he shifted his weight without letting me know in advance, that big buffer stood on its side quicker than cracky. The buffer and I went one way, and Pete went into that soapy slop. Besides swallowing his snoose, he polluted the air with copious obscenities. I think that he would have thumped me if he had not caused it.

Mark it down, nobody laughed.. THEN. Pete was a big, barrel-chested ox who was generally lots of fun to work with, but dangerously mean when he was mad or drinking. But I promise you that it was hilarious looking at his wet soapy knees and bottom.

I taught Pete how to run a buffer when he came to ENT. It was uproarious to the maximum. A child could run those big buffers if he knew how. Properly handled, they actually ran

themselves. If you didn't know how, they were like a wild steer to handle. I've watched them throw men to the floor. I've seen them spin grown men off balance. I saw one get completely away from a new man, go spinning out of control and smack a big hole into the sheet-rock wall.

Some of you bleeding hearts want to know why we didn't just SHOW the new guys how to run them? And miss all of the fun? No way! Not only that, you wouldn't want to show partiality in the service of Uncle Sam. Nobody showed us. They don't tolerate partiality in the military, and we were all men of impeccable honor -- especially us preacher-boys -- especially me!

So it was time to "show" Pete how to buff. Here stands this big, powerful, burly-chested, tattooed ex-marine behind this machine that he could have picked up with considerable effort. "How do you run it", he asks. I truthfully told him, "Just get a good grip on the handles and squeeze the switch". I really emphasized the "good grip on the handles" instruction, and embellished it with an appropriate grimace.

Now Pete had watched the rest of us handle these buffers with casual ease, effortlessly moving the buffer with one hand while keeping the cord out of the way with the other. A piece of cake, right? So, he approaches this machine with a confident, relaxed expression in his eyes and face. And he is as stupid as all of his onlooking predecessors, for all of the pushers are there, as well as every janitor who can reasonably "have" to be on first floor, P1. That's where we broke all of the new men in on the buffers, so that as many as possible could witness the "initiation rite".

He is "as" stupid as the rest of us had been because he tried to move the buffer from side to side, as it appears to operate watching others move the machine. It is one of life's contradictions: the buffer itself moves from side to side, but the operator moves the handle up and down. There's no doubt about it, a big floor buffer makes a monkey out of everyone who learns how to run one.

You would have rolled up on the floor in a fit of uncontrolled spasms of mirth to have watched Pete do battle with his floor buffer. He never spoke a word, but his facial expressions and enlarged veins were saying, "You WILL go where I want you to go", and all of the time it was going in the direction its rotation dictated.

He'd stop it and plant his powerful legs and get a mighty grip on those handles and squeeze the trigger again, straining every muscle and with beads of perspiration standing out of his forehead. And that beast would move inexorably in the direction Pete didn't want it to go.

On the third heroic try -- not HIS heroism, our heroic efforts to refrain laughter -- we all let it go and caved in to cackling and roaring, and Pete knew that he had been had. Don't worry, Pete also had his fun with new men later.

Then there was some "funning" that wasn't too smart, but one aspect of it needs the appreciation of you "humor gourmets". On two or three occasions, we foremen became involved in some water fights. You must realize that I was a victim, and not a perpetrator. I was a mature twenty by then and above such childish behavior, but you have to protect your honor, and then, too, I didn't want the other, older guys to feel guilty.

Sitting at both ends of the basement hall where the janitorial offices were, rested water-type fire extinguishers. The pump on these units would shoot water clear down the hall, or nearly so. That's fun in anyone's language! My guess is that 99% of men would try it if no one were looking, and about 95% of the women. It's wonderfully tempting, especially if a person is bent over down that hall. These fire extinguishers were regularly refilled, but not from fighting fires. After all, it IS important to know how the things operate. Drills are necessary. Yes. Yes.

I don't know who started these late night water fights, but once started, they quickly accelerated. Emptying the extinguishers didn't stop the battle. Every crucible or container was employed, and when the "war" was over, the hall, some fifty or sixty feet of it, was covered with water and the wax was already turning white. So three bosses had to break out the scrubbing equipment and sweat quite a little bit to get that hall in order for the next day. There was no studying that night.

The next time it happened, the weaponry was bigger, more plenteous (that is, borrowed from other building), and the battle zone grew to include the elevator.

This occurred as one guy was getting the worst of it and was retreating down the hall towards the elevator. Too late to stop him, he shut the door and stood inside, laughing it up. I ran around to the elevator shaft and stuck a hose into the elevator vent and poured it to him while the other guy deactivated the elevator controls.

I was having the time of my life until this hapless, trapped goose crawled under the protective tarp we hung on the elevator walls. I simply stuck the hose nozzle through one of the top apertures and behind the tarp and poured it on him again. He was suffering like a drowned rat and reacted just like one. Before I could move, he grabbed a mop bucket half filled with wax -- wax, mind you -- and threw its entire contents in the direction of his tormentor. Hey. He waxed me in the strictest sense of the word.

Some of you know what the consistency of floor wax is by having had some on your hands in the past. Imagine having it in your face, hair, arms and upper body! Wax is designed to adhere, and dry quickly AND endure. Especially industrial strength wax. Since I couldn't change shirts, I worked the balance of the shift in a shiny, foul-smelling straight jacket.

Then we had the basement floor AND the elevator to clean that night.

Referring to the elevator elicits gales of laughter, even now these forty years later. We foremen knew how to short circuit the elevator controls which deactivated those in the elevator control panel. We'd get a new man on the elevator and he would start his upward run to whatever floor he had been assigned. Once it was moving, we'd lock it into the "up" position. Locked in like this, even when the control handle in the elevator panel was moved to the "off" position, that beast kept right on going. It's exactly the same impression one experiences when stepping on a brake pedal and there are no brakes.

When this was pulled on me, I thought that I was going to ride that thing right through the roof of P1. I could envision that elevator cage with me in it going into a wild plummet five stories

below. I don't remember what my particular emotions were, whether I said anything or not, but I do remember that the rides I gave to other new men were embellished with curses, prayers, yellings and shoutings, bangings on the walls, or a combination of some or all of them, and some garments might have needed attention.

There existed a wonderful camaraderie between the most of the janitors on the ENT Air Force Base crews. I easily recall these days as some of the happiest of my life.

Away from the lighter side, my goal as a Christian was to find the opportunity to speak to every man on my crew about his relationship to the Lord before leaving there for a pastorate. I prayed for them on a regular basis and asked the Lord to open the doors. I had learned from experience that witnessing to people about Christ and their souls is nearly always misfires if it is not led by the Holy Spirit.

On this job, and on many others since that time, the Lord was so good to answer my prayers in this behalf. I can still remember sitting on the front steps of P1 one beautiful spring evening during break time, when the last man to whom I had not witnessed was smoking and chatting with me. I had been praying for so long for this opportunity, and Willie seemed anything but interested in anything to do with God or His people.

As only the Lord can do, He opened up the door so naturally and wonderfully, and it was THE time to talk to Willie about his soul. I often have wondered what happened to Willie, but at least the seed was planted, and one more person had come face to face with his eternal needs and Jesus' remedy.

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Chapter 17 PAYING FOR BABIES

As previously mentioned, we had no medical insurance of any kind until our three children were in the upper grades of school. This meant that all medical expenses had to be paid in the traditional way -- out of pocket. This seems very risky today, but there were many families who were in the same shape as we were in this.

Without full support from our dear lay people, who I need to quickly add, generally did the best that they could in the way of pastoral support, it was necessary for me to supplement the church salaries with outside work. I want to make a brief statement or two about pastors supplementing inadequate salaries, and then allude to it no more.

First of all, let me say that I would have been immensely pleased to have been able to give all of my time and energy to the pastoral work. Any outside work that I have done has been of necessity and has only been enough to meet the present needs of my family. I have truly tried to be conscientious in this and have done no more than necessary. I realize that it could be said that if a congregation can't support a minister, then it has no right to exist. My attitude has been that all churches need pastors, and small congregations have as much right to excellent pastors and

pastoring as larger, more affluent ones. Who's to say that the Lord automatically wants the best pastors in the largest congregations?

The second observation that I make about pastor's working outside of the pastoral ministry is debatable by today's standards, but it is how the Lord has led me. I have believed that it was my responsibility to take care of my wife and family, and not Deloris' A mother's job is a full-time one, and much more most of the time, so she has never worked outside of the home except for occasional times when there were little odd jobs that she has expertise in and could do on a willy-nilly basis. And then, we have never counted on those infrequent and little sources of income as applicable to family expenses. That has been hers to spend as she would.

On a related matter, I recognized early on in our parenting that she needed my help in the disciplining and training and care-giving of our children. Parenting is a big, full-time job for both parents and it takes a lot of pulling and working together to make it work. I felt that I should take as much pressure off from her as possible. She, in turn, was sensitive to my pastoral demands and responsibilities and made adjustments for the much needed private study and prayer time.

Regardless of how in-control some parents might appear to onlookers, parenting is often hectically out of control, and you just do your best and hang on and hope for a miracle. We were no different.

I recall weeks of incapacity when Deloris miscarried a baby and could do absolutely nothing about the house. Everyone who knows of her truly impeccable housekeeping habits would know how hard on her this period was. On my part, since we had just one two-year-old at the time, that wasn't too bad. A husband can do a lot of things when it is necessary. The only major problem that I encountered was ironing the ruffles on Trella's beautiful dresses that Deloris has so carefully crafted. I never did get the hang of it, even with Deloris' repeated advice. Perma-pressed fabrics really rescued us men on that deal. On the ironing, my specialty is handkerchiefs and pillow slips.

It wasn't uncommon in those days of Deloris' illness for Trella to come quietly into the bedroom where I was kneeling in prayer. Her mother had strictly cautioned her to not disturb Daddy as he prays to God. How can an adult explain a child's thinking? Apparently her understanding of "not disturbing me" was not talking to me or asking questions. That would be a major sacrifice for Trella on two levels: both not talking and not asking questions. So, she would quietly open the bedroom door and enter and sit down carefully on my bent legs as I talked to God. As long as it seemed natural and OK to her, it seemed that way to me also, so we prayer together. Can you imagine that? A two-year-old just sitting there, doing nothing, saying nothing but listening to her father talk to God? I could wish for that kind of heritage and experience for each two-year-old.

Now whenever grandchildren want to go with Grandpa over to the church and pray, I take them with me, and we pray together as I did a generation back. Sure, it's different, but I can assure you that if there is any discomfort, it is more likely to be on our part than the little ones. Jesus held them lovingly upon His knees because there was a kindred spirit between them. There are times when I must stop praying and take them to their mothers, but nothing is ever lost. Be sure of that. Children need to see adults in prayer.

This chapter is about paying for the birth of our three babies, however. Deloris was into her sixth month of pregnancy with our first baby when we moved from Bible-College to our first pastorate in Weippe, Idaho. (That is pronounced WEE'-IP.) There wasn't much time to prepare for the doctor and hospital costs of the upcoming birth.

Something needs to be said here about my "doctor philosophy". Early on I became sensitive to the prevailing social view of preachers in general by listening to them (people around me) and also to the attitudes of church people, and later, of those of the unchurched community. It all boiled down to a rather dismal profile of preachers, which was a "poor-me" person with his hand out. The beggar image somehow didn't fit my image of a man of God. And it bothered me to discover that preachers in general were considered poor credit risks and poor payers.

So, together we determined, that, by God's help, we would maintain a good credit record and distance ourselves from any image of begging or wanting something for nothing. Even in the early days of our ministry, when our physical and material needs were great at times, I couldn't reconcile the almighty aspect of God with a "poor-me", beggar attitude from His servants.

Accordingly, my plan was to have our babies paid for by the time of the birth. Compared to today's practices of paying for medical services months and years later, our goals might have seemed considerably presumptive, but I felt impressed while praying about this that God was pleased with such a purpose. The succeeding testimonies will verify that the Lord was indeed instrumental in placing this goal upon my mind and heart. The nearer that the time came for Trella's birth, the more that I laid the matter of the hospital bill before the Lord. (The Lord brought us to a fine Seventh Day Adventist doctor, Walter Sibley of Clarkston, Washington, who donated his obstetrical services gratis to full-time ministers.) As the church at Weippe had a revival meeting scheduled before our arrival in town and that necessitated the entertainment of the evangelist, there was little time for me to look for and engage in work outside of the church.

About a month before Trella's date of arrival, one of the men of the church who had a lumber mill (of the Hutchin's Brothers Sawmill) and also at that time a logging crew with which to supply the mill, ask me if I could drive a truck, and I assured him that I could. He said that they had a truck driver quit and that it would only be a week or two of work until the fall rains set in forcing the loggers out of the woods.

Two weeks of hauling logs is exactly what I needed to pay the hospital bill and a little left over after the tithe was taken out. I never had any more work all of that year. Nobody could convince me of anything else but that our God had arranged for two weeks of log truck driving just before the birth of our first baby. Then, as now, very high wages are received in the logging industry because it is seasonal, hard work with long hours and very dangerous comparatively.

When we knew that a second baby was to join our little family while we were busily pastoring a small congregation in Grandview, Washington, I started immediate payments to the doctor and hospital. There were seven months or so until the birth, so we put every spare five or ten dollars on them. In the final month, two weeks to be exact, we were still \$100.00 from having it all paid. That was the equivalent to an entire month's salary from our small church, and I had

picked up all of the odd jobs that I could find. So, we were praying much about the whereabouts of this final \$100.00 still needed to pay for our new baby -- not after the birth, but before or at the time of. It needs to be said here that not another person knew of our needs in this, even my parents who lived an hour's drive away. If you are trusting God for a need you generally don't advertise it. Sometimes the Lord might open the door to share it with someone else, but generally not.

The District Conference had elected me to the office of District Secretary a year or two previously, and for whatever reason, there had been considerable activity in the buying and selling of the district's real properties. I learned many fast, and valuable, lessons about the myriad legalities of property transactions during those years of selling old properties and buying new ones.

We had been working with a Free Methodist businessman on their purchase of one of our old churches. He wanted to see a church of his denomination started in this community, but the denomination were already over-committed in their new church planting and couldn't help at that time. So, this insurance man and his father were willing to negotiate personally for the property until the denomination could handle it. Accordingly, he and I had met on several occasions, both at his office and at our parsonage, to care for the various transactions.

We were to meet at our home for this particular evening appointment, and Deloris, who was obviously near to delivery, had baked something special and served it with coffee while we discussed and worked out business details of this contract. Our official work was over and he arose to leave, shaking hands and making small talk. He was at the opened door and reached into his shirt pocket and brought out a folded check. He laid it on the top of the front room oil heater (which wasn't burning then) while saying, "Now we haven't been attending church services for awhile because of trying to get this new church going, and I felt that the Lord would have me leave this tithe with you. This is for you personally, and not for the church."

We were nearly speechless, but thanked him as best as we could. He continued to chat a bit in the effort to relieve us of our obvious surprise and discomfort, and reopened the door to leave. His parting words were, "Now, remember, this is for your personal use, and not the church." I have to tell you the exact reason why the Lord put those words into our Brother's mind.

From the time of my conversion, God placed a specific claim for conscientiousness upon my life. It has not been burdensome or even unusual to me. Whatever has been important to God relative to fairness in conduct and treatment to others, in and out of the church, has been important to me. Taking an advantage of another person for my own personal gain or gratification was established by the Lord as wrong for me.

This is not written to reveal any personal virtue. It IS set down to witness that God talks to us about these things and wants His likeness of fair, selfless treatment to be living and operating in us, His children.

