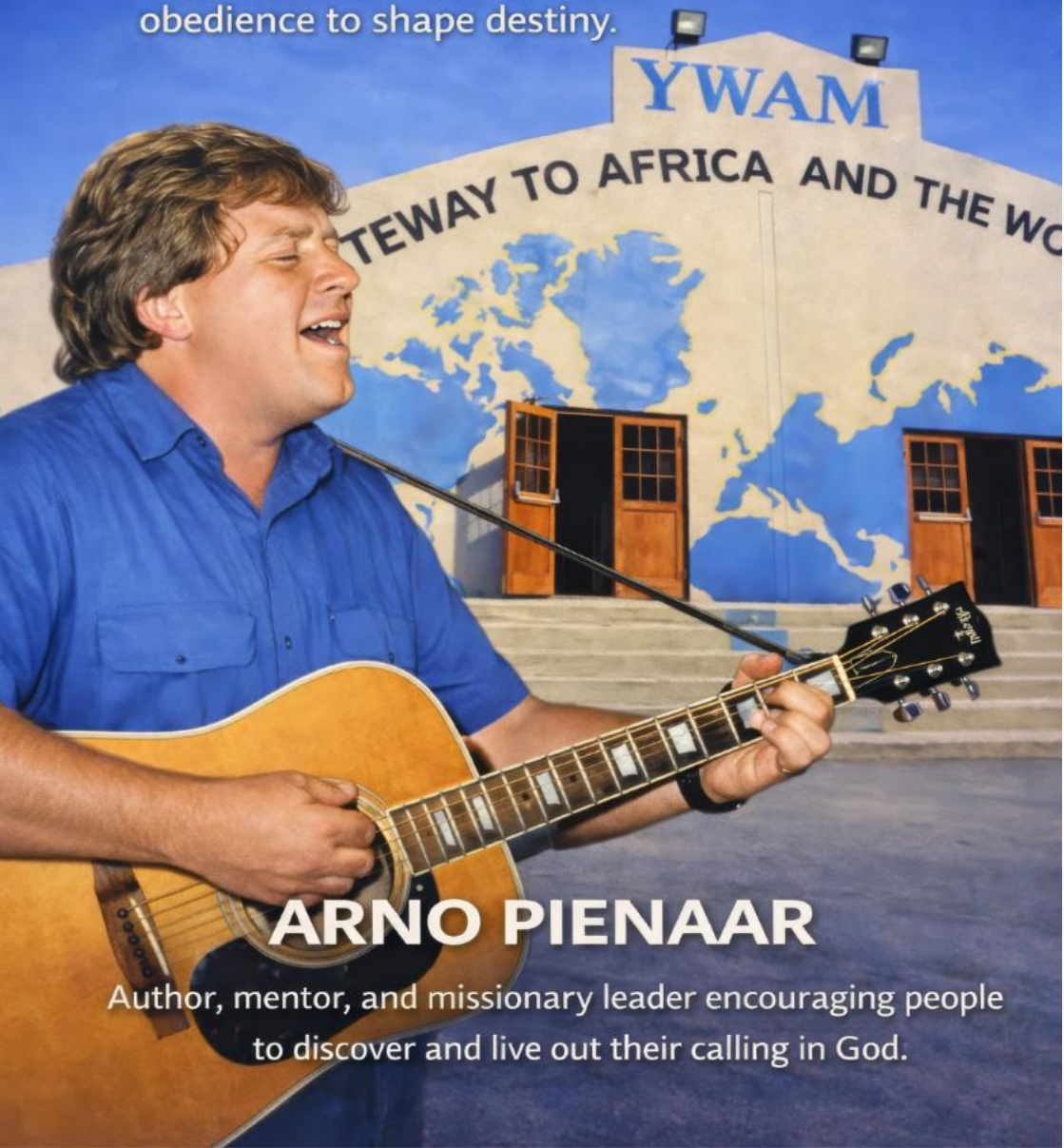


AWAKENED TO PURPOSE

Where grace meets faith and
obedience to shape destiny.



