

God's Path, My Journey - Book Sample

(Blog 0010 AndrewHadden.org)

What follows is a sample of my book, *Into the Storm: My Story*, that is an account of God's path of preparation for me, his messages, and his discipline – an account of my journey thus far. God was preparing me to lead in a great “storm” coming for us all, so it can help others prepare for the storm they also will face. God said people needed to know me and insisted I put up on the web these first five chapters of my first book with my blogs. I had recalled someone who had just read these chapters remarking, “I feel like I know you.” God had told me to write like I was talking to someone sitting at my kitchen table. That is how I tend to start getting to know people, and allowing them to get to know me. I have tried to be open and honest about struggles, trials, and failings, and explain things as I lived them. Much of what was written was written in some form when experiences were fairly fresh. I have included the book introduction and table of contents, which will give a pretty good overview of the rest of the book and my journey. I should also note that the book allows one to also get to know God, through my accounts of him speaking to me and others, as well as his discipline, correction, encouragement, and love. The book is available on www.Amazon.com and you can find it by searching for the full book title and subtitle, in quotes.

Into the Storm
My Story

By Andrew G. Hadden

Published by Andrew G. Hadden
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Introduction

We are all headed into a storm. I went through a storm to prepare me to lead others through the one we are all about to go through. I had preparation for my storm, and preparation for the ones ahead that we will all go through. In this book, I tell my story in my own words, with much of it recorded as I lived it. But I also include much that God said to me along the way, and things he taught me, and things he had me share with others to prepare them for what we are all about to go through. The goal is for you to benefit from the lessons God taught me to prepare me, and help me endure, and not just survive, but thrive. It is me passing along God's mentoring and coaching of me, to you. I also pass along some of God's warnings as to what we are going to face in the coming storm.

This book is about the path that God has led me on over many years, the messages God has communicated to me and had me deliver to others as I walked that path, and the discipline of the Lord, upon me and upon his Church, along that path, and associated with those messages. This book is my story, a spiritual autobiography. It is also a prophetic allegory—a symbolic message from the Lord—that God later made clear he was writing into my life. Initially, I thought this book would include primarily what God had taught me in many years of walking with him in a very long preparation for my call. In the Bible we see even longer time periods in some cases. However, I have not seen anyone really record the trials and the lessons involved along the way. Perhaps this book will, in that sense, fill a void. Eventually, God said my book was "a primer in many things."

For a long time, I based my writing upon what God had told me was a purpose of the book: "To know you, and me." Note that to help people know God, I have made his words spoken to me or to others easy to find by bolding them throughout the book, at least the first time they are mentioned. My life and my story have been built around those words, so it seemed appropriate. Perhaps it illustrates another way to look at Christ's words saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Mat 4:4 NKJV). I see my life as built around an utterance from the Holy Spirit down at the altar when I first recognized God's call on my life when I was a young man. It said, "**Fear not to go . . .**" but then warned, "**But know this. You will be tried as by fire and refined as gold is refined, but brought forth as gold.**" I am passing along, by this book, much of what God taught me in over forty years that seemed to me to be spent in the fire. Additionally, in so doing, I am passing along to you what I know of him, the God directing me and directing my trials, my fire, to purify and shape me according to his purpose. Perhaps by reading this you can avoid some of the fire, or perhaps have to remain in it less time to learn the lessons God intends to teach you in that fire.

Few understand what it is like to be shaped and molded and have such close direction of their lives as this volume documents. Few would understand the pain involved, or anyone being willing to walk through it. The pain is justified by relationship with the Lord of the universe, the Creator. The more relationship he gives a person, the more they are willing to do anything to not lose it—the more they are willing to endure. So pain and relationship go together. He—Christ my savior—is worth it.

I will say that God told me, about the things coming, "**Give them hope.**" If you have endured the long years of preparation as I have, I pray my story will give you hope. God is preparing many in the fire, in the wilderness, to release in the times ahead. Many of his shepherds, his leaders in the times ahead, will be like John the Baptist and Moses, prepared in the

wilderness and not released until the time appointed by God. The wilderness has been their fire and their protection.

As I wrote, Christ, more and more, revealed a purpose in my life in this season to live out his pain in allegory, and in so doing tell of his pain. So, if my pain seems significant, his is far greater. I was only chosen to represent his pain in small measure. He loves us all. His pain is multiplied by everyone calling themselves a Christian and everyone that he longs to receive him and become part of his Bride, the Church.

But there is more at the end of the story. The allegory continues and is designed to give hope. The allegory, the type if you will, of Christ's new Bride is designed to give hope to the rejected, the hopeless. Christ is not who the Church as we know it has made him out to be, to those outside the church doors. He is the one that ministered to people the Pharisees, the religious leaders of his day, considered sinners and outcasts to be shunned as not welcome in their "church," you might say. Additionally, Christ prophesied warnings of judgment on the Pharisees. One day, after long delay, that judgment came. In A.D. 70, the judgment came and much of the old religious system was destroyed. The old persecuted the new in the time before the judgment. Then the new was released in greater measure. Now, two thousand years later, much of what was new has become like the old, like with the Pharisees. Now Christ is ready to go to the highways and byways and bring in his Bride that is not now in the Church as we know it, and, in many places, is not welcome. Additionally, he is ready to use as leaders those considered unfit by today's Pharisees.

Those rejected by the Church, judged and shunned by the Church, are welcome to accept the call to come to Christ. He is not like the Church. He loves the stained, soiled, rejected and abused. He loves those that have become entangled in the sins the Church considers most vile. He welcomes them to come be forgiven and cleansed and healed and made new in his sight. He welcomes them to become part of his "Bride" just before the wedding. Whether they have buildings or not, he will place them in relationships and appoint shepherds to love and watch over them. The formerly rejected will shepherd the rejected, the cast aside will shepherd the cast aside. But they will be accepted by him, the Lord of the universe and the savior of mankind. It is not too late to be accepted in the true House of God on the earth.

Chapter 1: Heritage

It is hard to talk about my story, and what the Lord has taught me, without starting with my father. My father was a man of God, but as I have said in a respectful way before, “plain as an old shoe.” I say that to say that he was called by and used by God and was obedient and faithful, but approachable and a friend to the common man and the downtrodden. My mother noted that people seemed to either love him or “hate” him. For her reference, and the people she probably had in mind, “hate” would not be real hate, but dislike felt fairly strongly and detectable in the polite religious circles in which they lived and ministered much of the time. I am so glad God uses imperfect people, because it leaves room for me. I am so glad we do not earn our salvation, our hope of eternal life with God instead of punishment, by our good works. That leaves room for God to have mercy on me and use me in my imperfection, just like he did my father.

You see, polite religious people can be pretty hard to please and it can be easier than you might think to see evidence of their strong dislike. The easiest way to wind up on the wrong side of religious people is to be like Jesus. Jesus also had people either love him or hate him. He reached out to the downtrodden and had the religious people hate him. They even crucified him. So, now I have a more knowing perspective about what Christ warned us about in Luke 6:26 when he said: “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets” (NKJV). In Matthew 5:11-12, Christ said, “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (NKJV).

You know, I never thought of my father as persecuted by the religious, until reading the verses above and thinking of all he went through. You see my father was an evangelist, a pastor, a Bible college teacher, and finally, a missionary. He also spoke to many the words God gave him to speak, even though he was not one to give much of a clue that the Lord was telling him what to say, or showing him things. I remember him talking about being in a business/staff meeting at the Bible college he taught at for 10 years, and a difficult matter coming up, and him suggesting a solution. He told of a colleague pressing him after the meeting sensing that it must have been God that told him to say what he said because it was the only possible solution. He also spoke into the lives of many young people called by God into Christian ministry. By that I mean he was recognized as used of the Lord to provide edification (positive growth), exhortation (needed correction), and comfort (healing for their emotional and spiritual wounds). My father heard from God, but he did know persecution.

Let me tell you my Father's story in brief. Some of this I take from my recollections of what he shared over time, but much of it came from a videotape I made of him sharing his testimony with me a couple years before he died. My father's father was a Pentecostal minister and church planter, but also worked for the government. Granddad married the niece of one of the wealthiest men in America. The family warned my grandmother they would cut her out of the inheritance for marrying a Pentecostal preacher and she told them to keep the money and married him. My father grew up in a tough neighborhood of Washington D.C. He said he went all around the area at a very young age, selling papers and doing other work to help support the family in the depressed economic era in which he grew up.

My father was called to preach as a young man and resisted the call. God told him to go to Bible college but he joined the Navy. He had a back injury he seemingly got over, was

transferred, and then ended up in a military hospital, dying. Sometimes God does not take “No” for an answer. (Read the biblical book of Jonah again if you disagree.) God in his mercy did move his mother to pray and intercede for him and he was completely healed when the doctors thought he was going to die. The chief medical officer had my father’s paperwork before him and was going to stamp it, “return to duty,” but God spoke three times in an audible voice to turn him loose, that he was called to preach the gospel. The man thought it was a prank and looked for people or speakers and, on hearing the voice one more time, released my father from the Navy and told him he better preach the gospel.

Dad did preach and a year and three months passed. I don’t know the exact timing or circumstances, but, at some point, my father said he had taken an intelligence test and scored at the genius level. Then some people or organization offered to pay his education all the way to a doctorate but dad turned it down, saying he was called to preach the gospel. Dad also related that someone thinking to start a professional football team tried to recruit him but Dad would not accept it because he was called to preach.

Then dad was somehow drafted back into the Navy. He was assigned to a ship in World War II that was captained by an atheist, and he was for a while a secretary to the captain, but then was given acting chaplain duties. He also served as a fireman. Dad thought the chaplain assignment came by the influence of people he had known in Washington D.C., where he grew up and had served as a messenger between government offices. Dad felt his captain resented whatever someone may have done to help him become an acting chaplain, because genuine persecution began. Dad said the captain then assigned him to the deck crew and told them to work him to death.

They cut up his clothes before inspections. They took away his bunk. They hung him over the side to scrape or paint — under the waste pipe without shutting it off as they normally would. They refused to help him climb up a very long rope over the side, as was normal, and he got to the top but slid down almost to his death, hanging on to the end even though seemingly passing out of consciousness. Dad said they tried to kill him many times, dropping a rope supporting him hoping he would swing over and hit the anchor chain and be knocked unconscious and fall into the sea. They instigated someone somewhat mentally unstable to kill him with a knife. However, dad said he had done very well in hand-to-hand combat training and they had then sent him through what he called “commando” training. The attacker came from behind and dad flipped him over his shoulder and left him unconscious on the deck, but not permanently harmed.

Then those that instigated the attack tried to frame him as if he were the one harming another sailor. But a Jewish officer that saw the whole thing spoke up and told them that he would give them twenty years in the brig if dad just said the word. Dad would not press charges. Still, his persecution went on, until apparently God decided it had done its work in him, and the day came that the captain allowed him to hold services on the ship.