In the light of this, I determined long before beginning to pastor that anything given to us not specifically designated for our personal use would go into the church treasury. It was a settled

pattern of conduct, and we live by that same rule to this day. If there is any question, it is best for us to place it into the church and thereby keep old Satan and his accusations off from us.

Both Deloris and I were nearly afraid to open this folded check and look at it, but when we saw that it was for \$100.00, we were beside ourselves. It not only represented an amount equal to an entire month's church salary, but it was the exact amount needed to pay for our new baby. This was the first time that God met a significant need with a large amount of cash. (Large to us, anyway).

I need to back up a couple of years and relate how God had helped my developing faith to work in a specific situation. We had just moved to Grandview and went from the princely sum of forty dollars a week at the preceding charge to the princier sum of \$25.00 weekly. Please know that we are not complaining now and didn't then. We were where God had directed us and were immensely happy.

Regardless, the cut in pay was significant and was felt almost immediately. It looked certain that the school district would hire me as a part-time school bus driver (and did), but there would be no check until the end of September. So, from mid-July until October the first we would have to make do on \$25.00 a week and lots of fresh fruit and produce.

I need to digress long enough to sing the praises of the beautiful, bountiful Yakima Valley. Anyone who goes hungry there is lazy or incapacitated. To this day, if you ask around where to go, and with permission, you can glean after the harvesting and pick up the windfalls (fruit fallen from the trees).

Deloris canned fruit like there wasn't any tomorrow and filled any jar that anyone else didn't want. We ate fruit that she canned there for years after we moved from the area and to another church. What a wonderful, verdant valley!

We scratched our heads when they weren't itching a good number of times trying to make \$25.00 a week stretch for a car payment and food. For us, it didn't matter, but our baby had to have formula. So, we sold some little-used items to a second-hand store and bought Similac with the money. It just never occurred to either of us to let our folks or the church people know how strapped we were. When you leave home and go on your own and marry, it is your canoe and you paddle it.

The low point during that time came when Trella had to have some shoes and there was just no extra money to buy them, and after a look around, there seemed to be nothing else that we could reasonably sell. I told Deloris that I had no idea where to come up with the five dollars necessary to buy our baby girl some shoes and that we would just have to charge them at Sears. We neither one believed in what is now called "deficit spending", which is simply living in credit, nor did we want to place shoes on a charge account, but there seemed to be no other way.

As we had to drive to Pasco, Washington to shop at a Sears store, I had plenty of time to pray about it, and did. I can never forget what God said to me as I cried out our need to Him about our plan to charge a pair of \$5.00 shoes. He simply said to my heart, "If you can trust Sears and

Roebuck, why can't you trust Me?" I still get chills as I write these lines thirty-five year's later. What a gentle rebuke that was! It was like God was saying that "Sears would give my baby a pair of shoes and He wouldn't?" I was ashamed and blessed at once. I wish that I could tell you how we bought Trella's shoes, but I can't. The important thing was God was interested and involved and working in our lives to meet the need for a \$5.00 pair of baby shoes.

I want to break in here and tell a story about how the Lord met a very specific need of a dear friend of ours. It has no direct relation to us and our needs, but shows how carefully and detailed God's answers can be.

Kurt and Carrie Heath were members of the Yakima Wesleyan Church when we were privileged to pastor there for four years. Brother Heath was digging out basements at the time of this event. He was very busy six days a week and had his work contracted ahead for weeks in advance.

This is a side note, but Brother Heath couldn't read until he got saved and wanted to read the Bible. That always happens when a person gets really saved. This dear man went out and bought himself a New Testament and every day would get alone with God and ask Him to help him read His word, usually while sitting under a tree or in the shade of a building eating his lunch. He taught himself to read just because of the hunger in his heart for God's Word.

Unknown to him, his wife had been praying for a Bible of her own, as he always took the little Testament to work with him. She not only was praying for a Bible, but for a specific one that she already had picked out at the store. She wanted a Bible that she could read at home. Brother Heath knew nothing of her prayerful request before the Lord.

On this day, his hard day's work was done and it was time to go home for a good, hot supper, but on the way, a neighbor hollered at him as he was passing and asked him if he would move a little dirt around on his place. Brother Heath obliged him as it wouldn't take long and wasn't out of his way. They settled on a small sum, \$2.35, and he continued on his way home.

After supper, Sister Heath asked him if he had done any extra work that day. He was quite a bit puzzled, but easily remember the little job done on the way home. When he nodded, she asked, "How much did you get for the extra job?" When he replied that it was \$2.35, she said, "Hand it over. It's mine." It was the amount to the penny that she had asked God for. I can still see Brother Heath's big smile as he told me the story and observed in the telling that there was no way that he could have refused. He said that the \$2.35 was God's and not his.

When the time came for the birth of our son, Mark, the Lord intervened in a different way. We were then pastoring in Wenatchee, Washington and I was again driving a school bus part-time. According to our custom, I began paying on the medical bills what I could as soon and we knew that Deloris was expecting.

The doctor who was recommended to us was a good Seventh Day Adventist and both Deloris and I were comfortable with him. After a time he informed us that since our salary was so

minimal, he would charge us nothing! Think of that! So all that we had to pay would be the hospital bill, and our faithful Lord helped me to get that paid before Mark's birth.

An added blessing with Mark's birth was that the Lord sent to our church fellowship the nursing supervisor of the Obstetrical Department, Isabella Cropley. When Deloris started her pains, Sister Cropley came to our home and did what she did every day for a living and sent her to the hospital hours later than customary and saved us a day's hospital expense. As she was not on duty yet, Deloris had a special nurse and by her being there I was free to care for the girls with absolutely no care or alarm. In a little over three hours our son was born and Deloris was calling me from the hospital. Over these succeeding years, God has favored us with a special, trusted friendship with Sister Cropley.

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Chapter 18 THE CROSSWISE CHURCH

We spent three exciting years pastoring in the Grandview, Washington Wesleyan Church from 1958-1961. The small community was a farming one located in the Lower Yakima Valley. Both the congregation and the sanctuary were very small, but both Deloris and I, independently, were led while praying that God wanted us there. I must tell you about that. The entire purpose of this book is to show how our wonderful God involves Himself in the lives of very ordinary Christians who are fully committed to Him.

We were very young and inexperienced pastors right out of ministerial training and were pastoring one of the strongest congregations of our District in Weippe, Idaho (that is pronounced WEE'-IP). Somehow, this didn't seem right to either of us as older, more experienced pastors were serving smaller churches on smaller salaries. As already mentioned, God had spoken to both of us, while in independent prayer and at different times, not only that we should not stay and pastor in Weippe, but that He wanted us in Grandview.

When I mentioned my impressions to Deloris, she told me that God had spoken to her some day's ago but that she had said nothing about it to me as we had only been at the present church a year and also because I was the pastor. God has worked in this way in our lives -- sort of a check and balance system between us. God doesn't leave loose ends. If He is in a matter, it will all come together in time. When He works on one end, He is working on the other. This is a good reference point when seeking God's will in matters.

We followed this pattern down to the wire, agreeing to say nothing to our District Superintendent, I. G. Canary, about where we felt that we should pastor -- only that we would not continue to serve in Weippe. He asked us if we felt led to any particular church, and we rather naively told him that if God could show us, then He could show him. Upon reflection, that was a bit unfair to our D.S., but we were sincere and he knew it.

I shall always remember his first words as he came down the next morning from the upstairs bedroom. "The Lord wants you in Grandview, doesn't He?", he said. When we assented,

he replied with an even voice that they had already called another pastor. You can imagine how deeply that threatened our confidence in what we understood was God's clear leadership.

Deloris has always exhibited more patience in these matters than I, and she immediately adopted a "wait and see" attitude while I was fretting about how we could have got our signals from God all balled up. The next few days were very anxious and confusing ones to me and I spent much time in prayer trying to discover where to go from here. Did we err in the perception that we should leave the Weippe church? Were both of us mistaken about our leadings that we should be in Grandview?

A ring of the telephone a few days later calmed all of our fears as Brother Canary told us that the other man didn't accept the Grandview church's call and that they had extended a call to us to be their pastors. I don't know about you, dear Readers, but waiting on the Lord has been one of the hardest aspects of following Him for me. It shouldn't be, for His "track record", so to speak, with us has been one hundred percent! God has always come through with His promises to us. He has never once let us down, even though the timing -- that is, when we thought that it ought to happen -- has seldom met our schedules. Just about the time that we get mature enough and smart enough to leave the timing to God, it's time to fold our tents and go to heaven! Big deal! I wonder how the Lord puts up with us?

Many great and wonderful answers to prayer occurred while we pastored in Grandview -- healings, revivals, new people saved and increased attendances -- but the one meeting with God that I must relate arises from the construction of a new basement under the church building! Our small, growing congregation was in desperate need of Sunday school rooms, as there were only three at the back of the tiny thirty foot by forty foot building. Can you imagine a sanctuary only 30' by 300 including the platform? We once had a hundred thirty-five people in it for one Bible college concert, and the choir had to march into and out of the building before, after and at intermission time because there was no room for them to be seated.

To shorten this story, it was decided that we would build a basement and the first order of business was to excavate the from under the church. This would cost nothing but sore backs and blisters, as every yard was removed by shovels. God sent a retarded Pentecostal brother who could hardly talk, but he had a strong back and a constant smile and he knew how to throw dirt. We only had two men who were regular attenders in our tiny group, and as they both worked through the day, they could help little. I found out much later that one of the brothers wasn't even expecting the basement to be built. After we' had the walls up and the building reset on the new basement foundation, he dropped by (for the very first time) looked pleased and said, "Well, we are going to have a new basement, aren't we?"

Don't be too hard on this Brother's unbelief. This was the "umpteenth" time that this church had talked and planned and decided to build a basement! They had approved plans and taken offerings only to have the plans scrapped and the money spent on more pressing present needs. So, my disappointment in my brother's remark was short lived.

Bear in mind that I had never so much as constructed a dog house before this time. All that I had to offer this project was a very strong body and unbounded aggressiveness. No, I take that

back. God gave me one other very beneficial gift. I am an inveterate question-asker -- to this day. God gave me a questing mind and I love to learn from anyone and everyone. I really needed this special gift at this time.

Along with digging dirt from under the building, I began asking around the town about how to put a basement under an existing building. I received much advice and had to go about determining what was good and what wasn't. Ultimately, the Lord brought into the orb of my questioning two fine building contractors -- one a Nazarene and the other a Methodist. Both men graciously offered to help this obviously very green, young pastor who had more zeal than knowledge. They both offered to help me in any way that they could, and they were as good as their word. I literally called the Methodist man day after day, especially at first. He told me that I would have to knock some holes into the existing foundation to have a base for the building jacks, and then lift the building off from the old foundation, place four "cribs" under the floor joists, let the building back down on the cribs and then remove the old foundation. Sounded easy. Something to do each day before breakfast for exercise. That was a tall order for such an inexperienced person, and I look back now and wonder how in the world I ever thought that I could do such a thing! The confidence and enthusiasm of youth is truly heartening, isn't it?

My first question was, "What is a crib and what do I use for them?" I learned that a crib, or cribbing, is simply crisscrossed timbers, two one way and then two placed the opposite way on top of the first two until they rise under the building to form temporary supports. Four would be adequate, I was told, for this size of a building, placed in each corner far enough away so that the new footings and walls could be constructed after the dirt was all removed. In answer to my question about where I could get these cribbing timbers, my Methodist friend told me that he was tearing up an old railroad spur, and that if I were up to manhandling those old railroad ties, they would be the very best cribs you could get and I could have as many as I wanted. All I had to do is get them to the church, under the church, and then, when we were through with them, bring them to a location that he would designate. I was able to horse those railroad ties into place and came up with the finest cribbing you could get.

Then my Nazarene brother told how to place the building jacks that he loaned me under the joist stringers and lift the building a little at a time -one or two notches on each jack -- so that the building would lift evenly. Once the church was free standing a foot or so off from the old foundation, the cribbing was built up tight under the stringers and the building allowed to rest on the four cribs.

To a very young, inexperienced person such as I, this entire process was considerably unnerving. Every time upward pressure was exerted in the raising process, and every time that it was reversed in the eventual lowering, fearful cracking and popping sounds came from every disturbed joint as the nailed studs, rafters, joists and sheeting were resurrected to life after twenty-five years of inertia. It seemed to me to be reminiscent of Samuel's odd query to Saul in I Samuel 28:15, "Why hast thou disquieted me?"

And then there was the resultant movement of the entire building upon the four cribs. They were solid enough, alright, and there was no danger of collapse at all, but every step in the building produced a wiggling and quivering that took getting used to. I am amazed in retrospect.

Having spent most of my adult life now as a builder which has necessitated constant interaction with Planning and Zoning Commissions and Building Departments, such a situation is unheard of today.

We never missed a regular service (three a week) during all of the six or seven weeks that church sat on those railroad-tie cribs. That was before the days of rock and roll music, but we did it every service before the advent of such. It did produce an odd sensation as 35 to fifty people moved about before and after services. Like anything else, we were soon used to the motion, and the experience became a lifelong conversation piece for all of us who were in on it. You know, "I attend the church the trembles; that vibrates. We rock as we walk". Something like that.

I need to tell you of my faithful yoke-partner at this point. She is as game as women come, and since all of the building construction that we have been privileged to accomplish for the Lord over these many years has been done during the daytime when the men of the church couldn't help, I had to depend on Deloris to be my willing helper. She has been on roofs, in excavations, on scaffolding, ladders -- just wherever and whenever needed.

At this time, she became the person needed to wrap a chain around the cement pieces of the old foundation as I held the brakes on the old tractor a farmer lent us to pull them out. Our little girl played by the hour in the piles of excavated dirt while Deloris and I pulled out the concrete foundation.

The Pastor of a neighboring Wesleyan Church, Stanley Miller of Benton City some twenty-five miles away, was a fine mason and, though he worked full-time at it, promised me that he would come over on Saturdays and help me lay up the cement blocks. He was as good as his word, and in four Saturdays we had a new basement in place and was ready to let the building down on it. I was so eager and thrilled about how this was all coming together that there hadn't been much sleep for the past three or four months. Without doubt, my utter weariness of body accounts for what happened at this point, and this is the main reason for placing this page out of my life on paper.

As previously mentioned, the lowering of the church building was merely a reversal of the raising -- easing off the pressure a little on each jack rotationally to let the building settle evenly. The popping and cracking wasn't as ominous as previously, for now I was expecting it and also there was a new, solid foundation scant inches from the bottom plates. (We had laid the last course of blocks, called the bond beam, to within about six inches of the plate.) I won't bore you with how the jacks are placed to lift the building off from the cribs so that they can be removed, but it is tricky and challenging.

When I had lowered the building to within two inches of the bottom plate, a horrible realization hit me like the proverbial ton of bricks! I was absolutely devastated to discover that the northeast corner of the building, and therefore also the southwest corner, jutted four inches out from the building. My first reaction was that we had somehow made the foundation four inches smaller than the building, but a quick look at the other east corner verified the truth. In all of the up and down business, I had unwittingly allowed the building to settle crooked upon the new foundation walls.

Believe me, I came completely unglued -- totally wiped out! Besides the immediate "catastrophe", the fact that just about all of this heavy work for weeks on end had fallen to me personally, and the need to have Deloris help me do what men should have done, caved in. That some didn't even have enough faith that we could do it and that they wouldn't or couldn't help, came washing over me in waves of frustration and weariness.