ARNO PIENAAR

Author, mentor, and missionary leader encouraging people
to discover and live out their calling in God.

Awakened to Purpose

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This book is a personal testimony and reflection on God's faithfulness, guidance, and work in the author's life. The events, memories, and reflections are shared from the author's personal perspective and understanding.

Certain historical details, ministry references, and direct quotations are included from the author's personal memory, ministry experience, and available source material. Where direct quotations from published works are used, the source is named in the text.

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AI-assisted tools were used to help organise, refine, and polish this manuscript. The memories, testimony, reflections, and final content remain the author's own.

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Prologue

My heart's desire is that this book will inspire and reflect God's love, care, and encouragement. As you read, I pray that you will feel His gentle call to grow into the full potential He has placed within you. My hope is that it draws you closer to Him, deepens your relationship with Him, and helps you live out the beautiful destiny He designed for your life.

This book flows from a deep and heartfelt desire to share the reality of God's hand in an ordinary life. It tells of His woven tapestry through every season and circumstance, showing how He directed and led me into the plans He had prepared long before I knew them. Time and again, I have seen His faithfulness even in my moments of weakness, and His grace covering my many shortcomings. My story is really His story, told through the memories, experiences, and perspective of my own journey. It is a testimony of how real, patient, and true God is to those who seek Him with a sincere heart.

I want to show that God is not distant or unreachable. He is near, involved in the details, and faithful to guide anyone who dares to trust Him with childlike faith. His Word is not just a book of principles but a firm foundation to stand on when life's storms come.

My prayer is that those just beginning their journey with God, those stepping into full-time ministry, and even believers who have been serving Him for many years will find encouragement and guidance in these pages. May you find lessons that strengthen your walk and words that cheer you on, like a coach urging you to keep running your race with endurance and joy.

Above all, may God receive all the glory for the things He has done. May His goodness, kindness, and unfailing love draw us all closer to Him as we live lives of purpose, stepping out in obedience to everything He asks of us.

CHAPTER 1

Marked from the Start

I don't remember it myself, of course. I was only a little baby. But this is the first story I ever heard about God's involvement in my life from the very beginning.

My parents told me that on the day I was dedicated to the Lord, someone in the service stood up and spoke a prophetic word over me. They said that God would use my life to touch many people. They spoke about God's hand resting on me and that He would work through me to bring His goodness to others.

My dad later shared something that made this moment even more meaningful. It was the first time anything like this had ever taken place during a baby dedication in that church. No one had ever stood up to speak a prophetic word over a child before. It was unexpected. It was God breaking in. Heaven was marking something long before I could understand what was happening.

Even as a young child, I somehow held that word close. I did not always understand it. At times I forgot about it. But it was like a gentle thread quietly woven through my life. It felt like God's whisper before I could speak. A reminder that He saw me. A reminder that He had a purpose for my life and that He had already started writing His story in me.

When I look back now, I see that the prophetic word spoken that day was more than a meaningful moment. It was a seed planted in faith. And over the years God has cared for that seed. He did this through challenges, through joy, through moments where I surrendered, and through seasons where I grew at His pace. I stand where I am today because God spoke first.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you...” Jeremiah chapter 1:5.

This was my beginning. It was more than the start of my natural life. It was the beginning of a journey shaped by God’s voice and set apart for His purposes.

CHAPTER 2

A Legacy of Faith

My parents were part of a Full Gospel church: a vibrant, Spirit-filled community where faith wasn't just something they believed; it was something they lived. Both of them were actively involved, pouring themselves into the life of the church. My dad, especially, was close friends with the pastor. In fact, before he even married my mom, the two of them, my father and the pastor, went on a holiday tour together through Europe. That season of his life was deeply formative, not just for his faith, but for the foundation he would later help lay in our family.