He did have things to learn though, and he talked about those things over the years. One thing he learned was that even though he grew up in a tough neighborhood—and had to learn to fight to survive and protect others—those skills were not the skills God was looking for. My father was a big man, wearing a 52" suit by the time I knew him. He had forearms that were so big, I never even considered speaking disrespectfully to him as a young man. Once two men on ship came at him to harm him and he held them both up off of the deck, one in each hand, and shook them. He mentioned having carried a refrigerator upstairs by himself. But those were not the skills God was looking for. For once my father called out one of his persecutors and they

began to fight with fists and suddenly God spoke and said something like, “This is not the way to win them.” Suddenly, his hands hung limp at his sides and he was beaten up but learned a lesson about God and his ways. He did learn how to win them and saw a man with his abdomen shot to pieces raise his hands and praise God for his new salvation as he died.

My father also learned about God’s protection in the Navy. He made five invasions in World War II in the Pacific on a fleet oiler—a fuel ship. Once kamikazes, suicide bomber pilots that would crash their planes into ships, hit the ship. As the alarm sounded telling everyone to go to their battle stations, and he was headed to his station the usual way, he heard an audible voice say something like, “Stop, go the other way.” That voice was God and saved his life. The walkway he would have been on was shot to pieces.

My father walked in obedience. He went where God sent him and endured hardship. God could trust him to go where others would not go, and endure what others would not endure. I learned that from him and it is a very valuable lesson, a lesson learned by observation of his example and learned from the accounts of his life and his lessons from the Lord he shared over the years. I owe a great debt to him, because I learned from his pain and mistakes humbly shared and from seeing his perseverance in the midst of pain and lack of appreciation and recognition.

My father faced other persecution and had other miraculous deliverances. He used to tell of going to hold evangelistic meetings and pastor churches in backwoods places. Places like Wallace West Virginia and a little town in Arkansas, and “pioneering” (starting) a church in the Iron Range of northern Minnesota. He told of walking into a backwoods place where somebody had to walk in front of him calling out, “He’s a preacher, not a revenuer. He’s a preacher not a revenuer.” This was so that people with moonshine (illegal liquor) stills would not be fearful he was a federal agent or shoot him. My father told of how in northern Minnesota he had to build a fire under the car motor to get it started and how it was sixty degrees below zero (Fahrenheit). He told of staying in a cabin and a lady next door going to bed with her hair wet and it freezing to the wall of the cabin. He also told of my sister having a wolf or wolves try to sneak up behind her.

The stories went on. In one church there were men sitting somewhere private around a table plotting how to get rid of the preacher they did not like. (Because he dared preach the whole truth and touch their favorite sins it seems.) The only thing was, God protected my father by inviting him to attend their secret meeting. God allowed him to watch and listen to the meeting in a vision from the Lord. (For those who don’t know, when I say a vision, I mean in a supernatural sense, like in the Bible where they saw things the Lord showed them that natural eyes could not see.) They plotted to stir up a violent and jealous husband with lies and then have the wife come forward for prayer and have the pastor “lay hands” on her to pray for her—as is scriptural and customary in our circles, but done in an innocent and proper way. They intended to get him ruined or killed or both, but God protected him via a supernatural ticket to their meeting.

Another place Dad talked of a threat to dynamite the church. In a mining town, with dynamite available to the workers, that can be a serious threat. But God saw to it that it did not happen. In Jamaica, he stood between a man with a machete and his intended victim and gave the man a word from the Lord and he got saved and intended to prepare to be a minister.

In one place they decided to take up offerings to put a new roof on the new church, rather than pay the pastor. Often in small churches in those days the pastor had no salary, but got the proceeds of an offering specifically identified to be for his support. So, under those arrangements, a pastor walked in faith, but it was possible for people to “starve him out,” as they

called it. Well, my father was stubbornly obedient to God and preached what God told him and what the Bible clearly taught rather than ruining people with sugar-coated sermons that let them live on in their sins to be destroyed by them. So, folks that liked their sins more than their God could get upset.

My father had trouble from the back injury that was related to his military service. In 1958, more than a decade after he was released from the service, it got to where he sought medical help from government-paid doctors. Dad told the story of the doctors coercing him into a spinal fusion surgery, threatening to destroy his medical records if he did not agree to the surgery. Destroying his records would naturally end his serviceman's benefits. So dad agreed and had the surgery. The spinal fusion they forced on him left him in a back brace for five years, unable to pick up his little children. The fusion gave him a lot of trouble. Later in life he had to have another back surgery. Suffice it to say, he could not do most physical jobs in his life, even though he was a big man. Anyway, that church did not pay him enough to feed his five kids, if at all. Then they came around to see how he was doing—to see if their tactic was breaking him. The garden they had planted was all they had and luckily the corn was about ready to be harvested. Then somebody stole the corn out of the garden the night before they were to harvest it. But they stayed sweet in their attitude and made it through all that. They also made it through a church in Arkansas that provided so little they had to send the kids door-to-door to sell tomatoes out of the garden to be able to buy the books required for school.

I have always admired my parents for going wherever God sent them, regardless of the cost. My father pastored a small church in western Kansas, but had a good job compatible with pastoring. In fact, I think it was the best living they had ever had. As I recall, they were making about \$18,000 per year in 1970 and the church provided a house to live in and some food the people contributed. Then Dad felt God wanted him to go teach at a small Bible institute in North Dakota. Dad looked at his finances and figured he had to have a minimum of \$600 a month, or \$7,200 a year, just to pay his bills. The school offered just \$400 a month, or \$4,800 a year, and God said "Take it," so Dad did.

However, there was more to the story. People need to be sure when they take on that kind of sacrifice and walk of faith. They need to be sure God has spoken. Well, five years before, my father had a dream in which he was in a white van and traveling with his wife and one child and came into a town down in a valley and curved around and pulled into a gasoline filling station. In the dream, my father told the man at the filling station that he had an interview at the Bible college and asked where it was. The man pointed upward on the skyline and said, "You see that smokestack? It is an old hospital that has been converted into the Bible school." The dream ended at that point.

Well, five years went by and my father had forgotten the dream. However, when my father went to North Dakota for the interview, he pulled into the valley in which Jamestown is located, and he curved around and pulled into a filling station in his white van with his wife and youngest daughter. Then he asked the man where the Bible school was and the attendant pointed to the smokestack and said the words from the dream and God said "Remember." So, when God asked my Dad to take a huge cut in pay and go where he had no idea how he would pay his bills but God's miracles, he knew he was supposed to do it. God is good about that.

We had some interesting financial sacrifices back then, but we made it. Part of the pay for my father was that we kids could eat lunch at the Bible school. I trudged through the snow many a day to walk from the junior high or high school to the Bible college to eat dear old Sister Kluck's cooking. The Bible school was on a tight budget so potatoes were served most every

day, and vegetables not eaten earlier in the week were sure to be seen in some gravy and ladled over potatoes late in the week. I can remember buying shoes with my own money and having them wear out in three months, because I walked so much to get anywhere, and having to put cardboard in the shoe to cover the hole—in North Dakota’s forty-below-zero winters. I can remember the church youth group not believing my brother and I that we did not have the 25 cents they wanted to charge everyone for an event they planned. I remember normally buying one pack of chewing gum per week as the total of my spending for the week and breaking the pieces in half to make them last the week. Dad sent me out to get a job to help the family, like he had done growing up in the Great Depression, but I found I was too young to work according to state law. I had to wait for summer when I could do farm work.

Dad and Mom stayed at Trinity Bible Institute (now Trinity Bible College) ten years. During that time, I went from ninth grade through high school and college and beyond. Eventually, he saw an opportunity to go overseas in missions as he had felt since a young man he would one day do. The denomination’s Division of Foreign Missions talked to him about two positions in Brussels Belgium, I believe associated with a Bible college there. Dad told the leader of the college where he was employed that he desired to go. He then ended up losing his position at the college by not signing a new contract, only to have the missions department change its mind by filling one position and then deciding they did not need the other. So, my father was suddenly "out in the cold," so to speak, in North Dakota without a job.

He finally found a position with a church in Michigan, in a counseling ministry where they were live-in house counselors for people the state released from mental institutions into halfway houses run by churches. Then the pastor of the church had a moral failure and things got to where they had to look for work again. (When a head pastor leaves it was customary for all the staff to resign and for the new pastor to appoint his own people.) Then my father placed all his furniture in storage and went to Oklahoma to live with my sister until they could get back on their feet again.

Then my father’s spinal fusion broke and he had to have surgery again and, as he put it, “learn to walk again.” My father had so much pain in his life, but so much perseverance. When it seemed hopeless he did not give up. Finally, he found work again and resumed ministry as he could. Then he got the opportunity to take a trip to Jamaica and preach in a tent among the poor. That eventually led to him getting his missionary appointment and going to Jamaica to work in the Bible college among the poor in the mountains. It was very hard for him to raise his pledges from the many small churches at which he had services. It took a lot of perseverance and a lot of travel and sacrifice. He tried to get around in an old van and sleep in it at times to save money. Sometimes he would go to small churches and the pastor would not be there and no one would even take an offering for his expenses, or an offering would not even cover gasoline expense. I can remember contributing at a critical time when the missions department was considering canceling his appointment as a missionary because of his difficulty in raising support pledges. But he did make it and helped build the Bible college in Jamaica and ministered to the people.

Then, after several years, the people of the Bahamas heard about how he opened his home to the people and respected and fellowshiped with everyone, and they invited him to come there and help them start a Bible college. They had bought land many years before but not ever gotten a building built and a college to train ministers really going effectively. They had not had a US missionary there in many years, and had not wanted one, but wanted my parents to come. My father pestered a lot of pastors back in the states to donate money for steel and other materials, and to send teams on mission’s trips to help build the school.

Then cancer struck, but it did not dissuade my father. Even though they did surgery hoping to cut away the cancer and ended up just sewing him back up as incurable, my dad returned to his ministry to get the Bible college built. He would call pastors to raise money and supervise building efforts from a wheel chair in the end. Finally, I had to go and get him and bring him home to die, but he still believed God for healing and argued with me. (He had some basis for arguing, as he maintained God had healed him seven times of things that were supposed to kill him.) But I got him back to our home in the Kansas City area and he died in my home three days later. I remember God having me go into his room and read him Psalm 23 the night he died.

I did not understand God letting my father die that way, but soon I did. I was told that when they dedicated a phase of the Bible college, they named the library after my father and there was a standing ovation for him. I found that his perseverance was a testimony to that nation. They had been ready to sell the land and give up on a Bible college and a man with cancer, in a wheel chair, dying, gave them a testimony of perseverance. We will all need perseverance in the days ahead.