I immediately retreated to the dark gloom of the basement, and standing beside the now useless crib in the offending northeast corner (I could take you to five or six feet of the exact spot today), I was instantly reduced to an abject sobbing spirit. I was whipped, completely broken and helpless. This was beyond me, and out of sheer exhaustion I cried out to God, "Why?" I have heard all of my life that this is wrong -- that it is not of faith and trust to question God.

I have just two, cogent thoughts along that line. Whether it is right or wrong, I am not persuaded, but I do know that it is certainly human. My guess is that a saint has yet to arise who has not questioned God in his extremity and exhaustion at some time of his walk with the Lord. The best reason that we shouldn't be too hard on ourselves in these situations, and I say this reverently, is that our precious Savior did it. I do not see either His "why?" or many of ours as a lack of faith or obedience as much as an accurate portrayal of our humanity and therefore our need of Divine assistance. If we never get to the end of ourselves, we never get "into God".

I want to tell each reader of these lines that I can hardly write the succeeding words, but they are true and need to be proclaimed by any means at my disposal. Right as I sobbed and wept in utter helplessness and frustration, I was aware of a heavenly presence immediately behind and beyond my right shoulder. I can't tell you how I knew, but I did know as certainly as I existed that someone else was in that dark, gloomy excavation. There was no more light, but there was a lightening of the atmosphere. A heavenly presence was in that dark hole with me. Not a word was spoken, but I knew, I sensed that I should not turn to look, but I knew that someone from heaven was there.

For just a little bit I thought that it was Jesus, but soon came to realize that it was one of God's angels sent from Him to lift His needy servant. What did it matter who it was? The specialty has to be the same as if He were there in Person. He had sent His special emissary. I know that His angels attend His servants constantly, but on rare occasions, such as this one in my humble experience, He allows them to make themselves known -- revealed -- exposed to us humans.

I was transformed, not spiritually or morally or redemptively. This was an emotional and mental transformation. This was a very earthy, physical ministration to my despair and distraction. No one could ever tell me that God can't and/or doesn't do such things to us earthlings, for I know better. It happened to me. To this day, and as I have written these lines thirty-six years after the fact, shivers still run through me and tears still come. Wonderful Jesus. You can see why I want to write this book and praise His name.

But there is more. That heavenly presence did not leave me with encouragement alone. Remember that through all of this no words were spoken. All communication from God to me was unverbal, but undeniably perceived. I have never heard God speak to me in an audible voice that I

know of, but I know that He has on a number of occasions. He has given me definite, specific instructions many times and, now hear me, in every instance, it always works out exactly as He has said. There have been a few hundred times that I have wished and wondered if God were talking to me and directing me in this or that. I get impressions on my mind regularly and wonder if they are from God or if they are from my own fertile mind, but on those instances when it is unmistakably from Him, IT UNFAILINGLY OCCURS IN THE EXACT DETAIL AS IT IS GIVEN. What a testimony for our great God!

As I stood rather transfixed in this sudden, unexpected heavenly embrace of heaven's God (by whatever means, I care not), a mental picture came clearly into focus. Recall with me my Nazarene benefactor who was graciously loaning me the huge building jacks needed to raise and lower the building. When I needed the jacks to lower the building and went to the job site to get them where he was working at that time, he and his men were just in the final stages of placing a much larger building than our church on a new foundation. They had moved this building from another location, and at the time that I arrived, lacked just three or four feet from having it properly placed. I ask you now if you think that it was mere coincidence that I arrived at the work site at that precise moment? If I had come five minutes later, I would not have seen what they did, but when I arrived, two men were pushing that entire building with two building jacks that were set on a firm base in the ground ON AN ANGLE. I can assure you that the angling of those jacks never impressed me in the slightest degree at the time. That they could be used to push as well as lift totally escaped my mind.

But as I stood totally transfixed in this wonderfully uplifting, heavenly atmosphere under the "crosswise church", my heavenly visitor reminded me of that scene and the angled jacks.

There is no way that I can describe my frame of mind at this mental image, but I got with the program without any further imaging from God's architect. don't even remember saying "thank you" at the time, but I did many times later. I was one grateful preacher. Please bear with me. God put this idea into my mind, but from there on, the ball was in my court. Did God put His big hand on the northeast corner of that white-framed Wesleyan Church in Grandview, Washington and give it a shove? Yes and no. It didn't move magically all by itself as I stood there and watched, but He certainly did the fixing there that day as surely as if it had occurred "miraculously", so to speak. We need to see this. GOD INTERVENES WHEN HE SHOWS US HOW TO DO IT. I hope that we all see and believe this.

The rest is anticlimactic, but needs to be related. With a jack and a slanted timber placed on an angle pushing southward against a floor stringer on the northeast corner, and a second one pushing northward in the same manner in the Southwest corner, that entire building moved and lined up squarely onto the new foundation.

The only way that I can tell you how special this was, and is, is if you, dear Reader, have been ministered to in a similar manner. Thank You, Jesus!

* * * * *

AT THE APPLE CAPITAL

Wenatchee, Washington! The Apple Capital Of The World! That is how the local orchardists, community leaders and advertisers bill this lovely central Washington State city that lays on the banks of the mighty Columbia River.

We found ourselves pastoring in Wenatchee for one year as a purely and seemingly appropriate thing to do. It was our newest church extension project and had only been functioning for one year when its pastor, Reverend E. E. Meeks, was elected as our new district superintendent.

Immediately after this election at district conference and as our district board sat discussing what we were to do with the baby congregation at Wenatchee and no one seemed available to go, I volunteered with the understanding that Deloris and I could have time to consider it. We never felt that we were necessarily out of the Lord's will in going to Wenatchee, but for some time we both felt that we should eventually be in the Yakima church. It wasn't going to be open that year, and here was a present need, so we went.

God worked in some unusual ways during the one year that we were at this church in Wenatchee, and I will share them here. The congregation was small, but the building was nice and in a fine location.

I must first tell you about Jake. I met Jake in the wee hours one morning by Deloris' whispered warning that someone was trying to get his key into the front door. Sure enough, upon inspection, some person was carelessly and rather loudly trying to open our door. In response to my question of "What do you want?" a man who was obviously very drunk replied, "Come on, Honey. Let me in. I'm sick". He was so drunk that he couldn't tell a strange male voice from that of his wife's. I told him (through the closed door) that he was not at his house and that he should go on home. To this he replied that he was really sick and to please let him come in and lie down on the floor. I suppose that this sounded like a great plan to his addled mind, but struck mine as an invitation to a stinking mess on our living room furniture and floor.

When I again told him to go on home, he cursed me out and stumbled down the sidewalk -- right towards our unlocked Studebaker sedan. "Oh, no", I thought. "It's not locked!" It may seem strange today for anyone to leave an unlocked car on the street, but it was more usual than unusual back then. For those who quibble over whether our moral conditions are really any worse today than thirty year's ago, I just invite you to ponder this a little.

Sure enough, he tested and discovered that the car was unlocked, but not before hawking loudly and depositing "a large oyster" right on the shiny hood of our Studebaker. He crawled into the passenger side and, as the dome light was illuminating the entire show, began depositing the contents of his stomach. I cannot lie. I truly feel sorry for drunks, but I felt sorrier for our car. As it was summer and the parsonage windows were open, we could both plainly hear him retching and re-decorating the car's interior.

Deloris called the police and when they came, they called him by name. That's when we discovered that he was Jake. They aroused him, placed him in the cruiser and took him somewhere -- I assumed to jail.

By this time dawn was not far away and sleep was out of the question anyway. I dressed and went out to survey the situation. Vomit was all over the front seats, the driver's door and window, the dashboard and floor! Worst was that it was all over the dials of the instrument panel and down into the little grooves of the radio speaker. Jake must have been loaded.

When I think of this, it makes me think of what Jesus said about a lukewarm church. I wonder if we catch the gravity of the spiritual condition of today's lukewarmness? Jesus promised that such a half-hearted, careless attitude that would characterize the last days church would cause Him to "spue you out of My mouth". I have yet to meet a single person who enjoys vomit -- who looks forward to the sight and smell of it. Lukewarmness makes Jesus sick! That is what He says in the Revelation 3:16.

A 1955 Studebaker Commander didn't have floor carpets and I had put vinyl seat covers on the seats, so the best plan seemed to be carefully hosing it out. Yuk! What a mess! There are literally dozens of reasons why I hate alcohol in any form. The infringement into other people's lives is one of them. How sad and selfish drinking is.

In the middle of all of this stinking mess were Jake's false teeth, so I rescued them, cleaned them up and tried to remember the street address that he gave me when we were talking through our closed door the preceding night. Later in the day I went to that address and a fine, well-groomed older lady met me at the door. As it opened, there was Jake on the living room couch sleeping off his drunk. That dear Lady wept openly as I gently handed her Jake's false teeth that I had wrapped in a paper towel. Oh, the heartache and sorrow produced by booze.

I'll remember the ominous text as long as I live. I didn't want to preach this heavy truth (For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Romans 6:23) to our tiny congregation, who, as far as I knew, were all professing Christians. But I knew that God had spoken, so I obeyed.

It was a snowy December Lord's Day just after Christmas, and into the morning service appeared this very bright, attractive, obviously successful young couple with a beautiful little daughter of toddler age! I can see the fine chiseled, square-jawed blond head of the young man as I write these lines. He was a hunk (in modern idiom) and she was beautiful. He was the son of a lady who attended on Sunday mornings and they had been home for the holidays!

The young man seemed to respond quite well as I preached, but his wife was noticeably uncomfortable as I dealt with the results of sinning. After the service, and seemingly fruitless invitation, she really let me have it as they left, obviously very angry and promising me that she would never darken our church door again. You can imagine how the devil jumped all over me with cruel accusations. God's people who are spiritual and discerning must pray for their pastors when it is obvious that God has laid a serious message on their hearts. Soul winning is a most critical piece of business. I was really beat up over this, until...

A phone call from his distraught mother came the following day. This young family was returning to their home in western Washington after having Sunday dinner with his mother. They were involved in a head-on car accident near the summit of Stevens Pass and were all killed. They had been receiving their last call from God that Sunday morning in our little church. Again, I appeal to the spiritual among us to hold up pastors in prayer as they preach. We never know when it may be someone's last chance to repent.

Some great and wonderful things happened in Wenatchee. Brother Fred Richey was a new Christian and had been a lifelong smoker. As a result he had throat cancer and was in serious condition. It was bad enough that he had to talk in a whisper, was in constant pain and could only eat baby or pureed foods.

During one morning service he felt that God wanted to heal his cancer and, accordingly, we gathered around him and anointed him and prayed for him. I have done this many dozens of times throughout forty years of ministry and will continue to do so. The promises of God relative to Divine healing are as much in effect today as at any other time in church history. I don't have a clue as to why there is healing sometimes and none at other times, but it is up to us to obey God and believe Him.

I perceived no unusual Divine witness to my spirit as we prayed, but the next day when Brother Richey went to see his doctor, he examined and the re-examined his throat and then asked what he had done to his throat. He told him that the rawness was all gone and that the skin where the cancer had been was like a babies. God had touched Brother Richey and healed him in answer to simple faith and prayer. It was wonderful to hear him testify without that raspy, croaky voice and see the light in his eyes.

One Sunday morning there was a special, heavenly aura over us as we sang at the opening of the service. The unmistakable presence of the Lord was like a lightening of the atmosphere. Some of you know what I am trying to describe, and many of you don't -- and you may think that I am referring to mere human emotions that are naturally lifted in church. There's a world of difference.

I need to say this here. I hate hypocrisy with a passion and vengeance. My entire Christian life has been directed at genuineness and reality. Not once have I been guilty of trying to "pump or whip a service up", that is, an attempt to produce in my own enthusiasm an emotional atmosphere of rejoicing and power. I hate fakery and facades, and so does the Lord. Not only do I not engage in such emotional fakery, but I refuse to allow anyone else to do it in a service over which I have charge. But having said that, I desperately want the world to see God's presence and power displayed in and on His children. We need to see Him move in His heavenly and unmistakable manner.

A young mother of the congregation stood weeping as she held her baby daughter in her arms. The baby's naval had herniated (was ballooned out) and by every medical means their doctor could not get it retracted to a normal state. The next step was surgery, and Peggy believed that Jesus could touch their baby. They came and stood before the altar rail at the front of the

church and I anointed the baby as we all prayed together. It was easy to sense a special touch from the Lord. The next day the naval was back to where it belonged. Wonderful Jesus! We can call it coincidence if we choose to doubt. All that I know is that we prayed and the baby was well. I choose to credit the Healer of Heaven.

I often wonder why God has brought into my life and ministry so many of wonderful, unusual instances of healing and Divine interventions. I can assure anyone that it isn't because of my personal faith. I know down in my heart that I really have small achieving faith, because I am by temperament a rather skeptical person. It isn't so much that I have to have things proven to me as that I insist upon the genuine. God is into genuineness. He is the most real consciousness of my life. The church must always be careful to avoid the wild, fantastic claims of healings that are unsubstantiated and grandiose.

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Chapter 20

A CONTEMPORARY RAVEN

We all remember Elijah's ravens and how those special birds brought bread and flesh morning and evening to God's faithful servant for an unspecified number of days "until the brook dried up". (SEE 1 Kings 17). Aren't God's ways strange and wonderful? Who would ever had anticipated such a thing as this? Can we even envision such a transport of food -- in raven's beaks and/or claws? And ravens feed primarily on stinking, rotten carrion. Beggars aren't choosers, though.

The reason that I allude to the strange ways of the Lord is because later, when Jezebel was after Elijah and he fled for his life from her into the wilderness and sat under a Juniper tree, requesting that God would just allow him to die, God sent an angel to feed him, and I quote here from 1 Elijah . . . no, I mean 1 Kings 19:5-8):

"And as he lay and slept under a Juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.

"And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

"And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee."

Why did God feed him by ravens one time and with an angel at a later time? It was the same man under similar circumstances but by an entirely different method. GOD SELDOM, IF EVER, USES THE SAME METHOD TWICE. This is an interesting fact about God's methods, and one that we are well-served to remember.

For us humans, when something works well on a given occasion, we will almost certainly go with a proven, successful method repeatedly. We are very reluctant to change a working

method. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." I personally subscribe to such logic. But I have learned that God won't be placed in our little boxes of logic and predictability. I think that the main reason for this is so that there is little question of the source being Divine.

We were into the second winter of pastoring in the small, but fine, congregation at Yakima, Washington and were enjoying it immensely. God was blessing and a few new people were attending and finding the Lord. One new family was attending because of a very special Baptist brother who had a philosophy that Christians needed to attend a church in their own community so that they would have a community influence for the Lord. His philosophy might be debatable in the church in general, but in this case he seemed to have the mind of the Lord and it worked out to be a great blessing to the family and to our congregation and to us personally.

One Sunday morning this Baptist brother showed up in church with a nice, young family in tow. The family lived in our community and the two men worked together. Wanting to win his younger co-worker to the Lord, the older Baptist brother brought him and his family to our church instead of his own. This isn't the only time that Brother McCan had done this, nor would it be the last. We know how different this is for most of us. We were soon to discover that this was not the only unusual characteristic about this "little man" .

When we came to pastor at the Yakima church, it was with a weekly salary amount plus housing and utilities assumed by the church. This was common in those days. At least we thought that this was the arrangement until in the middle of the second winter the church treasurer handed me the heating oil bill for the parsonage. Their custom was to pay for the parsonage furnace oil only if they had the money -- if not, then the pastor did. Somehow, we missed this "small" error in communication. It didn't matter to me -- I just wasn't prepared for an \$80.00 oil bill in the middle of winter. That was the equivalent of two week's pay from the church. Our used car payment was only \$40.00 a month in those days. You can see how tight of a strain this would place on one's budget. But I took the bill (what else could I do?) and we took the car payment money that I had saved for it and the next week's pay and paid the bill. Then both of us came to the Lord wondering how we would buy groceries for the children and make a car payment in a week or so?

Bear in mind that "our way" was to take care of personal needs (1) before the Lord and, (2) without advertising. It just never occurred to us to talk about personal needs with anyone else in or out of the church. It wasn't even something that we either one thought about or even discussed as a possible solution. Our generation was taught that when you go out on your own, you go out on your own -- you take care of yourself. You didn't expect your parents, grandparents, friends, church or the government to bail you out of tight financial spots. I realize that this is hard to believe in the 1990s, but after Deloris and I left home to attend college, neither of us ever called or wrote home and asked for money. It just wasn't an option to most youth of the 1950s, at least among my set of peers.

In our minds, a big part of becoming an adult was the ability to take care of oneself. It was a major challenge. It formed a large part of one's concept of maturity and success. Doing without and "making do" with what you had were everyday aspects of living for millions of Americans. With rare exceptions, if you wanted to buy something, you saved for it until you had enough to make the purchase. If you didn't have the money, it was just one more nice idea. Living without

charge cards sounds really ancient, I know, and whatever earthly possessions that God has given us to use here on earth are all paid for. I'm not sure, but I believe that it was Uncle Bud Robinson who quipped that the three things that God hates are "dirt, debt and the devil". I'll buy that.

About mid-morning on the Saturday following the payment of the oil bill with the car payment and grocery money, Deloris answered a knock on the side door of the parsonage, and there stood Brother McCann with his arms literally filled with two big grocery bags. Deloris was aghast, but invited the man with his burdens inside. This precious brother, not only new to our congregation but a member of the Baptist Church, had brought two large bags of groceries to us. After he left, an inspection revealed items that Deloris would have bought if she had done the shopping personally -- milk, eggs, bread, cereal and on and on. She could hardly believe it and talks about it to this day.

That happened every Saturday for six weeks or so -- just the span of time that I needed to have grocery money again out of the weekly salary. Nobody but God knew that we were using grocery money to pay for heating oil. Nobody but He had it timed so that we were able to buy groceries again in 6 weeks.

Right about this time Deloris had a medical need that could not be ignored and we owed for a doctor's bill. I stopped by the office in a day or two so that I could pay him (again with grocery money) and the receptionist said that it was already paid. Since I hadn't paid for it, I asked her who had? She just smiled and said that she wasn't supposed to tell. When I pressed her a bit, she stated that she didn't know his name herself, but that he was a "nice, little, old man". Later at home, we both searched our minds to discover who could possibly have known of our need and who this "nice, little old man" was but came up blank. What we did both know was that God had answered prayer and met a pressing need.

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Chapter 21 DOCTORS AND ME

When I was young, people didn't go to doctors unless there were something really bad happening. I was fourteen or fifteen the first time that I went with a throbbing toothache to a dentist. I was obviously too old to be accompanied by a parent, and, oddly, neither Daddy or Mother said a word to me about what to expect or what to do -- I was on my own. Maybe they had never been to a dentist, I don't know.

Everybody knew where the dentist was in our small, farming community, so I made my way up the stairs to his office that was over the bank. I remember absolutely nothing of the entire experience, except one. I don't remember his name, what the office or chair looked like or whether he had a receptionist or not. All that I remember is sitting in this high chair with cold arms on it and he told me that my toothache is the result of a cavity that needs drilling and filling, and would I like a shot of Novocain? "What's Novocain," I asked. He said that it was a pain killer.

Now when I relate to you what I replied, "No, I don't need a shot. Drill away," you have to realize two things. First, I was obviously the epitome of naiveté -- I mean naiveté "numero uno"! Secondly, this appeared to me to be an affront to my manhood. At that stage of my life, nothing could hurt me; I mean pain was only something experienced by girls and sissies. I mean, these were the days of Gene Autry and Roy Rogers and Superman and Charles Atlas. These were days when men were men and the ultimate humiliation was to say "uncle", (that means, "I give up!")

It is unbelievable how naive and confident I was as that man set forces into motion that "unnerved me". (Pun intended). I wonder if that expression originated in a dentist's office (unnerved)? I thought that his tiny, belt-driven drill was going all the way through my jawbone, out my chin and into my shirt pocket! I never said one word. My manhood was preserved, but you can be certain that I have taken every shot offered since then. "Yea, Les!" That is what my kids say whenever I do something great -- or stupid.

I went to a dentist in Colorado Springs once to have a bad tooth extracted. He only had one forearm, but when he was ready to pull that tooth, he placed the stump of his severed arm against my head and pulled that tooth as slick as could be.

When Trella, our oldest daughter, two bottom front, permanent teeth grew in behind her baby teeth, we saw that there was a problem that needed professional help. Those two baby teeth wouldn't loosen the way it was.

Someone in the Yakima church where we were pastoring at the time, told us of one dentist in town who used gas to pull stubborn teeth, so we made an appointment. What I describe here happened in the 1960s. No kidding. The dentist was quite elderly and in the process of retiring. Maybe that explains what may appear to many of you as a very primitive method of anesthetizing.

He asked me to assist him, as he stated that she would slide down in the chair after he had administered the gas. I have no idea what kind of gas it was, but assumed that it was ether. There was no assistant. I was he -- or she -- or it. That is one job that I have never placed on a resume -- anesthetist's assistant. I must remember that the next time.

Out of a disarray of non-descript tools extracted (pun intended) from an ancient drawer, he selected what I would call a cylindrical flask -- similar to the pressurized canisters (this was before aerosol cans) that we used to squirt water on windshields in service station days.

He kindly, not brusquely, instructed Trella to open her mouth and stick out her tongue and proceeded to place two round gauze sponges under it. "Now hold her", he said to me, and watching the precise moment that she drew in her breath, gave her a spray of foul-smelling gas onto those sponges that were under her tongue. She choked and gasped and whimpered, "Daddy"! At each gasp, he sprayed again, the third time being so minimal that it seemed unnecessary. My precious little girl was totally inert. It happened so fast that I had no time for questions or emotion. She didn't gasp more than three times, but the fear and incredulity in her eyes on that first strained gasp was sort of like, "Daddy, how could you let this strange man do this to me?"

In a flash he grabbed his forceps and had those two teeth out of there in nothing flat. In scant seconds Trella was stirring in my arms saying over and over, "Daddy, Daddy." in a dreamy manner. She was instantly all happy with the knowledge that the ordeal was over -- the offending teeth were gone.

I am still amazed of the ability of that man to use gas in such an open, exposed manner and know the exact amount to administer. Trella couldn't have been out more than twenty or thirty seconds. As incredulous as this may sound today, what he did was unusual, and perhaps considered risky by some, but it was entirely legal. I read the sleep-stopping book entitled "Brothers Mayo", the two doctors who started the renowned Rochester, New York Clinic. Their father before them was not only a country doctor, but pioneered surgical techniques and procedures that were unheard of in his day. He removed ovarian cancers from scores of women on their kitchen tables while the two boys, starting at seven and nine, assisted. They were their father's anesthetists, and would hold the chloroform soaked rag to the noses and mouths of the patient while the father would say either, "More" or " That's enough". Intensely interesting. I like the way that they do it today, I think.

This is another doctor story. In 1955 I contracted what is commonly called "hay fever". This was so severe that I couldn't see to operate a tractor in the hay fields because of the sneezing, coughing and crying. The details of attempts to alleviate the distressing symptoms and going from doctor to doctor, even to taking the so-called "series shots" every other day, are boring, but I finally ended up with an allergy specialist in Yakima. He thought that he could help me (Of course. They always think that they can help you. What's to loose?). He did help me, even if it was for only part of a day, but that is the reason for this story.

He sat me in a very sophisticated chair and put a little bib on me (I always envision an odd reversion to infancy when medical people do this to me. Maybe that is the psychological purpose of such an act.) Then an assistant wheeled up an apparatus that looked for the world like an acetylene welding outfit, only on a smaller scale. I instinctively looked for a torch, knowing that if there were one, I was out of there. I mean, cauterizing with a welding torch? Not to worry. There was tubing, but no torch.

He turned some dials and then stuck the end of this tube into one nostril, sealed the remaining opening with his fingers and instructed me to cough. I insist that we are fools for doing exactly what doctors tell us. It is nearly incredulous how much faith we place in doctors. They tell us to cough and we cough. I do believe that most of us would bend over and cackle if we were told to. I wonder how much sadistic glee they experience over our naïveté', trust and innocence? When will a doctor be brave enough to (posthumously, of course) publish a book entitled, "The Stupid Things Patients Did In My Examination Rooms". I'd love to read it if I weren't in it.

When I coughed, he guffed a blast of that "whatever" into my ample nasal orifice and it coursed, not at all unpleasantly, all through my nasal passages and sinuses. At the same time, it expanded my stomach as the residual of who knows how much of whatever it was went into my tummy. He repeated this on the other side with a similar effect, only this time I knew what to expect when I coughed. I thought about balling up his sequence by faking the wind up, but not carrying through with the cough just to see what might happen. Better judgment prevailed because

it was that "unknown result" that made me behave. A misfire might have ballooned one nostril to an inordinate size or maybe tore out a few feet of sinuses.

I promise you that he opened up all nasal and sinus passages. They had been stopped up for so long that the change was truly remarkable. It really felt like I could have run my little finger or a pencil through that comparatively "huge opening". Briefly, I could have hugged that man. It was so wonderful to take great breaths of air through both nasal passages. But I have to be honest and tell any chronic sinusitis sufferer that my euphoria and big openings lasted just a bit longer than the time it took me to pay the nice girl in the office and then drive home. The next day, it was "plugged-up Polly" all over again.

So after I had paid the smiling lady who takes your money (they either wear masks, have gas or spray the smile along with their hair) and walked out of the office, I was feeling mighty fine. As I walked through this doctor's parking lot towards the car, "the sun was shining, the birds were singing and the flowers were ablaze with color and beauty". All was well. My nasal passages were cavernous. I could breath and breath and breath.

Without warning and completely unexpectedly, the residual of whatever he had guffed into my stomach, obeyed the force of gravity and arose in the form of a mighty belch. The forceful emission was accompanied by a very visible cloud of smoke and noxious fumes that extended two feet in front of my face and hung suspended there for horrifying seconds before mercifully dispersing into the atmosphere.

My first response was as natural as breathing -- I scoped the parking lot for any mirthful witnesses and, seeing none, convulsed in unrestrained laughter. What a blast! (Pun intended). I thought, "What if this had happened in the lobby and my belch with its resultant "noxious cloud" had enveloped the head of the smiling lady?" I was still roaring away as I reached the car and entered. Just as I was ready to start the engine, there was a second involuntary eruption, but without the same velocity or cumulus. What a gas!

The final doctor story in my bag of doctor's stories occurred in a chiropractic treatment room in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. I thought that I would bust a gusset over this episode. A Colorado friend thought that chiropractic could ease a severe stress problem that I was experiencing, and offered to pay for the treatments. "Any port in storm" it is said, so I went to the nearest clinic that was in fact in our neighborhood. Two doctors were working in this clinic, and over the years, I was to use them both with good results.

The initial exposure, however, made me wonder what had agreed to. The good doctor shuffled in (I wish that I could act it out for you -- words can't possibly convey it) -- with arms hanging limply and spastically. The man truly looked more dead than alive. His face was flushed, his eyes half-closed and he spoke without moving his lips, like the effort would softly transport him to "glory". I thought, "He is going to do something for me? It looks like he needs me to support him!" Not to worry. This was his normal demeanor, and he was very capable of manipulating my 190 pounds.

A major part of his treatment was some sort of a mixture of moisture and mild electrical stimulus. I think that the idea is to relax the muscles so that manipulation can be effected without harm. It also justifies larger fees. These days I just tell them I'm relaxed. No kidding, and I just try to look like a sack of beans lying there -- like the shuffling doctor looked that first day. I learn fast.

Since my lower back was to be adjusted, he had me lie on my stomach and placed two, moist bags or blocks on either side of the spine. Then he turned on this electrical contraption, and I looked around for the warden and prayed. This apparatus pulsated alternately and slowly, with the electrical impulses beginning low and then increasing in intensity to the point that you said it was intolerable. He kept adjusting the impulses with round knobs and it was really not as unpleasant as it may sound to the uninitiated.

But a problem arose just about the time "Dr. Shuffle" left me being properly electrified and went into the adjoining room. These treatment rooms were separated by walls that were "unseeable, but very hearable". The walls didn't go all of the way to the ceiling. Many of you have seen them in year's past. So, I could hear every word of the good doctor's and his lady patient. I could also visualize every nuance of what was occurring to the lady, as I had just been initiated.

As he turned the power of this gismo on, the lady said instantly that it was too much, and I could hear the dialogue as he adjusted the current.

All of this time, something wonderfully hilarious was happening in my room with a great buildup of a carnival atmosphere. After a few jolts of this electrical stimulation, it would start to arch my upper and lower body like the crescendo of an orchestra. When that stimulus peaked, all that was touching the table was my middle. As soon as she kicked out, I would be right back on the table all nice and relaxed. After once or twice, you would instinctively brace yourself against that involuntary arching. I am not only big and strong, but very determined, and besides that, nobody likes to be made a fool of a tiny, clicking, pulsating box of electronic gadgetry. So I would mentally determine that "this beast will not arch me up on that table like some puppet on a string". "No dumb, little battery charger apparatus will force me to do what I don't want to do!" And already forces were bowing me up and up and inexorably as the sun would a dried-out banana peel.

Listen, people, I was convulsed realizing how silly such a thing could be -- that thing coming on and my trying with all of my might to resist -- and up my neck and shoulders would come and my feet and knees off at the bottom and all bowed up there helplessly like a netted fish. I laughed and jiggled in the off position as silently as possible, knowing that there were no secrets in these examining rooms.

But mirth had only begun. The carnival became livelier. In the next room I could hear Suzy Q over there tuning up her latent vocals. "Oooo! Oh! Oh, my! Oooo! Dear me!" Then as the pressure came off line there was nothing for a few seconds. I knew perfectly what was going on in my room, so I could visualize this very unfeminine arching and bowing in the next. On the next hit she said, "Oooo! Ooooo! Oooooooo!" Each "OOOO" was preceded by a very rapid sucking in of breath and then this long, swooning wail. When the "Oooos!" became more intense and louder and

then followed by "Oooooo, Doctor!", I came unglued about the same time that Dr. Shuffle came on the equivalent of a run for him, which was about second shuffle.

I paid the man and got out of there before Suzie Q had a chance to discover who the knot-head was in the adjoining stall.

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Chapter 22 DRIVING NAILS

I have to start the nail-driving story with a pencil-pushing one. Somewhere along the line of acquiring supplemental income employment, it became apparent that the good Lord had endowed me with better than average clerical skills. Accordingly, the district organization had tapped me to handle the district treasurer's financial records. My very able predecessor, Mr. Emmett Cameron, was a professional accountant and was eventually promoted to the highest administrative levels of the Bureau Of Indian Affairs. It has been one of my life's greatest pleasures to witness a truly, fine, consistent, conservative man of God attain such advancement within government service. I have to believe, as hard as it is these days, that there must be more. I hope so, don't you? This good man patiently guided me into becoming acceptably competent in the procedures of bookkeeping.