One of the sacrifices my parents made was to go to a place people did not understand needed missionaries, and a place people would not see as a sacrifice. They were pained to have people not understand that they went to the poor, to the out-of-the-way, less desirable, places—not the beaches the tourists see. Additionally, it was much harder to raise support and keep support so they lived on less than they were supposed to have. I know also the pain of being called to be some place nobody appreciates as real ministry, or at least few do. What is important though, is that we all fill our places—the places Christ assigns to us. I would much rather have been in a mud hut in Africa and my father would much rather have been back in the tent meetings preaching the gospel to the poor. However, it is God that gives us our duties and it is to him we will answer in the end. I fear there will be many ministers that went to the place that looked and felt and paid better, rather than the place of sacrifice—emotionally or financially. Only God knows the cost to the kingdom of God, and the souls of men lost, due to their secret disobedience. Christ learned obedience from the things that he suffered, the Bible tells us, and so should we.

I should say a few words about my mother in this process. She has always been as gentle as a dove. She endured much with an inner toughness that kept going in quiet service when so many would not have lasted a fraction of the time. Her motto for raising kids was, “Feed ‘em and love ‘em.” Her motto for enduring was, “One day at a time.” That is the testimony of a patient endurer we could all learn from. She never let anything get so insurmountable as to make her quit. She showed a gentleness I have seen few match. She kept following a man that often led them into sacrifice and trouble—in the will of God. Additionally, she honored him and tended well to her family. In the midst of the trials and persecutions and sacrifice, that is a great testimony. But they were both human and imperfect and wounded.

There is more I can say about my heritage. I knew my father’s brothers as well. David worked construction as a crane operator and then wrote safety standards for construction for the government. But he also preached fifty years at a mission in the Washington, D.C. area and served as a senior’s pastor at a large church there. Charles worked ministering among Native Americans in North Carolina and became the President of a college for Native Americans there. He also helped with the Bible college in the mountains of Jamaica with my father late in life. My father’s sister, Esther, had her husband die leaving her with six children to raise. One son

became a pastor and a daughter a missionary. Other cousins were in ministry as well. I had a lot of good examples around me.

Chapter 2: Early Lessons

You now know of the household in which I grew up, and the legacy of faith, obedience, sacrifice, and endurance that was left to me. My perspective was not always so noble as in the last chapter. I knew a lot of pain growing up—some inflicted from outside of the family, some from within the family, and some from within my own body and soul.

I was born in Virginia in the mid 1950's. My parents were both from Washington, D.C. and they had returned for a while and had a mobile home across the state line in Virginia. My father pointed out the mobile-home park to me when we stayed for a summer near there later in my youth.

In my early years, my parents returned to the Washington, D.C. area at intervals, for various spans of time. My maternal grandmother had bought a house and wooded acreage outside of the city, in Maryland, and she, several times, hosted the family when my father was between pastorates or traveling as an evangelist. My father pursued his degree in various places, as his economic situation would allow. He worked secular jobs, and ministered, and attended Bible colleges within the denomination as he was able. Then he attended the denomination's liberal arts college in Springfield, Missouri. He was attending there when I began kindergarten. Then we moved to Wichita, Kansas and he finally got a degree from Wichita State University—in English, likely because his Bible college credits could count as literature classes on transfer, but he ended up with many more credit hours than needed to earn a bachelor's degree.

I went through first grade while we lived in a rented house across from the school. Then we moved to another neighborhood and I went to another school near McConnell Air Force Base because Dad was able to buy a small house in the neighborhood. I remembered the teachers having to stop teaching when the fighter planes flew over and the windows would vibrate as the engines roared overhead. Boeing, a huge defense contractor that builds airplanes, also had big operations in town.

I went through second through the middle of fifth grade there. I excelled and found out years later my test scores had been extremely high. What I remembered was learning about electricity on my own, studying circuits and types of motors, and about electronics. I had a friend that had kits that helped us learn. I was also given a chemistry set and did experiments with it—sometimes with a little mischief mixed in that was less safe than the kit intended.

Then we moved to Dodge City, Kansas, where I finished fifth grade, and I found power tools in a trash can and repaired them and got them working for almost nothing in parts and started making and building things. I also learned judo from a book with illustrations, and, when a bully tried to grab me and push me down on my way home, I dropped down and flipped him several feet in the air. He got the wind knocked out of him, and the pride, and never bothered me again. I tried to high jump, and got laughed off the field by older boys, but that was a sure way of getting me to make sure I was good at it the next time. I set up improvised standards to hold a crossbar in the back yard, and an old mattress to land on, and started practicing—and that was the beginning of a long history in track and field.

Then there was the small town in Western Kansas at which I went through sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. You know, those junior-high-school or middle-school years are so difficult for most kids, but I faced a bit more than that. In this town, a man bought a business and operated it in the town for many years and finally asked the people, "What does it take to accepted here?"—because he wasn't accepted. The answer of the town's people was simple and almost universally understood among them, to where they implied he was stupid to ask. They

rebuked him saying, “Well, you weren’t born here.” I had the misfortune of moving into this town in the impressionable and critical years of youth.

There was a spiritual element to the rejection of the town also. You see, my father was the pastor of a Pentecostal church and the town did not seem to care much for it. We were there three years. In that time, my sister and brother and I faced a good deal of harassment and, yes, a form of persecution. To give you some idea of the magnitude and impact of it, the minister that followed my father in that town left because one of his kids was on the verge of a nervous breakdown from the treatment of the other kids in the town. (But, many years later, I learned there was more evil going on than that.)

I had moved enough to face normal schoolyard bullying and to have to fight some to protect others, but this was different. I was cornered by two boys my size and had to fight them off. The superintendent of schools doubled as the principal there and he watched saying nothing as two attacked one, but when I began to hold my own and get the advantage to some degree over one of the two, he called me down by name, saying nothing to them. I was not born there. There was much harassment and putting down there. I started out “turning the other cheek” when another boy decided to beat me up for fun but my father told me if it was for being a Christian, turn the other cheek, but if it was just for sport (someone being mean), fight back. That was an issue that has taken years to work through.

The level of rejection of me that I felt in that town was considerable. I compensated by throwing myself into my studies and into sports, trying to win acceptance by performance. I studied into the night, night after night. In the end, I did very well in my studies and won Kansas state scholarship contest awards (including first in the state in social studies, because I had studied history so diligently). I also lettered in every sport, but it gained me only a little—because we moved. I had finally won some measure of acceptance, but I had to start all over again.

In those years my father made sure I learned about hard work. He grew up in the Great Depression and was sent out of the house as a child to work. That seemed normal to him. A man in the church had a lawn mowing business and my brother and I worked for him and then took over the business. I was only twelve but had a bank loan, signed by my father of course, to buy riding lawn mowers. I also had a newspaper delivery route and delivered papers all over the town in the early morning. My father had a job where he traveled to schools and hospitals in our quarter of the state, and sold cleaning and maintenance supplies and equipment. This was in addition to his pastoring a small church. Much of the time I also had to load and unload his cases of samples, and items to be delivered, and floor machines, before and after school as well. Carrying heavy things up and down the stairs into the basement storage area, and pedaling a one-speed bicycle up a long hill every morning with a bag of newspapers, was good training for sports though, and helped me do well at jumping events in track from then on. Following the mowing business, I took a required safety course to be able to operate farm machinery and started doing farm work at age fourteen. I drove tractors and then learned to harvest wheat and worked long hours during the harvest driving a combine that harvested the grain.

However, one very, very, notable thing happened before I left that small town. I repented of my sins and God filled me with his Holy Spirit—I was baptized in the Holy Spirit like in the biblical book of Acts, in chapter two. Besides that, I heard the voice of God for the first time.

Perhaps I should elaborate for those unfamiliar with terms like being “filled with the Holy Spirit” or “baptized in the Holy Spirit.” For the non-religious, I will use non-religious explanations. God is real, but he hides himself, wanting men and women and boys and girls to

seek him. He does not want people to serve him out of fear, but out of love and devotion. He does not want robots, because he wants children and friends in loving relationship with himself, not to be surrounded by machines programmed to recite a recorded “I love you” like a mechanical doll. Aren’t we the same? We would much rather have a real puppy that would grow to love us and greet us at the door than a mechanical dog with a remote control.

There is a scripture that says: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV). People who diligently seek God find him. People who humble themselves before him will likely get a response whereas the proud may not. (He is, after all, the Creator and Lord of the universe.) People can seek him by reading what he has said about himself in the Bible, his revelation of himself to men over the ages. While we no longer have the original divinely inspired writings, it has been shown convincingly that diligent copying over time has not introduced any significant error affecting any major article of faith. Unfortunately, many “scholars” have torn down the Bible over the ages, as people started getting their doctorates easier, or more attention, by finding some supposed error or inconsistency in the Bible. However, it is the truth, and the true revelation of God to this world.

I know these statements are not “politically correct” but it has always been the claim of the Bible, Judaism, and Christianity from the very beginning. Christ said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father [God] except through Me” (John 14:6 NKJV). To deny the exclusivity of Christianity is to deny Christianity. Those that want no religion to claim this exclusivity are really against both Judaism and Christianity, and quite honestly, probably against all religion and masking it by disrespecting the claims of them all by making the claim that the conflicting claims of all religions should all be treated as truth—which any logical, thinking person knows is not possible. What they really mean, in their arrogance, is that the spiritual realm does not exist (in their opinion), and therefore no religion matters, and all religious people should just go play in the sandbox they made for us and leave them to run the world. But they exclude from evidence all proof that the spiritual realm does exist by defining “science” in a way that excludes any possibility of considering evidence of the supernatural. So their assumption becomes their conclusion and that is neither science nor logic. “Tolerance” used to mean freedom to believe what one wants to, and to state one’s beliefs and positions and defend them, as well as challenge the beliefs and positions of others so that truth claims can be tested and verified—and to respect other peoples’ right to do the same. Those unwilling to have their claims debated are probably deceiving and coercing others, and that is what should be questionable and disrespected. Those that refuse to allow any debate about spiritual or religious truth in general are more coercive and intolerant than anyone.

About seeking him, the first step is humility. God says clearly that “He resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (I Peter 5:5 NKJV). The next step is to admit you have sinned against him—broken his rules or laws, like the ten commandments and many others like by sex outside of marriage (fornication—sex before marriage, or adultery—sex with someone other than your marriage partner), or hating people, or not forgiving people, or stealing, or lusting and thinking about sex with someone to whom you are not married. “We have all sinned” the Bible says in Romans 3:23. It also says the punishment for sin is death (in Romans 6:23). What it refers to is spiritual death, which is far more serious than the physical death one expects, because in spiritual death one is sacrificing the eternal life Christ came to offer them.

Pretty grim news for us all, but luckily, God provides a solution—sacrifices. In the Old Testament (the first part of the Bible, before the book of Matthew) God told people to repent

(turn away from their sins) and then sacrifice an animal, in a sacrifice that cost blood, to pay for the forgiveness of their sins. Their faith in that approach, that God would accept the sacrifice, is what really erased the sins on their account with God. But the Old Testament was just a practice run for the New Testament when God would send his own Son, Jesus Christ, to be the perfect sinless sacrifice once and for all. Now all we need is faith that Jesus is the atoning sacrifice that wipes clean God's record of our past sins. Then we start again with a clean record and help to conquer our sin habits.

In the Old Testament, God taught his people the seriousness of sin. He came very near to his people because he really wanted them to love him and know him, but he wanted to love them too. However, it did not work out very well because God is very holy—sinless—and expected his people to keep their commitments and follow his rules they committed to. He promised them wonderful benefits, a truly blessed life if they would just keep their commitment to him, but he also got them to agree to curses if they did not keep their commitment to him, terrible curses. This was common in those days among people—keeping your word was such a serious matter that people would pronounce curses on themselves that took effect if they broke what they agreed to do. They entered into the bargain fully accepting the terms—and then failed to keep them. God got very hurt—very, very hurt. Also, like us when we get hurt, he got angry in his pain and eventually did allow them to receive the curses to which they had agreed. He did however have great patience with them, far beyond what any one of us would ever have had. God is a strange and wonderful mix of extreme patience and love and great mercy to the repentant, but also great judgment when his patience is finally exhausted, after such a long time frustrated with flagrant disobedience.

In the books of the prophets you see God as the jilted lover, which I learned from a book by Philip Yancey, *Disappointment with God*. That is most useful in seeing God in the Old Testament prophetic books. These books are so powerful for getting to know God as he describes himself through holy men called apart to communicate specially with him and deliver his message to his people and the nations. These men were “filled with the Holy Spirit” in a special way, in a way not matched in our experience in history since the days of the Old Testament or the New Testament Apostles. These had a measure of the Holy Spirit in them, and inspiring them, that allowed them to write the words of the Bible straight from the heart and mind of God.

Now, let us try to understand what it was to have that measure of the Holy Spirit. These people, regular people like you and I, not supermen, had extraordinary experiences in which God revealed himself to them in various ways. Isaiah saw the throne room of God and felt God's holiness and his own uncleanness. Ezekiel saw awesome visions of God in his majesty and power that are still hard to take from his words to pictures. The Apostle John was taken to heaven and saw awesome things he was told to write in the book of Revelation at the end of the Bible. Elijah stopped the rain for three years with a declaration God sent him to say and called down fire on the king's soldiers when they opposed God himself by opposing the man God sent to rebuke the king and the kingdom for its sins. However, God tells us these seeming supermen were human just like us:

“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit” (James 5:17-18 NKJV).

I know I have digressed, at least it seems so, but now I will make my point. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God's Spirit, these men, ordinary men, heard the voice of God and saw visions of God and performed deeds of incredible power, supernatural power seemingly wielded by natural men. What they did and said was empowered and arranged and performed by the Holy Spirit. So, today it should not seem so strange that God, the Holy Spirit, would not have lost his power to empower ordinary men to do extraordinary deeds and declare his words of extraordinary power.

Do God's words have power? In the book of Isaiah, God talks about the power of his word that comes from him:

"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater,
So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it"
(Isaiah 55:10-11 NKJV).

Note that God was referring to his words, but also to his words that he called Isaiah to communicate out of his mouth or pen. God gave incredible power or authority to his words in the mouth of his prophets, as we see from what he told his prophet Jeremiah:

Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me:
"Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.
See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms,
To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant"
(Jeremiah 1:9-10 NKJV).

In the New Testament book of Acts, we have the account of God filling many others with his Holy Spirit, and the statement that it is for as many as God shall call—out into the future. So, you see, the same Holy Spirit that did all that in the men in scripture, is available to us all, in some measure.

The Holy Spirit came into me like he has into so many since people again began to receive his Spirit noticeably early in the last century. The Holy Spirit baptized or soaked me in his power and presence and caused me to hear his voice for the first time—and changed my life forever. I know he had chosen me before then, even from birth, but I did not have any sense of it until that day. I then knew I belonged to him and could hear his voice.

Now, in the New Testament, when people were baptized in the Holy Spirit it is usually recorded that they “spoke in tongues,” and so did I. I spoke in tongues for some two hours and my father and sister who prayed with me said it sounded like I spoke in as many as twelve different languages. In the New Testament book of Acts, it talks about how the Holy Spirit came on people and they spoke in recognized languages they did not know, as the Spirit gave them what to speak, and strangers from other nations recognized their languages.

Most of the time though, there is no one to recognize the languages and it does not matter because mostly people are worshiping God in their spirits and speaking that worship with the help of the Holy Spirit in words they do not know. I do know of times, though, that people spoke in identifiable and understood languages that people present recognized. For me that

happened one time, and the language was Hebrew, which I did not know, and the words said helped someone to understand God was speaking through me.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit changed my life forever. I felt peace in my troubled spirit for the first time and I have heard God's voice for the rest of my life. Hearing God's voice led to eventually being used in "the gifts of the Spirit" many of which are really based on hearing God's voice. See the New Testament book of First Corinthians, chapters 12 through 14 for more on the gifts of the Spirit.

I suppose that at this point I should explain what it is like to hear God's voice, because I anticipate that not everyone knows what it is like. God speaks in many ways, but the most common way is within a person's spirit, their consciousness. A science fiction enthusiast would call it telepathic communication—when one person can impose their thoughts into the mind of another. God does that. You can hear his thoughts or voice in your mind or spirit. My father and many others have heard God speak in a way that is audible. God can do anything he wants to, but most of the time he does things in a simple, unobtrusive way. Most of the time God's voice is like a vocal thought that we know did not come from us, usually because it was not something we were thinking or it comes in answer to our questions expressed to God. I should also mention that God will many times impress the sense of his presence strongly upon a person's emotions as he speaks, and that serves to help them know for sure it is him speaking. Well, I hope that explanation helps. One could certainly write a book on hearing God's voice and many have. (Jack Deere, Jim Goll, and Cindy Jacobs all wrote good books that cover the subject.)

Shortly after I was filled with the Holy Spirit, we moved from western Kansas to North Dakota, so my father could teach at Trinity Bible Institute. The school was then in an old hospital building in Jamestown. I attended ninth and tenth grades there in Jamestown. While there, I got pulled into prayer and a "burden" (a concern impressed upon a person by God) for the kids of the high school who did not know God. In that time, I remember the Spirit of God being heavy upon me, tugging at my emotions, and fellow students asking me about God even though I had said nothing to them to cause them to ask. I remember being used in a gift of the Spirit there for the first time, at age fifteen. I was in church and felt the Spirit of God pressing me to give a "message in tongues." I obeyed and spoke a message in tongues that God used someone else to interpret into English words understandable for those present. (There are many books on the gifts of the Holy Spirit from which you can learn more. However, be careful to learn from those that see them as being supernatural and available today because some see them as descriptions of everyday things like preaching and teaching done with natural talents, or teach that they do not happen any more.)

I also had my first discernable encounter with a demonic spirit in Jamestown. I remember lying awake in my bed late at night and sensing a demonic spirit there, and I shook in fear. I felt like I lost five pounds that night, just from the fear and shaking, but eventually I got up and found my father at the kitchen table. My father gave me a scripture, Romans 8:1, about there being no condemnation for those in Christ, and it helped me and I went back to bed and slept. It was the first of many battles over the years, and they do seem to come when one is dedicated to God and praying and seeking to see others brought to relationship with God. I have learned much about the attack of the spirits, or demons, that are the enemies of God, since that time. That is another topic I could easily write a book about. (For a good introductory book, I recommend Dean Sherman's book, *Spiritual Warfare for Every Christian: How to live in Victory and Retake the Land*, from YWAM Publishing.)

In Jamestown, it was harder for me because I had less opportunity to be involved in sports. We lived in a mobile home park far from the school and being in sports meant walking quite a few miles, sometimes in deep snow with temperatures as low as forty below zero. I tried to be in basketball, but it just was not practical. I did manage to spend several hours a week in a city gym on Saturdays playing basketball. My folks did not want me in school football, because they were scared of injuries, because I had injured a knee previously. I ended up playing quarterback in spontaneous games without pads in a city park anyway—and it was full-contact tackle football. I had so much energy and tension inside me I seemed to need sports to survive. Something had to diffuse it and hold it at bay. I did manage to stay in track, and did very well at it. I was especially good at pole vaulting.

In Jamestown, we had difficult financial adjustments. My father said I should go out and get a job to help the family, but I was too young according to law. Poverty cost me personally too. And in the summer, when I could do farm work, they had worked till after midnight and asked me to drive their pickup truck and turn the heat on for the boss for when they got in further down the road. Reaching for the controls in an unfamiliar vehicle, in the dark, made me edge off the road. I hit a washed-out place in the ditch and slammed into the steering wheel with my face, my nose mostly, and bent the steering wheel, and my nose. They took me to the hospital but we could not afford health insurance so I walked out of the hospital with the doctor warning me I needed treatment, as my nose was badly broken. I knew the family could not afford it. So, my nose was slightly crooked, a sign of my poverty growing up, and was much more crooked on the inside for many years until I could have surgeries to stop having so many sinus headaches and help me breathe better.

After two years in Jamestown, the college moved because it got an opportunity to bid for the grant of a campus. It was an old branch of a state university in Ellendale that had shut down. Ellendale was a town of about two thousand people on the southern edge of the state and north of Aberdeen South Dakota. For me that meant yet another move and another school.

Ellendale was one of the best places I had been, and I felt accepted more there than most places, but not by everyone. I remember a couple of young men in my class that tried to harass and provoke me, putting me down and doing things to hurt me when they could do it without getting caught. Though I was of a size and strength to easily have beaten one of the young men in a fair fight, I had let him harass me for months. Finally, one day on the softball field I had had enough and urged him to come over to me and repeat a taunt he had said. The teacher stopped it there and the day ended. That night the conviction of the Holy Spirit affected me and made me know that I had not acted in a Christ-like way and the next day I asked them to forgive me. With that unexpected display of genuine Christianity, they never really bothered me again. It seems many will test Christians for genuineness and, if we display it, they will eventually cease their taunts.

I can't say I was a very active witness for Christ among my classmates, but many had been "witnessed to" by many well-meaning Bible college students and had been very turned off by it. What did happen though was that in the final weeks of my senior year I helped them decorate the gym for the special prom dance, even though they knew I did not dance and my church did not believe it was right. Finally, waiting outside the gym, someone asked why I believed the way I did and, as I began to answer, many kids gathered around me and listened intently and respectfully. My patience and example without pushiness seemed to allow that one time to accomplish all that I might have attempted at other times. Though I only knew those kids for two years, I cared about them and still wonder how they are.