He startled me on one occasion by suggesting that I assume some of his "moonlighting" accounts. In his early days of government service in junior positions (in fact he started as a rodman and chainman on a surveying crew), these after hours bookkeeping accounts were necessary. As he was advanced, his full-time job consumed increasing time and energy and, at this point, he was "divesting himself" of his moonlighting activities.

This started me down an accounting trail that has allowed me to supplement my inadequate church income as well as be a blessing in many ways to church record keeping and financial investing. But that is another story.

One of these small business accounts was for a second generation building construction company in Yakima. Watten Construction, and its diminutive owner, Ed, was to become quite a focus in my life for a good number of succeeding years. I met Ed, and his perpetually smiling wife, Lois, and started a lifelong friendship. At the time of that first meeting, I didn't have a clue to where this would take me. God was working in my life and in my family's and in the lives of many churches and their congregations, far beyond what met the eye. And that is the reason for this story.

As far as I knew, Watten Construction would be nothing more to me than a small bookkeeping account. How wrong I was The first Spring after taking over Ed's books, as he was going over that month's bills with me, he asked rather abruptly if we had any young men in our congregation who needed a job. After mentally going over all of the people I assured him that we didn't, and then asked why he wanted to know.

Most of us are familiar enough with the construction industry to know that it is a "feast or fountains" kind of employment. Winters are down times and in the Spring everyone wants his job done "yesterday". This was Ed's predicament at that time and hence the reason for his asking about possible help. In answer to my question, he replied that he needed a flunky -- someone to pack building materials and be a right hand to the three carpenters. When I asked how long he needed such a person and he said "two weeks or so", I told him that I had a strong back if I could help. The "two weeks or so" turned out to be "or so", and I worked for Ed for two years or longer of full-time building construction work!

My mind becomes a rush of memories at this point. One of my life's pleasures is carpentering. Just a few week's ago I was cutting and placing underlayment on the floor of our new District Center in Vancouver, Washington, and as I measured and fit and cut and figured so that the joints would lap well as all set over floor joists and fit nicely, tears came to my eyes and I thanked the Lord for the privilege that was mine to be doing something that was necessary for His kingdom and at the same time so immeasurably enjoyable. I have had the best of two worlds, doing the will of the Lord in answering His call to the ministry and having fun at the same time. The church people of this local congregation at Coeur d' Alene, Idaho, where we have been privileged to pastor for over twenty-six years at this writing, have been so selfless in sharing me with construction projects all over our Northwest District. But, back to the story.

Let me tell you about Ed Watten and his father, Al, and their quality of carpentry. I am fully aware that every tradesman will tell you that his is quality work -- no exception. Did you ever hear any tradesman say that his work was shoddy? Absolutely not, but I witness constant shoddy workmanship, and so do you. It's the kind of work that we do when no one is looking that separates the craftsmen from the nail pounders. Carefulness is a big part of character. So, out of the hundreds of construction people whom I have met and known over the years, all without exception maintain that their work and workmanship is quality. I just want to tell you a few instances of what I call "Watten quality".

I was working with Al (Ed's Dad) one day and we were plumbing in a door jamb. Did you ever see a carpenter "double plumb" anything? I watched Al place a two-foot plumb alongside of a four-foot one and adjust them until the plumb bubbles in both plumbs were aligned. Careful Al. That's what I called him. For those of you who wonder: you plumb perpendicularly (up and down) and you level horizontally. Same instrument, but different reference and function.

Ed arrived at his name designation -- "right-on Ed" --rather humorously, even though, at times, it became somewhat irksome to our head carpenter, Big Al Krage. A quarter of an inch one way or the other on foundation forms is no big deal in anyone's estimation. Finish work is a totally different matter. In the construction industry tolerances vary depending on the nature of the procedure, and hardly anyone would quibble over a quarter of an inch over or under on a footing form or wall form.

We were forming up an eight inch thick, eight foot tall basement wall of an eighty foot run one day and Ed was on one end and Al on the other holding the tape. Al hollers, "Do you want her a little over or a little under, Ed?" There was this characteristic pause (Ed is not the quippy, conversationalist type at all. He usually grins while those around him ramble and blather), and then

Ed sings out in answer, "Right on!" "Sure, Ed," I heard Al mutter, and to me he observed that "we weren't building a piano!" I'm not knocking Big Al, my Dutch/German brother in Christ, and I'll tell you about him later.

Further proof of Watten's fine craftsmanship and integrity was evidenced by the fact that about half of their construction business was on a "cost plus ten (percent) basis, which was nearly extinct in those days and never today. That's just how much trust was placed in their fairness and how much their work was valued.

Big Al was Ed's head carpenter and the other one with whom I worked was Floyd Henry, but we all called him "Bud", and he was a fine, young Christian brother. Ed and I rounded out the regular crew with Ed's oldest son, Ron, and his father, Al, helping when needed (Al was semi-retired at the time). I cannot tell you how very special it is to work with Christian men unless you have had that privilege. No profanity or booze or smoking or dirty stories. Those two years were some of the happiest of my life, as well as some of the most productive as to future usefulness. This parsonage in which we have lived for twenty-six years is completely remodeled except for the two bed-rooms and living room as well as a new addition. Because of my tutors I have had the joy of performing this happy task and living in it too! What a blessing.'

I have to tell you what I remember the most about Bud. Bud was an exceedingly pleasant person with clear, twinkling eyes and a constant smile. His temperament was a quiet, unassuming, laid-back one, and his main gear was "steady". Bud's wasn't a "take charge" personality, but he would quietly be there by your side all day long. You could count on Bud.

The first few days I shagged floor joists -- 2 by 12s two at a time -even though they said one was enough. I thought that they were saying "Joyce" and kept looking around for this beautiful doll. This mistake wasn't entirely my fault, for carpenters generally fail to close the loop on the word and it emerges without the "t" most of the time. I've even heard carpenters refer to more than one as 'joyses". No joke. When those guys needed "joyses", I had them in their faces, and they were impressed and told me so at day's end.

During a break when Bud and I were talking, he made a passing reference to how "green" he had been when he started working for Wattens. By way of explanation he said, "Lester, I didn't even know the difference between a 16 penny nail and an 8 penny nail. I didn't know what I was looking for when they sent me after more nails." And my mind was going in a whirr right about then wondering, "What is the difference between an 8 penny and 16 penny nail?" Bud unintentionally had me located. Those men were so kind to me, except razing me a bit when I came to work with a brand new pair of carpenter's overalls in response to their recognition that I was indeed a carpenter. When Bud referred to a 16 penny nail, he took one out of his overall pocket, and then did the same with an 8 penny. Bud was wise and sensitive to my "greenness". You don't meet people like that often.

What a big difference experience makes. Some time back I sent Deloris to the hardware store for some number five finish nails. She returned with a bag of nails and as soon as I opened it I said, "Honey, I told you that I wanted number fives and these are fours." She smiled and said, "I told him that you would know, but he said that you'd never know the difference." Fives are as long

as sixes, but thinner, and fours are the same diameter as fives, but not as long. I specifically wanted the length of a five, but not the diameter of a number six.

I still remember Bud's innate sensitivity about my ignorance and how he taught me without embarrassment. Bud had a strange habit of lining up the 16s and 12s in his hand (like stacking logs) before placing them in his nail pouch. His explanation was that they wouldn't stick through your pants (as they would jumbled); you could get more in and they are easier to get ahold of. Smart Bud. I do that to this day. Learning is wonderful, isn't it?

Then there was Big Al. Al had big arms and legs, big hands and a big, booming voice to match the rest. Al was the antithesis of Ed or Bud. Al's prevailing philosophy was, "If it won't go, get a bigger hammer." Al was a shaker and a mover. He was like a bull in a china closet and never knew that patience was a virtue. You always knew where Al was. Al never sneaked up on anyone. What a guy! We're still great friends to this day and I plan to spend eternity in heaven with Al and Jesus.

Al was all of the time explaining construction procedures to me. He was constantly teaching and talking and waving his hands. I mean, "quiet" was not in the man's vocabulary. "Lester, you always hold the tape tight when laying out (marking top or bottom plates for studs or joists or rafters). Lester, you slant these sixteens on headers and they won't come out the other side. Lester, cripples have to be tight under a header". Al showed me the secrets locked up in a framing square and on and on. I owe so much to my friend, Al.

I learned just as much from Ed, perhaps, but he hardly explained anything to me. Maybe he was too busy. I learned quickly that this man was a walking construction encyclopedia, but I had to open it and read it. I learned from Ed mostly by watching him work. He was always figuring and thinking, and whenever I didn't understand what was going on, I'd ask Al to explain. He never became impatient with me. Both men were happy in their work -- Ed quietly working and Al verbally explaining. I've thanked them both, and the Lord, numerous times for being my teachers.

It wasn't just coincidental that we constructed two churches during the two years that I worked for Watten construction. No way. They had never done a completely new church project before that time and only one after I left Yakima and went to another pastorate. Hardly a coincidence.

At some point that I can't isolate, an awareness came over me that "I can do this". I had gained enough experience to be confident. I had this awareness that I could think and work out any construction procedure that arose. This occurs in every kind of work. None of us ever know it all. There are always new and different procedures that occur. Every job that I have ever attempted, large or small, has some little variation that requires what I call "working out". Like many builders before me, I've "worked out" many of these challenges during the quiet of the night when figuring it out on the job was illusive.

Another important aspect of this construction experience was how comprehensive it was. I mean that what I would term construction specialization was just beginning in the industry. We worked on the building from the footings to the final finish work, including cabinetry. I want to tell

you about installing imported Pecan wall paneling in a doctor's new home at \$22.00 a pop, and this was thirty year's ago! I couldn't believe that Ed would trust me with this stuff. You just don't make mistakes on such fine, expensive material. Accordingly, the Lord helped me to "see" how a building goes up, including and especially churches, from start to finish. There were no basic concepts of building construction that I could not envision

An so, now I am a grateful debtor to men who were willing to teach me. We are all in debt to our teachers. There is something of our teachers in all of us. Teachers are my heroes!

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Chapter 23 CURE FOR CYSTS

Sometimes I think that it would be easier for me to explain the numerous healings that I have experienced in my life and ministry if I had perceived some kind of a gift of healing, but this has not been the case. These healings have just occurred seemingly as a matter of course. They seem so normal and a part of everyday walking with Jesus to me.

While we were still pastoring in Grandview, Washington (1958 to 1961), God was redemptively moving on the congregation and its community sphere of influence and some folk were getting saved. A twin sister to a man who attended sporadically (her name was Jesse Lucero) had been a backslider for twenty years or more. We had visited in the Lucero home a time or two previous to getting a telephone call from the Prosser, Washington hospital that a lady was a patient there and wanted to see me immediately.

I dressed hurriedly, rushed the seven miles to Prosser and walked through the darkening corridors to a four-bed ward indicated by a nurse. You need to remember that I hardly knew this woman and she hardly knew me except for what her relatives had told her.

This is a good time to sermonize a little bit -- only a little bit, I promise. Many pastor's hands are either tied or freed in their ministries by the way friends and relatives represent him to their acquaintances, especially children. I have personally been both blessed and abetted and hindered by words of commendation or criticism that preceded me. Most pastors have experienced this.

This was evidenced in this case. As I stepped quietly into this four-bed ward, this woman whom I barely knew audibly burst out, "Oh, Brother Boone! If God will heal me, I'll serve Him the rest of my life!" I was understandably initially shocked as the nurse beat a hasty retreat and the other three women in the ward looked from her to me in silent surprise. But the shock turned to an almost heavenly atmosphere and control that I sensed immediately. I actually had as much freedom to deal with this woman's need as if we had been kneeling before the church altar. The other three women never uttered a peep as I dealt with Jesse about her soul. The fruit was ripe to be picked. I still have a lot to learn about soul winning, But I understand when someone is convicted and is ready to pray through.

She repented and cried out loud and I tried to encourage her without creating too much of a scene. My role in this instance was that of a cheerleader. It was her deal. I didn't have any special faith, hadn't "spoke any words over her", and certainly didn't anoint her with oil. I was just a contact point. I was only along for the ride. She was asking God to heal her of gallstones, as she was scheduled for surgery in the morning.

This is the reason for telling you about this healing. I really had nothing to do with it but be there. Jesse did the praying and the believing and Jesus did the healing and I got to enjoy it all. I have total confidence in God's ability to do anything that He chooses -- including divine healing -- but I have little faith in specific cases UNLESS I can sense Divine direction and permission in it.

I disdain any religious display that promotes and elevates a person. Such things dishonor God and seldom helps the cause of Christ. I personally think that this is a major reason why the Biblical method of praying for Divine healing is to "call for the elders (plural) of the church, and let them (again, plural) pray over him..." (SEE James 5:14). When a group pray over the sick and afflicted and the Lord chooses to heal, no one person's faith and prayer is credited -- only the Lord is glorified.

However, this case caught me totally by surprise and was out of my hands from start to finish. It wasn't three or four minutes until Jesse was praising the Lord for saving her and healing her lying there on her hospital bed. It was sort of like a summer storm -- sudden, powerful and quickly spent. There is no way that I could describe the peace and relaxation that sat upon this woman, especially her face. She was beaming and had a light and a peace upon her countenance. I prayed with her and left.

I didn't know of the succeeding events until the next day. Then I knew from a sister-in-law that Jesse had been suffering terrible pain from those gallstones for a long time, and that it had reached a point to where her doctor had told her that immediate surgery was required. There had been many x-rays that confirmed her serious condition and she was scheduled for surgery at eight am the next day.

After we had prayed and I had left (this was nine or ten o'clock at night) she insisted that the nurse call her doctor and tell him to come to the hospital. He understandably refused to come, and Jesse told her to call him again and that if he didn't come down that she would get up and go home with or without his permission. He angrily came and when she insisted that the Lord had healed her, he was more angry and told her that such talk was nonsense. Again, upon her insistence to re-x-ray and that she would pay for it, he reluctantly had her taken to x-ray. That dear man had the technicians take three different sets of x-rays and could not find one stone large or small. God can do it and He does do it even though we can't explain such things.

Jesse was some woman. She was quiet temperamentally, but seemed to do everything in an unpredictable manner in her relationship with God. The Lord sanctified her holy while she was up to her elbows in sudsy dish water. (If the reader is unfamiliar with this grace, read about it in Acts 15:8 and 9). Her heart was hungry for all of God, and He simply met her need as she prayed and cried while doing dishes.

She never told a soul, but you should have been at church the following Sunday morning. All through Sunday school, the entire atmosphere was impending -- not foreboding -- impending -- like the momentary arrival of the dawn. As the songleader arose to announce the first hymn number for the worship service, I heard a snuffle, then another and another. Jesse's head was down and she was trying to hold back the glory that was in her soul. But others knew that God was there and we all were just rather transfixed, nobody moving or saying anything, but there were noticeable increased sniffles as men reached for their hankies and women their purses.

Friend, if you have ever experienced what I am trying to describe, you fully understand. If you haven't, you may chalk it up to mere emotionalism. I can tell you this. I have witnessed humanly whipped-up emotions in church services since I was a young teen, and I hate it with a vengeance. I have also felt and seen God come and have literally given all of my life and ministry to its continuance. With God and His church, there ever has been, and always will be, the spurious and the genuine.