In my high school years and beyond, I had to come to terms with my Church's rules that went beyond what many Churches taught. In my father's home, I was never allowed to go to a dance, or a movie, or even to play games with playing cards, and that was normal for most of the families I knew at church or at the Bible college, and it was what was expected of the students. I eventually discovered that the rules came out of what was called the "Holiness Movement," and that my denomination had started among people from that movement. In the Holiness Movement, people came under severe conviction for their sinful lifestyles just by the action of God himself. Then they abandoned any kind of entertainment that had gotten them personally into trouble. If they had gotten into trouble from going places that played card games, they did not want to ever touch playing cards again. If they got into sin from going to a bowling alley that served alcohol, they gave up all bowling. If going into places of entertainment with live people on stage got them into sin, they gave up theaters. They did it because they wanted to give up what made them weak and led them into sin because they now wanted to stay close to God.

The unfortunate thing was that by the second generation, what had been done out of conviction and necessity for some, got turned into general rules for all. And the young people could not understand. The denomination needed to learn the scriptural discipline to separate common scriptural rules of conduct for all from personal leading and what was best for individuals because of their history or personal weakness. Over time, the denomination did learn and are seldom so "legalistic," but unfortunately, some outside the churches do not know that they have changed—and in some more isolated places, the churches probably have not changed that much. Still, one benefits spiritually from avoiding temptations and focusing on what God expects of them. And, in my experience, I found that the boys in the locker rooms talked a lot more lustfully before and after the school held dances, and parties after graduation led to tragic mistakes and sins under the influence of alcohol that people likely regretted for a lifetime. I was not one to judge them, but I did have compassion for those living with the regrets of things they likely wished they had never done. We all have done things we wish we had never done.

I continued my pattern of hard work in my high school years. I did farm work, especially working in the wheat harvests, driving combines and trucks, and driving tractors in other times. I also worked for a mobile home sales place that owned a mobile home park and did maintenance and mobile home installation work. I worked in a butcher shop, cleaning and painting. One summer I got a job traveling around constructing metal grain bins. I also got a job, for part of a summer, rounding up cattle on horseback, on a daily basis for a cattle breeding operation. The summer after high school, my father insisted I go with the family back to the Washington, D.C. area where he went to work for the summer and I worked washing and reconditioning used cars for the used car lot of a big Lincoln Mercury dealer where my uncle was the manager. I learned a lot of skills and tricks to transforming an old-looking car into a shiny, clean one. I had a good deal of variety in work experience, and plenty of opportunity to learn hard work.

I also participated in basketball and track. In track, I again excelled and won state honors for two years in pole vault and high jump. I worked very hard at it though. The long hours paid off in scholarship offers. I preferred the field events, but the coaches found out I was fast and made me run the open 220-yard dash and the same distance in a relay.

I enjoyed learning about electricity and electronics on my own and learned to get broken TV's and appliances working again. I read news magazines. I also read encyclopedias or whatever sources I could find to learn whatever I wanted, like how automobile engines and transmissions worked, and the inner workings of various types of jet engines. Early on I had had

a science teacher who had been a military pilot and taught us aeronautics. Later, I hung around a man at the college who had worked in electronics for the military and tried to learn from him. I loved learning, and it made the choice of what to study in college hard.

Chapter 3: Choices and Training

As I approached graduation from High School, I got a stack of mail from colleges all over the country. Unfortunately, I got no good advice to go with it. I had good grades and had done very well on the Pre-SAT / National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test and become a National Merit Scholarship Semifinalist. It was only years later that I read a newspaper article that said a semifinalist could go to most any good college on scholarship. I had done well in track and won a few scholarship offers, but the money did not amount to much. Beyond that, in my ignorance, I thought it did not matter where you got your college degree, that all colleges were the same as to the value of the degree. The only college my father encouraged me to go to was the West Point military academy and that was because I got mail from them. He even took me to visit the campus while we were on the East Coast for the summer. However, I think God had a plan such that, in my ignorance, I chose my denomination's liberal arts and sciences college in Springfield, Missouri—Evangel College (now renamed Evangel University).

The college had a track program, but discontinued it after my first year. So much for all those years working toward a track scholarship. I resorted to intermural sports— football, basketball, and softball— for fun and exercise and still had enough time for my studies. People took it seriously because there were a lot of guys who had been varsity athletes in high school who were now in intermural sports in college. We also had a guy on my dorm that was really into boxing and could tell you who went down in what round in what fight years ago. So we also had fun with boxing matches in the “study” room in the dorm as well.

In high school and earlier, everyone who knew me would probably figure me to become a scientist. I did well in all my subjects, but I really loved science. If I had known more then, I would probably have gone where they had an engineering major. At Evangel, I started taking physics, chemistry and math. I liked physics best, but they did not have a physics major, only a minor. So, I became a chemistry major. I spent hours and hours in the chemistry lab and did very well, earning the departmental scholarship. However, by my second year I began to see that I liked people a lot more than test tubes, so I began the process to change my major to business management. By the time I started taking mostly management-related classes, I had thirty semester hours of chemistry and physics and had almost completed a math minor, complete with three semesters of calculus. It gave me a very broad background, and to that I added taking courses in the main computer programming languages, one for scientific programming and one for business programming.

I should mention that I found out there was an examination program, accepted across the country, that let you prove you knew the material in college-level classes by way of examination and get college credit for the subject areas in which you got sufficiently high scores (when ranked versus college sophomores, if I recall correctly). So, before I had much college credit, I took all the tests that seemed feasible and tested out of more than a year's worth of general education credits, basically all my general education requirement except the Bible classes the school required. It allowed me to save a lot of money taking classes in subjects I had already studied very hard and remembered well. It would allow me to finish college a year earlier, in three years instead of the normal four. It also made college harder, because I did not have the easier courses most people mixed into their schedules for four years.

Suddenly I was no longer a freshman but a second-semester sophomore. That came in very handy because about that time I got to know a smiling, friendly junior class girl named Sue I ended up marrying.

On some breaks, I worked for the Bible college at which my father taught, doing carpentry, painting, and installing the suspending ceiling of the new chapel they built. That summer I went to work in the Washington, DC area again and worked at a huge soda bottling plant, first throwing cases of bottles rapidly all day feeding the production line, in a job most people quit right away because it was so physically demanding. They had hired football players in hopes they would endure the work and they had quit before noon, so they tried me because I had done farm work. Eventually, they promoted me to doing quality control testing, using my chemistry background. I came back to work the next summer, but in a different role, this time in the warehouse inspecting and accounting for the loads going out to assure the paperwork matched the goods being loaded by the drivers.

The second summer, I missed my girlfriend, and did not think the new summer job would give me enough overtime to make enough money, so I left and decided to apply where she was. I was serious but she wasn't, so I headed out for home in North Dakota and ended up working the summer in Wyoming, doing hard labor on a construction project, with pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow, and then working as a "roughneck" on an oil-drilling rig near the Bighorn mountains. We broke off our relationship and did not communicate much. I spent the summer just working and working out and doing some reading.

That fall at Evangel I dated around some, but in the fall, around October, Sue and I had a very long phone call. The relationship started up again and progressed. It seemed she had developed a further appreciation of me in that time. We got engaged that Christmas and scheduled a May wedding for the week after I graduated.

As I worked hard to finish my studies at Evangel, something interesting happened. I was going to graduate Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in management, and minors in math and physical science, and was cruising along thinking life was set. Then one night, God's presence seemed to show up and cause me to know that I would have to give a prophetic word in chapel the next morning. A prophetic word, or "prophecy," is a message from God spoken out to the people present. In our denomination (and among most of the half a billion or more Pentecostals and Charismatics worldwide), this is an accepted procedure in certain parts of the worship service, because it was an accepted procedure in the churches in the New Testament. (You can see prophecy discussed in the New Testament book of First Corinthians, chapters 12 to 14, and in various places in the book of Acts and elsewhere, and all over the Old Testament.) However, the leaders will judge if it is really from God or not, and may stop someone if they do not feel it is God inspiring the message. So there is risk involved in obeying in this way. I was so scared that I stayed up all night praying. I sensed the "burden" (concern) of Christ for students that had slipped away from him while at college. The Lord gave me a word like the word to one of the churches in the book of Revelation where Christ said they had "left their first love," their love for him.

I was very nervous. I had given a message in tongues as a fifteen-year-old but then someone else had to get the interpretation from God and express it in English. This time I had to take the responsibility to speak in English and have the word judged as to whether it was of God or not. I delivered the word and felt the Spirit of God empowering me, affecting my emotions with his emotions and calling to them to return to him. Then I had many questions. What did it mean that God had used me in this way? Was he calling me to some kind of ministry? I did not know. I had never felt called to ministry, and frankly, most of the time did not want to be. I had seen my father and mother suffer and sacrifice under it. I was not the kind of person who wanted

to get up in front of people, at least not to preach. It scared me a lot. I had warned Sue that God might call me to ministry though. I wanted her to understand that there was that possibility.

Well, after giving that word in the college chapel, it seemed God was done speaking to me. He had showed up, asked me to deliver a prophetic message, and then vanished. I had no sense of being called at that time. God did not change my direction. So, I completed my tests and proceeded to scramble and get ready for our wedding a week after graduation.

We were married in a small town near her family's farm. We said our vows and headed out for a short honeymoon on the way back to Ohio where she worked. I had to start looking for a job and preparing for graduate school in the fall.

Chapter 4: “You Will be Tried as by Fire”

Dayton Ohio changed a lot of things for me. The plan was for me to work the summer and then get my MBA, Master of Business Administration, degree at a local university. A lot of feelings rise in me as I think of it. I felt I was not outgoing enough to be in management, even though I had changed a lot at college, and had been elected president of my college dormitory hall and then the president of the collection of halls that made up a dormitory building. I knew I needed to come out of my shell more and learn to get more comfortable working with people, so I looked for a job selling cars for the summer to force myself to be more outgoing. I walked along a main street in the city and applied and left résumés at several places. One was a very large Lincoln Mercury dealer, and they hired me. They gave me a book on car sales to read and talked to me some and had me start dealing with customers. I did quite well initially and learned some skills in dealing with people and negotiating that helped me later. I did find it a challenge to deal with some people. Some were strange and made trouble, even appearing to be mentally ill. Furthermore, I found that one of the people I worked with was not entirely ethical, and that troubled me.

As the summer wore on, I looked forward to going to graduate school in the fall. I had been accepted and given a research assistantship to work for an Asian operations research professor who was building a computer simulation of the trucking industry. We also started looking for a house and found a bargain that had been foreclosed on and repossessed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and was being sold by bid. We scraped together the required ten percent deposit to go with our bid and waited for the outcome. The house would need a lot of work. When it had been repossessed, the owners had evidently taken everything from the property they could, including carpet, closet doors and closet shelves. The government had then boarded up the windows to protect the house, but had evidently broken out the large picture window in the process.

But, about the time we were given the go-ahead on the house purchase, I got very, very sick. In late July or early August, I got sick and lay in the living room of our apartment, burning up with fever for around five days. My temperature would hit one hundred and five (at least per our thermometer) and I would just lie there, not thinking clearly. Sue kept going to work. We tried to get in to see a doctor but did not find one willing to take new patients. Finally, Sue found a doctor in a small town south of us, and took me to see him. I remember him examining my very swollen throat and saying he should do a culture but what I wanted was relief so he would prescribe penicillin. I have since learned that he was right, he should definitely have done a culture to identify the type of bacteria. As it turned out, what he prescribed would not affect the type of streptococcus infection I had, and in fact, as I learned years later, using the wrong antibiotic on a strep infection can lead to a hyper infection where the bacteria grow almost uncontrollably.

That is apparently what happened to me. My throat swelled almost shut and even water burned badly when I tried to drink. Finally, we came back and they referred me to the hospital. There they had young doctors file by to inspect my throat. I guess they found it an unusual case useful for teaching, since the infection was so bad. I was in the hospital for twelve days and on intravenous solution, unable to eat, for eight days. They gave me countless shots of antibiotic. I lay there hour after hour in almost a state of stupor. I had a small New Testament with me and read it some. I remember wondering if I would gag and die in the middle of the night because my throat was swollen almost shut and drainage would gag me and make me cough again and

again. They only came by every four hours to give me shots and, in-between, it seemed no one ever checked on me.

Also, once they had me in the hospital, they discovered I had mononucleosis. It left me very, very weak and was a very severe case. When the doctor let me out of the hospital he warned me to follow his instructions and rest, or it could kill me yet, and told of another young patient that had not listened and had died. I went from being able to dunk a basketball and pole vault to being barely able to walk. It was in that shape that I found myself when I got out of the hospital, but I needed to get my house ready to live in so we could get out of our apartment by the required date. Though very weak and needing to stop and rest often, I got our home ready to live in. In all this time, God never spoke anything to me. I was doing the best I could with what we felt God had allowed to be the plan for our lives at that time, since he had not told us anything different.

I started graduate school, and my research assistantship, a short time later and found that I barely had the strength to make it up the stairs to my office. Then I found that the mononucleosis, which had attacked my brain and nervous system as well as my liver, had taken far more from me than physical strength. My mental strength and endurance, as well as my emotional reserve were gone. I used to regularly study in college from eleven PM to two or even four AM without a problem, with a sharp mind. Now I found I could not stay up studying past ten o'clock at night.

Eventually, the inability to quickly get my mental strength back, the reserve on which a student "burns the mid-night oil" to study, took its toll. I found that I had to drop out of school in November. I had always excelled at school. I had graduated Magna cum Laude. Now my strength had been taken and not just physically, but mentally and emotionally as well. Things would get me emotionally shaken too easily. I saw the physical strength coming back, but the mental and emotional strength and durability were slow in coming back. I had been sick enough to die and stayed that way for days, but I did not expect all those effects. In one's youth, one does not expect recovery to take time.

So, there I was, in a house needing work and ashamed at not having the strength to stay in graduate school. I faced limitation for the first time in my life—weakness and inability to rise to a challenge. It was humbling. Then, I felt the shame of having my wife have a good job and going off to work and I was there in the house. I started looking for work but found that I was not in a good city to find work. Years later I found that, due to the condition of the economy at that time, it was normal or average for a college graduate to look six months to find a job. I faithfully sent out résumés but did not get much response. Then I was told I was in a town where a major firm, once a dominant firm in its industry, had gone from something like 55,000 employees in town down to six or eight thousand. Beyond that, many of those people with experience in management were around and unemployed or underemployed and looking for the same jobs for which I was looking.

I had plenty of time to talk to God in this time. But God was not talking back. I spent time doing a lot of fixing up the house. I put in a textured ceiling, painted the walls inside and out, built closet doors and shelves. I repaired the flagstone patio. I worked on the lawn and landscaped. I installed air conditioners. I sealed the driveway asphalt. I did a lot to make the home livable and attractive and to increase its value, but something inside me was dying—and God was standing by watching it die. The glow and confidence of a new graduate, with honors, was dying—and pride, at least some of it, was dying along with it.

Finally, after about six months, I got a six-month temporary technical job in a local General Motors plant's engineering lab. I worked hard and learned and, even though I was hired and paid as a "lab aide," I was allowed to do the work of a "senior special tester," which I was told was the highest job grade in the lab. I designed my own experiments and data-gathering techniques to test brake systems to see if a recall was needed. As the six-month term came to an end, they assured me I would still have a job. They said that, even if they had to have me leave for one day to comply with rules, they would hire me right back. I also had applied for their management-training program and was looking forward to a status similar to what my wife had gotten at another General Motors division.

But something began to change—in me. God's work silently behind the scenes in my heart began to take hold of me. Finally, one Sunday we began to sense something come to a head. We came back from Sunday morning church and talked. Without any clear voice in words we sensed God working something in our lives—a call. We both acknowledged it that afternoon as we talked. I talked about going to Bible college, and I later sensed God wanted me to go to the one where my father was teaching. It was not my natural choice, because I had grown up there, at least during high school.

Following our decision to go, there were several messages in tongues and interpretations or prophecies at church that seemed to be just for us. One in particular was a strong confirmation. After the service, we were down at the altar and there were only about a dozen people left and someone gave a message in tongues and interpretation or a prophecy. It was **"Fear not to go, I will lead you to a green place. But know this; you will be tried as by fire and refined as gold is refined, but brought forth as gold."** I knew God had spoken.

That word, at least the part about being tried as by fire and refined as gold is refined, has defined the course and theme of my life. God has reminded me of it along the way, as trial followed trial and I felt the heat of the refining process, ever waiting to be brought forth. God has used others along the way to call attention to that process, but I still wait in the fire, over forty years later, hoping to be brought forth soon. But I am jumping ahead of my story and must return from my digression.

After this we went through some real battles with spiritual attack or oppression. In this time, we had three days and nights of some of the worst oppression. We fought spiritual battles that kept us up praying. We searched our hearts for any sin that might hinder us. At one point, I felt like I should throw away or destroy all my trophies and other "treasures" as a sacrifice of my pride. (Pride is a sin.) I felt that God was working in me about my pride and I began to despise it and destroyed the sports trophies I had so prized before—trophies I had earned at state track meets—and that represented my pride. I also threw away a lot of medals, ribbons, and certificates I had earned over the years. I regretted more the pride they represented than the fact that I threw them away.

Looking back, there was one more aspect of this trial and test and the attack of the enemy. Before all this started I was very much involved in prayer and being used in the gifts of the Spirit and having them acknowledged and appreciated by our pastor. Just before all the attack of the enemy started, I had a vision, or really a spiritual experience of a unique character. Now I have come to wonder if all the attack did not stem from what I was shown and how the enemy may have marked me as dangerous to Satan from that day on. In the spiritual experience, I saw nothing. It is hard to explain, but I had a clear sense of suddenly being in another place and in another time—the future—and prophesying, but as often happens when one prophesies, I had my eyes closed. In this experience I was saying, **"Dare you to stand before the people of**

God with sin in your heart!” Then someone grabbed my shoulder from behind to pull me down or handle me roughly and I felt the power of God surge through my shoulder to them, and I knew it was not for good. I had the sense God had struck them down and perhaps even dead.

The whole experience took only a few seconds, but it affected me forever. I, more than forty years later, still spoke of it as having been like having been in another place and time and then brought back. For me it was like it had already happened. No spiritual experience had ever been so real. It scared me and scarred me. I felt like a tree struck by lightning and forever marked. God was very serious about something and I would never forget it. Still it was so startling and almost traumatic that I tended to put it out of my mind, or attempt to over time. I feared God’s judgment would fall around me and I was afraid it would fall on me too. I did not feel righteous enough to stand where his judgment fell and be protected.

At Trinity Bible College, the Lord provided teaching jobs at the college itself and we ended up meeting a need only God would have known about. I was supposed to teach a science laboratory for the spring semester but the science teacher suddenly needed major surgery. The Lord had me in place to teach the class and help out both the college and me. I also took a class in printing and learned to do the photography, plate-making, and running of an offset press, and helped out in the college print shop. I did not know at the time how important such understanding was to the work of many denominational and missionary publishing activities.

The instructors at Trinity were seasoned pastors and missionaries, even if they did not all have the best degrees. They knew God. Paul Davidson could teach the works of the Apostle Paul and make you almost taste the dust in the road as you journeyed with Paul on his missionary journeys. People probably still order his tapes from the school. He had his wounds though, his humanity. He had been in China when the communists took over and he had, I believe I heard, suffered a breakdown of some sort that left him disciplined in the disciplines it took to avoid depression. He had walked a difficult path himself and that made him a better teacher and mentor of men and women of God and he was dearly loved by them.

Then there was Brother Peter Walker, my father’s friend and neighbor. This was a man who walked with God in extraordinary ways. It touches me thinking of it. He would be sound asleep in the middle of the night and God would wake him up and tell him there were two Bible college students down in a bar and tell him to go get them—and he did and they were there. God also told him who stole something from another student’s room and he stood in chapel and gave them a chance to repent before he turned them in. People learned to fear God around Peter Walker, but he was such a gentle and humble man.

We have lost something in our Bible colleges when men like these can no longer teach and mentor our ministry students. Degrees can be good, and meeting government requirements helps provide funding, but we have lost too much if it costs us having men and women of God who have special gifts and relationships with God teach our ministers. I miss them and their kind, though I know there are still some and they may have doctorates and not lose what these men had. However, some do lose it, or never had it. If only we can learn from the Word without losing the Spirit.

When the Lord called us from Dayton to Trinity, I had felt like he still wanted to use my administrative training. I had felt that perhaps we might end up in an overseas Bible school. At Trinity, I wrestled with where my call fit in. I felt pushed into either a pastor or missionary "mold" but did not feel like I fit. I did not feel I had a call to preach at that time. I still felt like the Lord wanted me to have both an administrative and a Bible background. It soon became evident that it would be better for me to get prerequisites for the Assemblies of God Graduate

School and then attend there, rather than continuing at Trinity. This was because I had completed my degree at Evangel in three years by testing out of most of my general education courses through a widely accepted testing program, and they did not want to honor those credits even though I had a degree. They would have had me take all the general education classes. I learned later some colleges tend to make transcript evaluations in ways that result in more income for the school.

While at Trinity, I had talked to the academic dean about how to prepare for my calling. He had pointed out the increasing need in many Bible colleges to be able to teach or serve in more than one area, and encouraged me to prepare in both Bible and administration. Over time I began to feel the dean had given me a word of wisdom from the Lord, at least about preparing in both administration and Bible education. I decided take his advice and pursue two master's degrees, one in Bible, and one in business administration. I applied at both the Assemblies of God Graduate School (now renamed The Assemblies of God Theological Seminary) and the Graduate School of Business at Southwest Missouri State University (SMSU—now renamed Missouri State University, MSU) and was accepted at both.