At this juncture in our church, I had been led of the Lord to preach a number of sermons of what I call heart holiness. Some call it entire sanctification or consecration or the deeper life for Christians. I can't say that I had perceived any more effect on one worshipper than another, but evidently quiet Jesse had been listening closely and hungering and obeying. That is what is always exciting about new Christians -- they tend to listen and obey and then go after everything that God has for them.

Unknown to me, Jesse had been searching her heart and talking constantly to the Lord about having a pure heart. Her days had been filled with praying and searching. On a day preceding the above-mentioned service, she had spent some time praying by the bedside in her bedroom asking God to meet the need of her heart. She arose and went about clearing the table and preparing dishwater. By her own testimony, she had soapsuds halfway up to her elbows when God spoke peace to her heart in cleansing grace. We were getting the overflow the following Sunday morning as she tearfully told this story.

I am such a blessed pastor. I have been privileged to see God work and move in my own life and in the lives of others so definitely and specifically time after time, but I need to get back to the story of the two cysts that formed on my tailbone and how God instantly healed one of them.

At this time we were pastoring at the Yakima, Washington Wesleyan Church and had traveled to a zone meeting in Hermiston, Oregon. At the conclusion of the service I stood at the rear of the church holding the door for persons to exit. A young man from the local church there offered to do this for me and as I stepped forward to surrender the heavy door to him, for whatever reason, he allowed it to snap back in its customary fashion before the closer caught. The sharp edge of that door hit me squarely on my tailbone and it wasn't at all comfortable.

The initial pain wore off momentarily and I hardly gave the instance passing thought except that, in ensuing days, it continued to be sore. When the condition persisted and I went to the doctor, his examination revealed that I had what he called two pilonidal cysts on my tailbone. The present inflammation was due to the door injury, but the cysts, he explained, may have been there all of my life. They are commonly referred to as "jeep driver's cysts" because of the irritation to the tailbone

by the constant pounding of the hard seats. In my case, it was from years of sitting on truck and school bus seats.

He explained that he could remove them surgically, but they often return if the irritation continues. Number one, we had no medical insurance. Number two, we needed the income from the bus driving to meet family financial needs, so both Deloris and I went to prayer about the matter. I should back up in the story enough to mention that I had asked Deloris to see what was going on with my sore tailbone before going to the doctor. She saw the angry, inflamed cysts that were hidden from my view.

I was praying about these two inflamed cysts as I walked the ten blocks of so to the bus barn. Just as I reached the intersection where I turned West in my walk, right in the middle of it I felt what I could best describe as a sort of electrical current course all through my body, starting at my feet and head and converging to my tailbone area. This continued for some seconds and slowly receded.

I am fully aware of how dramatic this sounds to some who read these lines. A]] that I can say is that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating". I have never had such a shocking experience (pun intended) before or since. I have had my share of thrills and excitements and emotional highs just as any of you, but this was unprecedented to me. I knew that God had touched me. Ask anyone who has ever had God perform some supernatural act on them or for them and they will affirm what I say now. It is unlike a mere emotional high. There is a consciousness of the different and the unusual.

After the bus run I could hardly wait to get home. I ran some bath water and crawled into the tub. It was highly unusual for me to take a bath in the forenoon. I will always remember Deloris' comment as she inspected the previously inflamed area of my tailbone. She stated that not only was the large inflamed cyst completely gone, but that the skin where it had been "looked and felt like a babies skin".

That has been thirty year's ago and that cyst has never returned. This was a strange aspect of that experience, however. The smaller cyst that was unaffected by the injury, was still there, but it didn't trouble me then and doesn't today. Wonderful Jesus! I am as puzzled as to why He chooses to heal some times and not others as any other Christian, but we do need to believe that He can and will, and we need to ask Him and trust Him.

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Chapter 24 GOD'S CALL TO COEUR D' ALENE

I need to tell you about Rusty, my eighteen-year-old autistic buddy who only stood three feet tall. Rusty's parents kept him at home, and home was over their tiny, community store a block north of the church. Those were days when mental retardation was not as socially accepted as today, and people tended to ostracize and ignore them.

Whenever I went to the store and saw Rusty standing by the stairway landing, I would call up to him in friendliness and recognition. It took awhile, but before long he would respond with a big smile and grunts of happiness. The adage that "aim at a child's head and you'll hit a parent's heart" was never more true than in this case. Soon the parents became friends, and, before we left Yakima, attended a revival meeting service. After we had moved, they called from the hospital when Rusty passed away and told me that Mrs. Gere had given the Lord her heart by Rusty's bedside. It pays to let the love of Jesus flow out to people.

Mr. Mitchell was the community drunk and lived in the house south of us across the street. Time after time he would stagger and stumble in front of the parsonage fence and then through the church parking area on his way home from the bar up the street. He was a typical town drunk -- unshaven, bleary-eyed, dirty person and clothes -- the whole nine yards. In spite of all of that, I loved him and tried by various means to be his friend.

One early evening he came stumbling by with two large sacks of groceries, and Deloris called to me that he was nearly falling. As we watched him pass the front of the church, cross the street and enter his gate, he finally fell heavily in a heap in his yard and lay there.

I ran to him as fast as I could and picked him up and helped him stagger into his filthy house. I cleared off his divan so that he could lie on it and told him that I would get his groceries. Both bags were broken open and groceries were all over the yard. Most of the contents were beer and wine, but I gathered them all up and placed the perishables in the refrigerator. I put a cold cloth on his bruised forehead and called his son, who came right over. After he arrived, we chatted awhile and I left, considerably shaken and sad.

"How in the world can we see this poor man saved from the powerful demon of drink?", I sobbed out to God. "Is he too hard a case? Is there any hope?"

Just before we left the Yakima church we were in a Spring revival, and had gone through the entire meeting with no visible results. On the very last night, a "complete stranger" (so we thought) walked into the church and sat on the back pew. It was Mr. Mitchell, but none of us knew him, for he was nicely dressed, shaved, hair combed and sober! When recognition ultimately came, I was ecstatic to be sure! Though he didn't get saved that night, God was clearly dealing with him and there were no apparent negative reactions from him. Nobody in the community had ever seen Mr. Mitchell in church. It pays to love people who are unlovely. Love and compassion in actions are the greatest sermons that a preacher can preach.

During the four years that we were privileged to pastor in Yakima, the Lord allowed me to claim twenty new families saved and a new church building constructed across the street on acreage of a large field. God did answer my small request, but not in Yakima. I wouldn't even try to explain the ways of the Lord. What I have learned is that God answers prayer, but hardly ever in our time frame or in the way we expect. Three of the new families I had been trusting for had been saved in the last year, and they would sort of be the down payment of what God was going to do.

After these four years with this fine congregation, we were caught totally unaware by a negative membership vote to remain. I don't need to tell you how heartbreaking this was. Time does heal all things and God did not fail us.

It was obvious that we wouldn't be staying in Yakima, but where did the Lord want us now? A call came from our good District Superintendent, Reverend E. E. Meeks, with the explanation that he wanted to place our names at the Coeur d' Alene, Idaho Wesleyan Church. When I replied to him that "God would have to knock me down for me to go there", an explanation is in order. My statement was neither brash or rebellious to God, nor was it a brush-off to my district superintendent -- just very ignorant.

Some of you who read these lines will understand my response instantly, and others of you will remain totally in the dark. It is enough for me to state that the Yakima church was by far the most conservative church on our district and the Coeur d' Alene church was the most liberal. We were miles apart in matters of personal convictions and conduct. My reaction was immediate and understandable. It wasn't either a rebellious or unwilling response -- it was "there is just no way that this would work" response. I'll jump ahead of the story to tell you that we are starting our 27th year of pastoring this church.

I have already told you that I drove school busses in three different pastorates -- Grandview, Washington, Wenatchee, Washington and in Yakima. So, when I went to the bus barn the next morning after Brother Meek's phone call proposing that we consider the Coeur d' Alene church, I had almost completely put the idea to rest and was instead thinking about any other churches that might have been open and where we might be moving. I was also understandably still crushed and hurt from being voted out of the Yakima church, especially when new families were being saved and neighbors were showing interest in coming. So, my mind was far from Coeur d' Alene, Idaho or anything to do with it.

As I have repeated in this book, I could take you to a very close proximity of the spot on South Broadway where I went totally blind. Here I was driving this big, 73 passenger Kennworth school bus loaded with children and doing perhaps 30 or 35 miles per hour on that narrow, two-lane avenue (people who drove it in 1966 would attest to its narrowness) and, suddenly without warning, I couldn't see a thing! My immediate concern was for the safety of the children (you don't ever "panic-stop" with a school bus unless absolutely necessary, for the children are not buckled up), and I was desperately trying to safely stop the bus and stay in my traffic lane.

Dear Reader, after a lifetime of having God speak to me in many and various manners and circumstances, I am still amazed at how clearly, but quietly, He can say what He wants said. With absolutely no audible words and in split-seconds faster than words and phrases, He said to me, "What did you say about not going to Coeur d' Alene?" Shivers run up and down my body and tears come right now as I write these words. I instantly told Him that I would go, of course. He knew that my response of the previous day was not in rebellion. I just couldn't see that it would work out with our conservative, divergent ways of thinking compared to those of the Coeur d' Alene people. My sight cleared as instantly as it had gone and I was right "smack-dab" in the center of that narrow, ten-foot lane. Only truck and bus drivers would know how hard it is to keep an eight foot

vehicle within the perimeters of a ten-foot lane, even when one is alert and wide-eyed. Wonderful Jesus!

It's wonderful to have God show you what to do. It's beyond adequate words of human expression to get unimpeachable, sure-fire direction from heaven and have no doubt about it. My fears and apprehensions were still in my mind. God never said one word to me about how anything would work out. He never gave me a schematic or a game plan. I didn't even know what the will of the Coeur d' Alene people would be if our names were presented to them. God said to go, and that was enough.

Now, hold your seats! I'll never explain women, and they will never explain men (we're just too comprehensive and profound), but listen to this! All of these occurrences were taking place in the spring of the year 1966. When I returned from my bus run and told Deloris of these strange happenings of the past three hours, she got this far away look in her eyes and replied that she knew in March at our ministerial convention that we would be in Coeur d' Alene as their pastors. Such feelings were inexplicable to her and so she never said anything to me about them.

Al and Evaneille Bailey, fine, committed laymen at the Coeur d' Alene church, were in attendance at the convention in March. Evie was a very vocal, opinionated, fun-loving, animated kind of person. You never wondered if Evaneille were in any group. It was impossible not to know. As Deloris viewed her cackling animation in a group of ladies, it came to her that we would pastor them and she promptly dismissed it as a passing thought.

We moved to Coeur d' Alene Idaho in July of 1966 and it became the scene of many heartaches and blessings and everything in between. The Coeur d' Alene Wesleyan Church became our lives, and Coeur d' Alene, Idaho became the "hometown" of our three children. It more than likely will always remain so.

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Chapter 25 AN ELEVEN MONTH REVIVAL

I have chosen not to speculate why half of the good people at the Yakima, Washington Wesleyan Church voted to have a new pastor. I love all of them and value their independence in thought and choice. I spend little time thinking of what might have been, for, number one, it is a futile waste of time, and, number two, what we think may have been if we had our way in any matter could be in error. All that I know is that God graciously gave to Deloris and me and the Coeur d' Alene congregation what He had led me to trust Him for in Yakima, and much more.

It would take another book just to write down the events that have occurred here in this place, so I must both limit and condense them. Some stories must be told. One thing that neither of us had to struggle over was whether we should be here or not. That was a settled issue for sure.

The original white-framed church sat on the corner of Third and Birch Streets and was built in 1918 and had obviously outlived its usefulness. The 2 by 4 rafters were sagging, much of

the sill-plates were rotted and the building overall was in need of serious repair or replacement. I want to detail just one aspect of this that was typical of the entire building.

You entered the vestibule, and hence the rear of the sanctuary, from the East on Third Street. The platform and altar area was in the West end of the sanctuary. Immediately to the south of the platform, right in front of the entire seating area, was an opened trap door, for want of a better word. This exposed the stairway to the basement, which accessed all Sunday school rooms, furnace room, small kitchen facilities AND the two bathrooms. Consequently, anyone needing to use the bathrooms during church services had two options: he could go outside from the rear of the church and around to a south door to the basement (which few did, especially in the cold of Fall and Winter) or take the simple, most direct route of traipsing in front of the entire congregation and down the trapdoor stairway. Such an act was both embarrassing and distracting, and it appeared like a burial with each enactment with this person disappearing down into this hole in the church floor. Obviously, I saw the humor in it.

Remember that I mentioned in an earlier chapter of how upset I was when the Yakima construction work occupied my time eight hours a day for two years with Watten Construction Company? This came back to me time after time in the ensuing years. We began almost immediately discussing the building needs of the church. Those discussions led to a major remodeling that resulted in (1) a Sunday school office right beside the pastor's study, (2) a badly-needed nursery, and (3) a stairway at the back of the sanctuary. What a blessing! The "trap door" was permanently retired, and no one mourned its passing!

God began to move upon our congregation! Perhaps by now every reader is aware that this has been a lifelong pursuit of mine. A small, but powerful, book, "When God Stepped Down From Heaven", came into my life at the very beginning of my pastoral ministry, that established the simple ministerial goals from that day until now. They will be the same until I die. I don't know how long that God will keep us here in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho, or whether we will ever pastor any other church, or if so, where it might be. I don't know where we will retire or if we will retire, for I don't know whether our health will allow future pulpit ministry or not. I have no idea what I'll be doing or where I'll be living when the rapture or death will end my earthly sojourn, but I know in my heart that my ministerial goals will be the same as they have been all through my adult life. I WANT TO SEE GOD MOVE.

I realize that I am stubborn in this and am considered non-progressive and generally unrealistic in my expectations. All that I can say is that the vision that God gave me in the 1950's for a community-wide and countryside-wide, heaven-sent revival when I started my pastoring has not only remained viable and desirable, but it gets stronger and more imperative in my soul as the days come and go.

The little booklet referred to above describes the Hebrides revival of 1949 through 1951 and how God shook those Scottish Isles with His power until every person was aware of what was occurring. People by the multiplied hundreds sought and found God at home, at work, in taverns, in vehicles, in ditches, in open fields as well as at church. I'm still asking God to do that in Coeur d' Alene, Northern Idaho and the Palouse. If I never see it happen with my two eyes, I believe God anyway. If the Lord moves us from here, wherever we land, I intend to believe Him

for His wonderful, gracious Holy Spirit to move there! He lives in my heart! He fires up my spirit and pervades my desires and energizes my soul with His powerful presence! It is an incredible adventure to have the greatest power of the universe living and dwelling in our hearts!

But, oh, how I long to see Him move redemptively upon and within the lives of the backsliders and unsaved of our area. I want Him to move with such unmistakable effect and in such broad influence that no church or person will be praised or credited. Wouldn't that be great!?

God began to move upon our small congregation with such power that I did not preach at scheduled services half of the time for a period of eleven months. Conviction was so general and lay so heavily upon the hearts of people that we were ministering to, in and out of church services, that folks were praying through at all times and places. It was common for folks to be under such conviction that they would come and seek God during the preliminaries before I even had a chance to preach. **THAT DOESN'T BOTHER ME A BIT. I WELCOME IT!** People would pray through during Sunday school or the mid-week prayer meetings and even in board meetings. Physical healings were occurring at various intervals, and some were being instantly delivered of alcohol and narcotic addictions

I don't need to tell you that I was in spiritual "high clover"! And I need to issue a big disclaimer at this point. These kinds of movings of God don't occur because of a pastor or evangelist. I was just the instrument that God had positioned here at that time. **SOME SAINTS HAD BEEN WEEPING AND INTERCEDING BEFORE GOD FOR YEARS LONG BEFORE WE HAPPENED ON THE SCENE.** Previous pastors and mothers and fathers in the church had been waiting on God and asking and knocking and seeking. I was only being used of God as a catalyst.