When we made the decision to move, at the end of the summer, God really provided for us. We came into Springfield with our possessions in a U-haul trailer and found a good apartment at a good price quickly. Then, within just a couple days, my wife had a good job in industrial management at the local plant of a large company. I started at SMSU in the fall and started taking classes at the Assemblies of God Graduate School as well in the spring (taking classes at both schools). While attending school, we thought it best for me to devote all my time to study and get through, since my wife had a professional job with sufficient income for us to do so. Still, I worked in an assistantship in the Management Department at first, which gave me discounted tuition as well.

At this point, I should explain that, at this time, my wife, over a period of months, began to repeatedly argue against my continuing my preparation for ministry. She wanted me to quit seminary and finish the business degree. I assume this was because she felt it would assure that I could get a job with better provision and security than she thought my being in the ministry would provide. With my wife's push to finish only my MBA (and an extra accounting major to be able to take the CPA exam), and to get a conventional position rather than a ministry position, I considered possible positions. At one point, someone I knew interviewed with the FBI, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in Kansas City. I found out that they were looking for professional accountants who could do white-collar crime investigations, but that they would also be regular FBI special agents. I decided to apply.

It was an extremely thorough and time-consuming application process. I had to drive to Kansas City for testing and interviews. I was interested, and went through the whole process to where I was accepted and they were glad to have me. They said all I had to do was call them and let them know, and they would do a quick background check and send me off to Quantico, Virginia for the regular FBI agent training. But they also indicated it would always involve the possibility of being called in on an FBI SWAT team for a gunfight, and that it would involve serving in one of ten unspecified major cities first, and then waiting for seniority to get out to the location of our choice. I did not fear the possibility of serving on a SWAT team, but I knew my wife, who grew up on a farm, would not want to be in a huge city for as many years as it might take to get seniority enough for a location she might like. Learning about the FBI, and its antiterrorism role, and the Kansas City office, was something God used later to help protect my country, and God used a famous minister to later tell me there were "no detours" in how God had

led me (but that is getting ahead of my story).

When my wife's job became difficult, pressure from her intensified to where she insisted that I finish my business degree as soon as possible and go out and get a job. At her insistence, I went out in August and immediately arranged a position with Phillips Petroleum at their headquarters in Bartlesville, Oklahoma to start in December or January—as soon as I could finish my course work on my Master of Business Administration degree. Phillips was a big international oil and gas company with good pay and benefits.

The job with Phillips was a good job, with me making more than either of us had ever made. However, I was forced to rush my MBA degree and not get the balance in management and other coursework I wanted for a general leadership role. What I ended up with was an MBA along with the equivalent of an undergraduate major in accounting—which I took as a fall-back position to be assured of a job, but which I had no real desire to make my main focus. Even in accounting, I focused on management accounting and the tools for financial analysis and management decision-making. I was later informed that if I had waited and applied through on-campus interviews I would have been eligible for Phillips Petroleum's elite management development track. (I had earned straight A's.) Toward the end of my MBA work, one of my professors, who had been an insurance industry executive and still did consulting around the country, offered to set me up in a good consulting job. However, I was already committed to Phillips and could not see breaking the commitment. (I think he was willing to recommend me because I had set a record in his MBA capstone course designed to teach planning and strategy skills and utilizing a computer simulation of running a company.)

It is interesting to note that, shortly after my wife pushed me into arranging a job with Phillips, the pressure on her job went away and she got another position in the company that she loved. She later stated that if only she had hung on a little longer, things would have been different. Hindsight shows that preparation in both administration and spiritual ministry was something the Lord would use. However, the ministry preparation was delayed.

While in graduate school I had been very driven. I almost could not bring myself to go to bed until and I had all my assignments done and had read the chapter that was to be lectured on the next day. I could study many hours a day and go to class at night. However, I would take long walks late in the day to decompress, think, and pray.

After Sue got what she wanted from me of skipping the ministry preparation in favor of the business position, she encouraged me to take a break rather than look for work to fill up a break I had in August. I did some hiking in the national forests of the Ozark mountains and loved it. I also decided to take up Tai Kwon Do (karate). I found a place that took the training very seriously, with the teacher having learned in Korea and currently fighting professionally (and, unfortunately, in bar fights as well). I appreciated that he was taking self-defense training seriously and forcing people to really show ability to gain advancement. I stayed with the training until we left town months later and earned a green belt, a middle-level belt. I enjoyed gaining skill and sparring with those with much higher-level belts. I avoided the spiritual side of karate some places get into, but enjoyed staying in shape and developing the skills and discipline to be able to defend myself and others if the need ever arose. The nice thing about having such skills is that, if you have them, it contributes to not having to use them, and not having to hurt people seriously to convince them to not try to hurt you or your loved ones. (Funny, that sounds like national defense policy too, a proven approach to having peace.)

At least in not trying to pursue two graduate degrees at once I had a little more time to be human, to live a little. Maybe God allowed circumstances to intervene, to keep me from

being so driven toward the goals he seemed to have identified. I did learn, over many years, that his sense of timing and his definition of the word, “soon,” can be very different from ours.

Chapter 5: Seminary & Callings

Phillips Petroleum was a major international oil and gas company with one hundred and eighty some subsidiary corporations strewn all around the world and around twenty-five thousand employees. It was good experience to be there. I had interviewed for a position on the Corporate Comptroller's staff, in an area responsible for policy and systems. I had expressed interest in the systems area, but by the time I hired on they had split that area off under different management. So I ended up with responsibility for studying authoritative pronouncements affecting corporate accounting and Securities and Exchange Commission reporting requirements, and writing position papers, policies, and procedures. I also passed the CPA (Certified Public Accountant) exam and earned that credential. Before long they also gave me responsibility for writing an internal professional newsletter intended to keep financial and accounting managers and professionals worldwide informed on new requirements. I also got drawn into recommending accounting treatment of difficult matters, including things like contorted legal contracts and expenditures involving billions of dollars, and drafting letters for the comptroller's signature.

I was also commissioned to study what was necessary to start doing business in China, when the communist nation first put forth a concerted effort to bring in foreign businesses to help them modernize and train their workers and provide employment. I was to study it and summarize it in a presentation to the corporate comptroller and his leadership team. At the end of the presentation I was asked if I wanted to be assigned to China and expressed interest. Nothing came of it, but I heard I was later considered to go to another position in Africa. I was pleased but frustrated when my first evaluation started with superlative comments and saying I was "running circles around" employees that had been there twenty years—but I could not be promoted according to policy until I had put in two years in my current job grade.

I had the misfortune of being good at work I did not like. Luckily, after eighteen months, I was "hand-picked" to be assigned to a special project to sift through all of the financial and statistical data going to senior management and into the published financial statements, and to redesign the chart of accounts and data encoding scheme used to collect and supply it. Then the project progressed to designing or selecting the software to meet the needs and working toward implementing it, and my status changed to being assigned to the Management Information Systems area. That project gave me exceptional exposure to what information and decision-making actually runs a major international business. It also gave me opportunity to get all kinds of training and expertise in systems analysis, programming, and analytical and communication skills. I worked on two different "flavors" of giant mainframe computers, as well as early PC's and learned the knowledge behind the alphabet soup that computer experts use to describe what they know. (That included: OS/MVS JCL under JES3, TSO and ISPF, VM and XEdit, macro languages, and a very powerful 4th generation programming language and database that could allow one person to design and program systems in a small fraction of the time traditional programming took—and get information for management much faster than traditional programmers could.)

I also designed and built a system for efficiently loading and managing the major software system that was purchased, and the software company was so impressed they wanted to buy it. However, Phillips did not want the potential liability of selling programming code, which of course was not their primary business.

Phillips also sent me to all kinds of general, supervisory, and management training. I

was obviously being prepared for advancement, but I was impatient. I was getting training I could not have afforded otherwise, and some of it was by top companies and experts in that area of training. I could not see that God was using my experience and training there to prepare me to be a leader.

Phillips was an old-line paternalistic company – but much like some of the popular new companies that provide a lot for their employees. They took work seriously, but also emphasized having a nice family environment. They provided huge gym facilities and sports leagues. I participated in men’s basketball and co-ed volleyball leagues with my wife and friends from the company. I also developed my Tai Kwon Do skills more, at a gym that also trained boxers and took the training seriously. I socialized just a little with the ambitious professionals I worked with, but found most of my friends through church. I found that I tended to choose most of my close friends from people with hourly jobs, like technical support people, or carpenters, or draftsmen. I liked spending time with everyday people more than serious corporate climbers. One friend was really into fishing and we went bass and crappie fishing quite a bit over my years there. And church-league softball became a constant summer activity. In Oklahoma, they take softball very seriously, and our team was good, but we also had a lot of fun at it. I took the high-pressure job of pitching. High pressure because it is hard to pitch slow pitch softball to keep people from hitting or getting good hits, especially in the gusty wind of Oklahoma—and because some of the batters could about take your head off with a line drive if your reflexes were not fast enough.

The Lord blessed us financially while at Phillips Petroleum, about doubling our incomes in five years, but at times I felt desperate to get to where the Lord was leading us. At one point, I wanted so much to get on to whatever the Lord wanted us to do that I was at the altar begging the Lord for an answer or leading. His only response was "**Wait.**" He did send a trusted friend who felt impressed to tell us that the Lord had a work or ministry for us where we were. I was ready and willing to go to Bible school or to do whatever else the Lord might want at several points over those years. I knew that what we were doing was not what we were to do long term. For me, my life would have felt wasted to spend it there, doing what I was doing.

About this time my wife began to feel she wanted to have a baby. It seems strange now, but, in the beginning, we had thought more in terms of not having children at all. But her "biological clock" began ticking loudly, as women say when they begin to feel they are getting older and need to have children if they are going to have them. I remember being somewhat concerned about it. The company did not seem that stable in some ways, with oil prices declining and cutbacks happening. But we finally agreed and planned having our first child. Our son, Kirk, was born in the spring of 1984.

Several significant spiritual events over the last year and a half of our five and one-half years in Bartlesville led up to God bringing us to a new phase of our lives. Back in Dayton, the Lord had promised to lead us to "a green place" and Bartlesville seemed to fit that. (The tourism brochures even call it "green country.") The Lord blessed us with good jobs and raises that allowed us to pay off our bills and save a considerable sum that would finance God’s purposes for us. In August of 1985, I was in the midst of building a patio and deck on our home as a birthday present for my wife, and we were settled in and comfortable. But I heard the Lord speaking to me in my spirit saying, "**Sell your house, and have it sold by the end of October.**" I walked into the house and told her what I thought the Lord had just said to me. After praying about it, Sue and I agreed that we would do what I felt the Lord was leading me to do. The house was sold and closed before the end of October. The buyer was someone that was moving

to Bartlesville to start a business. They drove by our house and stopped as we were putting our for-sale sign in the yard.