I want to stress an important point right here. I already mentioned that while we were in Yakima, three new families had been saved during one revival meeting, in fact, in the first three nights of the revival. When the meeting was over, one of our key laymen unwisely made this public comment, "We'll have this brother (referring to the evangelist) come back again if he can help us see three new families saved like this". The truth is that any number of evangelists could have "picked that fruit". Here's the truth of that story.

One of those newly saved families were at that revival meeting as the result of an uncle, who was a member of our church, having spent literally years and years of living before them and loving them and praying for them and letting Christ be seen through him. Another family was saved as the result of the Baptist brother leaving his church and bringing them to ours. And the third family were there for the evangelist to preach to because I had contacted them by calling door to door in the community. Then, as all good pastors do, we had been in their home and witnessed to them and showed them the love of Jesus and a better way and little by little helped them to overcome their skepticism of churches, preachers and Christians.

Over the years, I have come to see that the church needs to exercise caution in giving credit or taking credit for the salvation of souls. Few of us knows the price that has been paid, usually behind the scenes, in love and prayer and involvement into people's lives, that nobody knows about. In my personal evangelistic endeavors in camp meetings and revival meetings, I make sure

that these thoughts are expressed and known. Even so, during this time of the special moving of the Holy Spirit upon the Coeur d' Alene Church and community, I realized that I was privileged to be the reaper. Someone else had tilled the ground and planted and watered the seeds.

Butch O'Shea (not his real name) was the alcoholic husband of one of our faithful Sunday school teachers. He had tried to walk with God before, but booze had kept him defeated. Butch was in the scrap iron business with a husband and wife team and all three of them were alcoholics. While both men were drunk one night, Butch fell under a loaded truck and the duals rolled right over his midsection. When I arrived at a Spokane Hospital, the first diagnosis was that he wouldn't even survive his injuries. When he did survive, they told his wife that he couldn't possibly walk again and that she should expect him to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair.

As I visited and dealt with Butch about his soul, he claimed to get things fixed up with God and Mrs. Boone and I, with his wife, brought him home from the hospital in a wheelchair. One Sunday night after a particularly blessed service in which we had anointed and prayed for Butch, I needed to meet with the church board in my study. While we were in session we could hear shouting and rejoicing in the sanctuary and, without any warning, Butch burst into the study door praising God and very definitely on his feet just like the paralytic in Jesus' day "walking and leaping and praising God". This doesn't have to be believed, but I saw it, and so did dozens of other people at church that night. Butch was out of that church (wouldn't you have been too?) yelling like a Comanche and running up and down the sidewalk in front.

Whether you have ever seen anything like this or not, at least you know why I long to see God move -- again and again -- in the 1990s -- today! This was far from the end of this story about Butch. It gets more incredible. He had developed an angry cancer (that's what the doctor called it) about the size of a fifty cent piece on his heel from many weeks and months of hospitalization and recuperation. THE NEXT DAY, when he arose from bed, that malignant sore lay intact on the bed sheet and his heel was well. I know that many who read these lines are skeptical, and for good reason. I am no guru or faith healer or even possess more faith than any other Christian or preacher. The only reason that I can come up with, after years of searching my mind as to why there have been so many instances of God's miraculous power displayed around us, is that I yearn so greatly and constantly to see His power and glory. Maybe my great, intense desire provides a channel or catalyst or atmosphere in which He can work. I would call my place in it all as great desire, but far from much faith. I know that my faith is really very small.

Throughout my entire ministry, I don't think that I have known any other individual who was so much a recipient of God's miraculous power as Butch O'Shea. God was trying to draw him to Himself on the one hand and bring glory through him on the other.

As usual, Butch was not only an enthusiastic witness to God's saving and healing power, but he immediately wanted to see his loved ones and close friends saved. It always works that way. However, a strange mood rested upon my soul when he announced to me that he was going to get his former business partners saved. There was an instant warning that flashed in my mind and soul, and I was so deeply impressed with danger that I told him that he should not go to them. You all know that this would be 180 degrees opposed to the normal response of a preacher who believes and teaches that a certain sign of genuine conversion is to be vigorous about soul winning.

I don't ever recall a similar experience, but God was warning me and I faithfully passed that warning on to him.

He waved off my concern and told me rather confidently that God had done so much for him that he wanted his friends to get saved too. I left that encounter with a heavy heart. Butch had quit his drinking alright, but he was still smoking and took the attitude that whenever God wanted him to quit, that He would just take it away from him. I don't claim any special gifts of perceptivity when this kind of thing has happened throughout my ministry, but I do know that the Lord has very specific ways of getting His thoughts through to us.

What I tell you now is the truth as surely as I am alive. God was desperately trying to preserve AND use this man's miraculous testimony, even though he continued to spend lots of time with his former drinking and business partners. I'm not positive of the time frame at this point, but it stands in my mind that within a two-week period (and it could have been less than that) the husband first, and then the wife, died naturally of unknown causes. It was even reported that way in the papers, and neither of them were fifty at the time. I believed then, and still do today, that, knowing that they would not repent, God took this husband and wife out of this world in the effort to save this dear man's soul.

Again, I can understand a lot of skepticism about matters such as this. All that I know is what happened and when it happened -- and I believe that I know why it happened as it did. God's Word says that His ways are past finding out. (SEE Job 9:10) I'm sorry that Butch did not stay true to the Lord, but I understand that he got right with God before he passed away.

Other great experiences occurred during this season of the moving of God in our church. Wonderful, gracious conviction was a continuing aspect. One salesman with his fine family who had been attending was under mighty and obvious conviction service after service. His wife and a number of his children had sought God for forgiveness, but Smiley (not his real name) was proud and unbending to any appeal.

One particularly moving service as I extended the invitation to the hearers, he stood griping the pew in front of him, as sweat popped up on his forehead and face. I've seen a good number of people do this over the years, but most were not so noticeably reluctant. You could see the set of his jaw and the gritted teeth. Anyone who has witnessed my invitations will confirm that I will not pressure listeners to respond, and there are two primary reasons. One is that I lean one hundred percent on the blessed Holy Spirit to do the persuading. That is His department and He can do an infinitely better job of it than I can. The other reason is the basic trust that I place in individuals having good judgment. I respect their judgment and volition as I would my own. It is simply treating them as I would want to be treated if our places were reversed. It is not a biblical adage, but I believe that a man persuaded against his will is of the same opinion still". I like to see people respond to the clear presentation of the gospel and not to my emotional intimidation. I would never knowingly do that.

Smiley never responded to the evangelistic appeal -- though others had, and the service was over and the lights out and we all went to our homes. We went home to help me get packed for an out of town week and a half revival meeting. What we didn't know was that God was still

working on my friend, Smiley, at the home of his friend, who had been attending our church for some time. Both men had been Air Force (and drinking) buddies in Oklahoma. The Christian family had been saved some time earlier in Oklahoma and were now trying to win his old service buddy to the Lord. They sat around the table drinking coffee and talking about the things that had happened at church. Some time after midnight, Smiley prayed through beside the breakfast table.

I was awakened around 1:00 a.m. by a banging at the front door of the parsonage. I wish that I could have captured on film the scene that greeted me as I opened that door! There stood these two former Air Force drinking buddies grinning like a couple of ten-year olds who had just got new bikes. Smiley said, "Brother Boone. I just got saved and had to let you know before you left town to go to your revival meeting". I promise anyone that they can awaken me at 1:00 a.m. any day of the week for a testimony like that! What a thrill. Praise the Lord.'

There were seven new families saved during that eleven month period, besides numerous individual conversions of men, women and teens and children. There is nothing to compare with the moving, convicting, converting power of the Spirit of God. And He doesn't change! If we can get in line and in "sync" He still moves today!

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Chapter 26 A DEBT-FREE NEW CHURCH

I am a conservative from my top-most, gray hair to the soles of my callused feet, so risk taking is hardly even in my vocabulary. Thinking ahead and planning ahead is the engine of my choice machinery. My eldest daughter says that I am so practical that I stink. If so, I like such perfume.

In our third year here in Coeur d' Alene it was decided that we should build a new church and not remodel the old one. I'll jump ahead and tell you that in two year's time we had a new, debt-free church seating 175 that cost us no more than the \$25,000.00 we had estimated it would take to remodel the old building. How this all came about is another instance of many very precious Divine interventions.

A pastor friend of mine, whom I love and respect dearly, was the antithesis of me. He was what I would call a "plunger". Everything that he did was "full speed ahead". His philosophy was to "just do something and God will help you pay for it". The truth here is that we must "wear our own armors", so to speak. They built their new church and borrowed money that took them twenty years and zillions in interest to pay for. That may be OK for others, but is just not "my cup of tea". I hate debt and interest. This brother just kept rubbing it in about how badly we needed a new church like theirs and told me how we could sell bonds that in reality obligated members of the congregation and that we just didn't have enough faith and blah, blah.

Accepting criticism, even if it is good-natured for the most part and supposedly "constructive", is hard for me to take. It is one of my worst faults. I try not to let it bother me, but it does anyhow, and I keep working on it. I was bawling and squalling before the Lord about this

brother's charge of no faith (and I realize that I don't have much because of temperamental reluctance) and was asking God to some way take away my natural unwillingness to dare and venture, and replace it with great, achieving faith like my brother had and on and on.

The Lord spoke to me so clearly that if we would start to build, we would never have to stop for the lack of money. Can you beat that? This was as certain to me as I am writing it down now. Isn't the Lord wonderful?! He knew me! He knew all about my unadventurous temperament. He knew how much that I hated indebtedness and paying untold thousands of dollars in interest. He was so willing to use me in a way that was in line with my temperament.

This is not to suggest that faith in this instance were unnecessary, for quite a bit of it was called for. It is just that my faith could operate in His revealed will -- in His leadership. We didn't have a silver dime in our church building fund. There was no building fund. The good people were struggling to pay me \$60.00 a week salary and I was personally carpentering supplementally to support my family. There was also the church board to convince.

The Lord enabled me to draw up adequate plans and I found a local engineer who approved and placed his seal on them (he said that he did not do this, but was very pleased with the quality in the drawings, scales and specs) and then I took it to the local church board. God blessed that board meeting with such a spirit of favor that they could all sense the hand of God in it all and unanimously approved the proposal.

The story of how God miraculously brought certain people in to haul dirt and excavate would take a whole chapter. Hundreds of tons of dirt were removed (so that the resultant building and parking lot would be on a street level) and never cost us a cent. Funds came from sources still unknown to us that accounted for about two thirds of the construction costs. The rest were raised from the congregation in a two year period. The Lord was as good as His promise and we never stopped once because we didn't have money for materials.

Besides the extra giving for the building from our largely laboring class of congregation, the people stretched their faith and gave me a 50% boost in salary to \$90.00 per week. I still had to work some (I built one house during that time), but could give most of my free time to the construction.

What a joy it was to see this building take shape! God intervened so many times so that we could do the work ourselves and thereby save the church the labor costs. I was able to trade my carpentering skills to other tradesmen so that there was no money needed time and again. A local electrical contractor said that he would take out the permit and oversee the installation as I did the work. He was the largest contractor in the city then and was so busy he didn't want or need more work. Bless his heart, and what trust he placed in me! I would not, of course, fail or embarrass that kind of confidence placed in me, so I did everything as good or better than specified. As everything in the church building had to be in conduit, this was a new challenge, but after a 'bit my contractor friend said that he would get me a license and hire me to work for him if I didn't want to carpenter any more. The inspection from the Building Department was not only approved, but with a fine commendation. Thank You, Lord!

I need to tell you a little incident of how various people would do their part of encouragement. I had just finished nailing down a bottom plate and was ready to stand up some ten foot studs for the northwest walls when I heard a small boy's voice coming up to me from the excavation. He couldn't have been more than seven or eight and said, "You are sure doing a good job, Mister." I kindly thanked him and thought to myself, "What does he know? I could be doing a horrible job, but he would have said that anyway." His compliment meant nothing as to my efficiency, but it was a great encouragement that a boy would make an effort to notice hard work and improvement. We don't have to have any special expertise or great knowledge to be an encourager. Anyone can do it. One older couple who I will tell you more about later, would drive over every day and see the progress. That meant so much just to be interested.

Every week or two, (we guessed that it was on paydays), an envelope would come with fifteen or twenty dollars in it. The addresses and writing was always printed to ensure anonymity, and would always enclose some encouragement such as, "Keep up the good work! The church looks great! Good job!" This continued faithfully for all of those two years and the anonymous person must have been in attendance for the dedication service, for we received the last letter the week afterwards with the simple observation that "the service was beautiful."

When I was laying up the cement blocks for the basement walls, my father, Roscoe, would come by each day early on his way to work and mix up a batch of mortar for me. He helped me place the heavy 22 foot I-beam that carries the floor joists over the fellowship hall. I think of him often as I view the room or walk over it as I pray. The I-beam is unseen, covered above by underlayment and carpet and underneath by sheet-rock, but it faithfully carries the floor service after service.

Brother Guy Norris, our dear Assistant Pastor for ten years, was really the only retired, and therefore available, man of our group who could help during the days. At nights when the working men were available, I was bushed. My days always start at 3:30 or 4:00 a.m.! so that I can get in the necessary prayer and study time. Brother Norris was such an encouragement through it all with such a constantly beautiful spirit. One of his favorite sayings was, "Nothing is too good for the Lord".

He was helping me build a new house on the west side of the city a few years earlier and while we were putting up some fascia from a scaffold, we put a little too much upward pressure (and therefore downward pressure on the scaffolding) on the warped 1 X 8" cedar board, and cracked the scaffold supports. Down we went with pieces of scaffold, hammers and nails and arms and legs flailing, about thirteen feet into the excavation. Man! He must have been 65-70 at the time and I just knew that something Irish that shouldn't be broken would be and I would be in for it! Neither of us uttered a word and rode it out to the bottom, which was fortunately, very soft, sandy soil. Other than being shook up, we were OK, but always after, Brother Norris would get that unique twinkle in his deep, blue eyes and tell about "how two holiness preachers fell." Or he'd say, "Now, I want to tell you about the fall of two holiness preachers." Bless his memory!

I need to tell you about Al Bailey. He was a class A layman in every way. Al was small of stature and, as I am large, there was much good-natured teasing between us. I called him Zacchaeus and he'd call me Samson. When I would tease him about his diminutive stature, he'd

say, "Some very expensive and powerful things come in small packages." Here was the measure of the man. You could always count on Al whenever there was something to be done about the church. When I would thank him for helping me, he would inevitably say, "Pastor, you are the one who should be thanked. This is our job, not yours." Al Bailey had a pastor's heart. He had the heart of a father. He had the heart of a giant. He was a doorkeeper of the church.

Then I need to tell you about Sister Grace Scott who was a very quaint, no-nonsense, retired school teacher. I could write a chapter on her alone. Her husband, George, was a precious brother, but very meek and quiet and soft-spoken and followed his wife around like a puppy. She said to us once about him, "God showed me that George would die before I will. Aren't you, George?" And he smiled and obediently agreed to dying before she would. They always sat near the rear of the sanctuary so that they could scoot out and thereby avoid any of the "foolishness and levity" (as she thought) that occurred among the saints after the service ended.

In one service, I saw him lean over and quietly whisper something to her and she looked at him rather strangely and then said loudly enough for all to hear, "Well, go!" He sort of grinned and arose and walked quietly to the bathroom. Her "testimonies" were a gas. She didn't intend to be funny and I guess that is why it always seemed to be so. Whenever her remarks would put people under their seats, she would say, "Well, that's not very funny!," and then we would really roar. You can imagine the gargantuan effort it required of me standing up there in front of everyone. She would "testify" from a little notepad extracted from her purse! I kid you not! Once when she was being wheeled into surgery over an emergency situation with a kinked bowel, Deloris and I were following along trying to reassure her (the Scotts had no children or relatives who cared a fig for them), she looked at me just as the orderly was taking her through the surgery room doors and airily stated, "If I conk out, Pastor, you take care of George." She was quite a lady.

When we were nailing gussets onto the roof trusses, she wanted to help and there was lots of nailing to be done! She brought a little tack hammer along and had everybody in stitches with her floppy, ultra wide-brimmed pink hat. It would take scores of little "peck-peck-pecks" with that tack hammer for her to get one six penny nail into place! We would put her and George on a truss over in one corner and let them peck, peck, peck away. Those dear people scrimped and saved and economized all of their lives to leave something to God's work, and left the church about \$90,000.00 in property when they went to heaven. She was strange, but loved God with all there was of her.

I have to tell you about the new church pews. When the time came to order them, we were all in a called local church conference. I always did that whenever there were issues of significance to decide. I made on-the-spot construction decisions; called frequent building committee meetings to settle matters that the five-man group could work on; and then got the entire church membership together in all larger matters! It's always best from a number of standpoints to involve as many people in choices as possible without making the process too cumbersome. The issue to be decided on the pews were twofold. First, whether to buy all oak pews at \$125.00 each (Remember that this was 23 year's ago) or spend an additional \$25.00 for acoustical and cushioned ones. Secondly, if we opted for the padded pews, the kind and color of the fabric.

When the final vote was taken, only Evaneille Bailey voted for the all oak pews, but she took all of the good-natured ribbing without offense. She was not a person to be easily intimidated. After these 23 years of use, those bright gold, cushioned pews still look nice. What sold most of us was that inevitable scratches in solid wood are there -- period. The nylon fabric resists even hard cuts and can be replaced. We don't have one cut in all of the thirty pews.

A really important testimony needs to be made here. In every matter of choice -- involving scores of corporate discussions and decisions -- during this two-year construction process, there was not one bad scene of hurt feelings or upsets or even contentiousness. Generally, in most churches, the worst will come out during a major church construction project. The Lord really helped us.

At the May annual meeting following our moving from the old church and into the new, and before we had installed the air conditioning, we met in the fellowship hall downstairs because the sanctuary was so hot. We had temporarily moved the old pews down into that room intending to buy individual folding chairs at a later time. We were sitting on the old pews during the one and a half to two hour business meeting! I have already mentioned how very vocal of a person Evaneille was, and she observed after a while that "those old boards were sure hard to sit on", only she used terms that all of us who knew her could guess quite accurately. Her mother-in-law, Sister Maud Bailey, who was the antithesis of Evaneille (very, very quiet and soft-spoken) said, "Who was that person who voted against the cushioned pews?", and we all cracked up, including Evaneille!

The purchase of the new pews was another minor miracle. We set them up as memorial pews with attractive brass plaques affixed to each back, and every one of them were individually bought and paid for by the time they were installed. They were one of the largest, individual costs (as was the carpet) but the Lord helped us to have all of the money when needed.

The new sanctuary was filled to overflowing as our General Superintendent, Reverend Melvin Snyder, dedicated it to the worship of heaven's God in 1972. It was all paid for -- no loan, no interest and not a day lost because of inadequate money. The Lord is faithful to His promises, isn't He?

At least our family would agree that the greatest miracle of this two-year construction period occurred during this dedication weekend, and was not directly related to the construction or financing of it. It had to do with the salvation of an eleven-year old girl, which I think that you'll agree is the greatest miracle of all.

Our three children experienced all of the events of the eleven month revival described in the preceding chapter as well as the continuing miracles that occurred during the construction of the new church. Children aren't saved just because they are exposed to the truth or a moving of the Holy Spirit. I have known dozens of PKs (preacher's kids) who didn't have a solid assurance of personal salvation.

God brought our Miriam to Himself in a very extraordinary manner that proves again just how personal and unique each experience of grace is! At some point during the weekend of Brother Snyder's preaching at Coeur d' Alene, God showed her a checkerboard, only the squares

were black and white instead of the traditional black and red. People were standing on each of the squares (her included) and she perceived (again, in God's own special, inimitable way of communicating with us) that the persons standing on the white squares were saved and those on the black ones were lost. As soon as that realization reached her consciousness, she cautiously peered down at her square, and it was black! She immediately left her place and bowed at the new altar of the church and found Jesus as her own personal Savior. God will show us if we truly want to know and we'll never forget it either.

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Chapter 27

TWO WONDERFUL HEALINGS

Before setting down these two wonderful instances, I want to testify to a brief, but very positive, unmistakable incident that is typical of the way that God reveals His constant care and concern for His children. I know as well as any of you how many times we struggle over the reality of God in our lives when He seems far away and very uninvolved with what is happening day to day. Most of our days are uneventful, and we can read books such as this one and think, "Nothing like this ever happened to me". The specific reason for my taking the time and putting forth the considerable effort to write this book is so that we can know how interested God is in each of us -- that God is constantly watching and monitoring our everyday lives. It is only when we look back along the trail that we can see His care and concern that was there all of the time.

Only rarely can we see this interest and involvement at the very time. This happened a number of year's ago to me, and it was wonderful! I was doing something that pastors do all of the time -- calling on sick people. We do this day in and day out -- week by week -- and it is really not a very glamorous part of pastoring. In fact, for the most part, it is draining emotionally and physically. Lots of times pastors put on their "encouragement smiles" (and please don't interpret this act as hypocrisy. It is a matter of ministering good cheer and blessing) as they enter sick rooms. Sick people don't need long faces and "you poor thing" pats on the shoulder. They need smiles that exude confidence and assurance. They need upbeat, positive, hope and encouragement that speaks of a living, capable God. But don't think for one minute that pastors always feel that way. We get our encouragement by drawing for the Well that never runs dry, and often our cups get rather dry and we really need Jesus to juice us up. He does! Praise His name.

I was on my way to Kootenai Medical Center to make a hospital call just as I have hundreds of times in twenty-six years, and could take you to within one hundred feet or so of the spot in the 1200 block of Government Way, where the Blessed Spirit of God spoke these startling words to me.

"Lester, you are now serving Me longer than you served the devil when you were unsaved". Obviously, I did some quick, mental arithmetic to March the 18th, 1953, and wonder of wonders, the Lord was right! Doesn't that sound silly? Checking the Lord out for accuracy?

No. That wasn't my motive in the least. You know that. It was an automatic, human reaction that every single person would have responded to just as I did. I haven't heard of another Christian

who has had this happen to him, but I'm sure that there are. That it is highly unusual is undeniable. What impressed, and I might add, instantly greatly humbled and softened my spirit, was how personal and involved the Holy Spirit is in our everyday lives. I was barreling down a street and at a spot that was as ordinary and familiar to me as the back of my hand. I had driven over this very spot in the same vehicle wearing the same suit and doing the same thing in the same way as scores of times before. Listen to me now. ON EVERY ONE OF THOSE FORMER "EVERYDAY, ORDINARY, FAMILIAR" OCCASIONS WHEN I SENSED NO SPECIAL NEARNESS OF GOD, HE HAD BEEN THERE NEVERTHELESS. If that doesn't bless you, "your wood is wet", to phrase it as colorfully as Sister Dorothy Ard would.

Besides that perception, I was greatly touched by God's accuracy. He had the exact time pinpointed to on absolute accuracy -- beyond any time measurement known to man. Can you beat that.!? My mind was a million miles from the instance or the date or even the year of my conversion. It was far away from that wonderful, incomparable time that Jesus came into my heart and life and I knew it.

Why did He do it? I think that I know, and it wasn't so that I could write about it in a book some day. He didn't do it to bring Him glory and honor, though I am doing my best to accomplish that. He did it just because He loves me. He wanted to bless and encourage and lift me. Glory be to Jesus. Jesus is the best Friend any of us will ever have and He doesn't treat His friends shabbily regardless of how it may appear sometimes. When Jesus Christ said that "He would never leave or forsake us!! HE WON'T, even when we do sometimes feel abandoned by God and man. Hallelujah! Glory be to Jesus! And don't get upset by my shouting a little bit. That's the place to do it.

Let me close this book by relating the instances of two great healings. Reverend Guy Norris, our good assistant pastor, was aging and his body was showing the strain of the years. He wound up with a heart condition that required the implantation of a pacemaker eight to ten years before his death. He had strong faith in God's ability and willingness to heal our bodies and we had anointed and prayed for his heart condition a time or two without there being any visible results.

About five years later he wound up in the hospital with something painfully wrong in his abdominal area. Without alarming him, the doctor informed his family that he had a cancer in his bladder and, after treating the infection with antibiotics, sent him home. Sister Norris shared the doctor's diagnosis with me and said that the family has chosen not to say anything to him about it right away.

The following Sunday Brother Norris was at his usual place in church but was considerably pale and weak. God settled down upon us in His unmistakable manner, and Brother Norris was characteristically weeping and quietly praising the Lord. At a lull in the continuance of the preliminaries, he arose and asked me if we could anoint and pray for his heart condition that had been bothering him by all of the physical stresses recently. As the Bible instructs us, I called for the elders of the church, as well as others who believed in Divine healing today, to join me as I prayed for and anointed our precious brother for his heart problem.

What happened then was a clear to me as I can see my dictionary and concordance standing on my desk as I write. As I placed my hands on Brother Norris' forehead placing a tiny drop of oil there and lifted up my eyes to heaven's God, and as I began to pray for Jesus to touch his heart, I could see and sense my right hand going right down through his head and shoulders and pass his heart and on down to rest on his malignant bladder.

People, you have to realize that I am definitely not a spectacular person. I abhor dramatics and theatrics and spectacular feats, so-called, that discredit genuineness and reality. Maybe this is one reason that God trusts me with such wonderful occurrences. In my wildest dreams I would not have conjured up such a thing. I just don't have natural faith for such goings on. I've never had a similar experience or heard of one like it.

This, and other instances similar to it, have convinced me years ago that God won't be dictated to or anticipated. My experiences in walking in the Spirit and witnessing His incredible, unusual operations in and through us have proven to me that His ways **WILL HARDLY EVER BE DUPLICATED. GOD'S MIRACULOUS WORKING GENERALLY IS UNIQUE TO EACH UNFOLDING SITUATION.** Isn't He a great God!?! He is the creative God, and He can roll out unique and unprecedented occurrences all day long if He chooses to, and not a one of them will be a duplicate.'

This is a major reason why I personally oppose "assembly line healings". When you see one, you've seen them all. Look at Jesus' healings. None of them followed a pattern.

Nobody but the Lord and me knew that, by direct intervention, I had "touched and anointed" Brother Norris' bladder and not his heart. I have to honestly tell you that I was afraid to tell anyone but my wife. People, I'm serious! I don't have much faith, and the Lord and I both know it. I am temperamentally a skeptical person.

But the next day when Brother Norris was scheduled to have x-rays for the "bladder cancer" that they already knew was there -- so that they would know where and how to radiate it, if that were even possible -- they couldn't get a clear picture after three separate tries. After three tries, Brother Norris told them that they may as well not try again and that if they couldn't get a clear picture after three tries that he was going to trust God. It was a sure sign to him that the Lord wanted him to trust Him. That doesn't set too well with medical people, but he insisted, put on his clothes and went home. When God took him to heaven years later, it wasn't from bladder cancer.

The final testimony is about my own dear Deloris and how she is walking today because God touched her. Without making a public spectacle of either her or her two doctors, a relatively routine surgery that was scheduled for 1 1/2 hours grew into nearly three times that long when serious complications arose. Tumors from the affected area had attached themselves to the bowel and their removal necessitated a bowel resection -- certainly not routine.

The blood flow was kept from the lower half of the body for much longer than should have been, and when she awakened in the recovery room, her left leg was paralyzed resulting from twelve inches of the nerve sheathing to that leg being dead. We ultimately discovered all of this from months of therapy and treatment by, first, a neurologist and then a neurosurgeon. I still have

their reports verifying the condition and the cause. We did not sue the surgeons because we knew that what happened was an honest mistake in the first place and because we just don't sue in the second.

I know the legal climate of our generation, but for the life of me I can't understand suing a person who makes an honest mistake. What a day in which we live! We might not have this current, so-called "health crises situation if Americans weren't so greedy and suit happy. Doctors err just like the rest of us do. I know that some of you are scratching your heads "where it doesn't itch". That's OK.

The fact is that Deloris' neurosurgeon told her flatly that she could be thankful that she were not in a wheelchair and that he treated neurological injuries like this right along that refrained the patients from ever walking again. This is the story of how she walks today.

Her leg was not only useless (I had to lift it into the car), but pained her constantly and atrophied (shrunk). Obviously I said little about that, but it was pitiful to see her beautiful thigh shrink away and look like it was someone else's like one didn't belong to the other thigh. Besides the condition was the neurosurgeon's statement that the injury was permanent -- that any healing that would occur had.

Deloris continued to play the organ for church services, half dragging that atrophied leg up the two steps to the platform. This figures into what happened on one Sunday morning. I wish that the church could see that she doesn't have to make big spiels and announcements about the person and power of the Holy Spirit. My life and ministry has proven that in the regular course of church activity, miracles will occur randomly and periodically if we will just stay low at His feet, keep pure in heart and life and keep our hearts and minds open to His leadership.

The young husband of a newly-saved couple would praise the Lord at the "drop of a hat", so to speak. He was very vocal, so that when others had publicly stated that they were trusting God to "heal Sister Boone's leg", Bill jumped up and said, "This is the first time that I ever heard of this. If Jesus still heals today, let's pray for her and trust God to do it!" Oh, for the church to retain that first-love fervor! Bill rather put the squeeze on the rest of us (both Deloris and I were reluctant to place our personal needs before the church) and so I invited the people to gather around her and we anointed and prayed for her amidst considerable feeling. Deloris is greatly loved and respected by these dear people.

She went back to the organ and we finished the service with her there, and I announced a dismissal prayer. What a sight she and I routinely walked to the rear of the building to avoid collisions, with my allowing her to precede me if she had been at the organ (as this day) for an invitation or a closing hymn. This time, as I watched her arise from the organ bench, and move towards the two steps down, there wasn't the slightest hesitation or limp or dragging, and she wasn't faking it, for she hates fakery with the same passion that I do. She couldn't have made that atrophied leg move if she had willed it to! But I didn't watch amazed alone. If anyone had his eyes closed for the benediction, it would have been the person praying, and I'm not even sure of that. Everybody was watching her walk unhindered down the south aisle and then we all started grabbing for hankies, for there were many tears of grateful joy.

I love to hear our two daughters sing, "There's a great parade of miracles, and it's led by a wonderful King. Oh, I'm so glad that I'm one of those miracles. We're miracles of Jesus, our King!" (Gaither). Glory be to Jesus!

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THE END