The sale of our house was more of a miracle than it may seem. The housing market in Bartlesville crashed at the end of October with the announced lay-off of 500 by one of only two major employers in a town of about 35,000 people. From there it got much worse when, that winter, Phillips Petroleum was the victim of two hostile corporate takeover attempts that would have turned the town to a ghost town—in most people's opinions. People took Christmas gifts out from under the tree and returned them before Christmas. By spring, Phillips had fought off the takeovers, but, to pay for paying out more to shareholders, it started major layoffs that caused a collapse of the real estate market to a low from which I wondered if it had recovered even fifteen years later. Before we left, a newspaper headline said the whole town had dropped 25% in value and there were 1,000 homes for sale in a town of around 35,000 people.

We were then expecting the Lord to lead us on shortly, so much so that we insisted on renting a house month-to-month. We began to discuss possibilities and I put my resume out. In September, while praying at the altar, our Sunday school teacher and close friend came to pray with us. Not knowing anything of our recent leading and actions, she felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to say, "**You have a special calling**" and "**You have not yet been shown what that calling is.**" She said that **the Lord would show me but that, "You will have to listen closely."** Starting at this point, I began to journal things that we felt the Lord was using to guide us. Over the fall and winter, we began to discuss where we might fit in, in the way of a ministry. In April of 1986, the company offered an early retirement and severance plan that would pay my wife more than a third of a year's pay to quit. It seems the Lord had worked circumstances in our favor and we began to plan for her to quit in June.

One Sunday that spring I had an experience with God that marked me forever. I spent six hours in the presence of God in an incredible way and hearing his voice like his throne had descended in the room.

Seven years before, I had been deeply troubled by the experience that was like being at a future event involving a prophetic rebuke for sin and the judgment of God perhaps falling. Over seven years I was able to put the experience out of my mind until this day when the Lord showed me beyond any doubt that it was he who had showed me the thing. I was sitting in a Sunday morning service when the Lord brought the thing back to me, his judgment coming on a leader or leaders in the Church, and sent me rushing to the altar begging him not to let it happen and interceding saying, "Oh God no!" God answered, "**It must be.**" I had never felt such a burden or prayed with such intensity. Nor have I ever been more in the presence of the holiness of God. All others left except one person who remained at my request. Over six hour's time I was in the presence of God as never before. I interceded and worshiped as wave after wave of the felt presence of the Holy Spirit came.

Then I heard the instruction, "**Take the shoes off of your feet.**" I immediately rejected it as just my thought. I rebuked myself saying to myself, "Yeah sure, now you think you are Moses!" But the waves of feeling from the Spirit of God suddenly stopped and I knew it had been God speaking, not my thoughts, and that I better obey.

After I obeyed, the presence of God came into the room in a way that made it feel as if the throne of God had descended and been suspended above the platform and choir area. The holiness of God seemed to float out toward me, and it was a terrible and awesome thing. It made me feel terribly unclean in the sight of God. I went down on my knees and face like a Muslim prays and still felt like a cockroach that wants to flee into a crack in the floor when a light is

turned on. I felt like I was a bug under a terribly bright searchlight and there was no crack to crawl into. I felt exposed under the horrible power of the holiness of God, trapped in the open, in fear of the awesome presence of a holy God. What could I do?

But God had the answer. He told me to take my Bible, which was on the pew beside me, and open it and place it over my head like a cover. Then he said, "**As the written Word covers you, so will the Living Word cover you.**" It gave me an understanding of how the blood of Christ covers us in the presence of a holy and awesome God. How doomed we are, in our sin, without the covering of the blood of Christ in the presence of a holy God. It is only through faith in Christ's sacrifice that we have that covering. I then understood what Isaiah expressed when he found himself in God's throne room in Isaiah chapter six. He cried out ". . . Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips . . ." God provided a coal off the altar to cleanse him. My "coal," to cleanse me, was the blood of Christ. I was so afraid at having to stand where God's judgment was to fall, but he comforted me. Though a very hard thing was being shown to me, I knew God had spoken to me.

Over the spring and early summer, the Lord began to speak more to us, but he used a technique of getting us willing to do one thing, then showing us that he really wanted us to do another - something more frightening to us. One Sunday, there was a special speaker and he talked of unusual opportunities to work overseas as professionals in countries where missionaries could not go, and an agency that arranged it. It got me thinking. Then on another Sunday the pastor spoke about sacrifice and finding God's best will for your life, rather than just what is good and acceptable. The Lord really spoke to me during the service and we I went forward at the altar call. While praying, I felt that God had given me a sense that I would be going overseas, though I was given no sense of how, in what role, or when. One tends to assume sometimes, when they are much better off leaving things undefined. Still I felt a heavy sense of responsibility about it.

To make a long story short, God used a lot of people, ministers and other solid people to encourage and provide instruction and confirmation from God, step by step until it was clear we were to go back into Seminary and prepare for spiritual ministry.

Additionally, God provided for us uniquely in the house we bought in Springfield. We spent a frustrating day looking for a place to rent and getting little help to do so from real estate people. At the end to the day, just before we thought to return home, I thought of the home we had almost completed a purchase of while I was getting my MBA there. We drove by it and it was for sale and we got a showing. It had been remodeled exactly as I had said, on the way over, it would need to be. And we found we could buy it on a nonqualifying assumption, such that us not having jobs did not cause a problem. And the payment would be cheaper than rent would have been. This was another amazing confirmation that we were taking a step God had planned for us.

We came and got settled into the house we had purchased and we had enough in the bank to allow me to go to seminary and her to stay home with our son for a time, as she had desired to do. God had done some wonderful things for us. We did not intend to be foolish. We lived in a very small but adequate house and budgeted our money carefully.

I did very well in seminary, earning top grades and enjoying it very much. I studied very diligently. I knew this was to be my main opportunity for formal training and I wanted to get all from it that I could. I do remember being frustrated with all of the reading. Each class seemed to assign huge amounts of extra reading. So, I spent hour upon hour reading both the

textbooks and the outside reading. Only at the end of my last class in residence did I have a professor tell me that they did not really mean "read," just skim! Well, I guess I got a lot more benefit from the reading than others, but there was a cost.

I was doing well in seminary and enjoying it—so much so that I started to think about how I could minister so much better with more education. I started to address my fear of standing up in front of people to minister by thinking that if I could gain lots of knowledge, I could teach from that knowledge and not be afraid. (Public speaking is the number one fear in America, by the way.) I talked to God about how I wanted to go on for my doctorate. He replied, **"No. I want you to rely on me."** God wanted me dependent on him to minister, not to be able to minister without him by relying on what I had learned in schooling.

Then something else started to happen. A deep burden for prayer started to come upon me. I was drawn into more and more prayer and much prayer in the Holy Spirit (in tongues). The mess of a fallen televangelist in the news caused me to remember that first prophetic experience of warning of sin in a leader or leaders and of judgment. I also remembered the experience of the throne room seemingly coming down unseen into the church in Oklahoma that had carried a similar theme. I became very deeply burdened in my spirit. The Lord gave me desire and strength to pray like I had never prayed before, and was giving me a desire to be in his presence even if it meant praying in the Spirit for hours with much anguish and weeping. It seemed the burden would hit me when I crossed the threshold of my home. Only once did it affect me in public and that was when I was asked to pray in our Sunday school class and the burden drew me to pray longer and more intensely than people normally would in a Sunday School class—such that people looked at me when I finished. But, it was just a small leak of the flood that would hit me at home.

I had another encounter with God in this time, in a season of much prayer. I was standing in my closet and felt God make his presence felt. He asked a vow of me. He asked me, **"Are you willing to speak the hard words, words hard to say and hard to hear?"** I gave God the vow he asked of me. I had no idea what it would cost me to fulfill it.

I pushed on with my efforts to finish seminary, while my wife was gone five weeks to help my pregnant sister in Oklahoma so she could obey her doctor and stay in bed so she would not lose her baby.

In this time, the need arose for me to really know what God was calling me to do. I began to ask the Lord just what he had called me to do and he gave me an answer I would not understand for many years. He said, **"You're sent to bring the refiner's fire to the House of God."** I did not know what he meant by that. It seemed it had to mean a preaching ministry or at least a spiritual ministry of some kind.

On a Saturday around the end of the seminary semester, I rose early again to pray. I was praying for the Lord's enablement, being particularly concerned about being able to finish school and get all the reading done which was being required of me. Then the Lord caused me to feel his presence and power in a special way. Then, I felt like the Lord was telling me to go and rest so I went back to bed.

As I rested in bed I "heard," with spiritual ears, someone crying out for us to send them pastors. All I could think to reply was, "We will send." **Then I had an eyes-open vision of a map of China suspended in the air and an unseen hand pulled back a sheer curtain from in front of it.** Then the Lord gave me a message about that country to give a leader in the denominational foreign missions division. God said to tell him, **"I will send you a flock for China, and that flock will be their shepherds."** God also said not to be concerned

(presumably about funding) that he would send them out.

We felt uncomfortable with going to the foreign missions division leader but I felt I had to obey. We called and arranged to see him later in the day. We went in and I meekly shared what had happened to me and the message. He tape-recorded it and shared it with the leaders of the missions division and it was received as a confirmation of recent prayers. This was strategic revelation about a major country. It contained the strategy for getting people into the country, one validated in time to be very successful—not going as pastors/ministers but as just working Christians, like teachers and professionals. However, a price was to be paid for it. I did not know that receiving strategic revelation brings strategic-level retaliation from Satan. He tries desperately to negate strategic revelation. Even if he cannot prevent it being delivered, he wants to discredit the messenger so the message is discarded. So, you get attacked in a major way. I did get attacked.

I was exhausted from seminary finals and my wife having been away for weeks. Satan loves to attack people when they are exhausted, just like wolves following a herd of deer. I went through some tough battles, some of it with the enemy trying to confuse. And I got more strategic revelation from God as well. In this time, I also received revelations about things coming on the country in the future. These things troubled me. And God showed me a vision of me ministering before a large crowd of people in what appeared to be a stadium. I had never wanted such a thing, so it concerned me.

I wanted to continue my preparation for ministry and pursue a ministry position. I had just two courses left to earn my Master of Arts in Bible from the seminary, but I felt the need for some additional courses to prepare me for ministry, such as homiletics (preaching). I had earned the required prerequisites for seminary, but did not have a Bible-college degree and felt a need for some practical theology courses to be ready to go out and minister. I tried to enroll for the fall semester, but my wife argued strongly against it, not wanting me to continue to pursue ministry. But I persuaded her to allow me to finish one course I was doing by directed research.

I spent the month of September completing one three-credit course on the Holy Spirit and I researched nearly all the popular writings in the Assemblies of God on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I read more than three thousand pages. I wrote a long paper (twenty-four pages) surveying and comparing and contrasting the teaching on the gifts. Dr. Stanley Horton, my instructor and one of our most respected scholars on the Holy Spirit, recommended it to *Paraclete* (The A/G's scholarly journal on the person and work of the Holy Spirit) and it was published some time later (in the Winter 1990 edition). Years later, a relative told us it was required reading in one of his courses at Bethel Seminary, a seminary outside our denomination. Later I found our own seminary was using it for a class. It was one of the few bright spots in this time.