When he married my mom, they chose to stay rooted in that same church, even though their backgrounds were different. My mother came from an Apostolic Faith Mission background, while my father had grown up in a more traditional church setting before he came to know the Lord personally. But together, they committed to walking forward in unity, building their marriage and family on the Word, in the power of the Spirit, and in community.

And so, it was in that church, the Full Gospel fellowship where my parents had poured out their lives, that I was dedicated to the Lord. That's where the prophetic word was spoken over me. That's where, even as a baby, God's story over my life began to take visible shape.

When I look back, I realise how much legacy matters. My history with God didn't start with me: it began with choices my parents made, with friendships they formed, spiritual soil in which they chose to plant themselves. Their obedience became my inheritance.

"But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children." Psalm 103:17

This was my beginning: surrounded by faith, marked by a promise, and held in the arms of parents who believed that God had a purpose for me.

CHAPTER 3

A Father's Faith, A Living Reality

I thank God for my parents, for the way they didn't just talk about Him but lived in such a way that I could see He was real.

My dad, especially, modeled something that deeply marked me. His faith wasn't surface level or a matter of religious duty; it was personal. His walk with God showed in the way he prayed, the way he made decisions, and even how he handled life's challenges. He had a good knowledge of Scripture, yes, but more than that, he had a living relationship with the Lord. Watching him taught me, without many words, that God was not distant. He was near, present, and involved.

His story made that even clearer to me. He had to leave school when he was only in grade 10 because they grew up during the Depression years and he had to help support the family by entering the workforce at a young age. Later in life, when he was born again and surrendered to the Lord, he would tell me how he prayed and trusted God for a good job. God answered him. He received steady and secure employment with a regular income. Because of that, we lived comfortably in a well established and good neighbourhood. My dad always testified that this was God's faithfulness at work in his life.

He was also a giver, faithful in his tithes, generous in supporting others, and someone who lived with an open hand. Out of that, I could see how God continued to provide for him. His example spoke louder than words ever could.

I remember small moments that made deep and lasting impressions on me. Once, when I was in my teenage years, my dad misplaced his keys. Instead of panicking, he prayed, "Lord, please help me find them." A little while later, he found them. To me, those moments were powerful. They showed me that God was not only interested in the big things like jobs and provision, but also in the small details of our lives. That truth stayed with me. God is near enough to be involved in even the smallest matters.

All of this became foundational for me. From a young age, as a primary school boy, I truly believed in Jesus with all my heart. I remember how I would kneel at my bed at night and sincerely pray for all my family,

especially my cousins, who were such a big part of my life back then. Even then, before I understood much about life or faith, I already believed that God was real and that He listened. That early faith was simple yet genuine and quietly began to shape how I saw the world around me.

As I grew older, that same faith deepened. I just knew that God was real, not as a concept or a tradition passed down, but as a Person. I couldn't explain it in theological terms, but I believed with all my heart that there was no other way to live than to live for God. To me, it was the most obvious truth in the world.

It wasn't forced. It wasn't something I had to be convinced of. Because of the atmosphere my parents cultivated, especially through my dad's example, I had a quiet but firm certainty that God is, and not just that He exists, but that He walks with us.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6

Looking back, I believe seeds were being planted long before I even knew the word “faith.” Seeds of reverence. Seeds of truth. Seeds of the fear of the Lord. Seeds of trust in a faithful God who cares about every detail. And those seeds have grown roots that have anchored me through many seasons of life.

CHAPTER 4

The Anchor of Knowing

Even though my life would eventually take a few side paths, some deep detours, really, I never doubted that God was real. That truth was anchored in me too deeply to be shaken.

There were seasons where I wasn't living fully for Him. Moments of rebellion. Years when I tried to deal with the dysfunction in my family, my own insecurities, and wounds in my own way. I didn't always understand what was going on inside of me, but I know now that I was searching, searching for healing, for affirmation, for peace. And sometimes I searched in places that couldn't give what only God could.

But even in those times, when I wasn't walking closely with Him, I couldn't shake the awareness of His presence. That deep-down knowing never left me. It was my lifeline.

I knew He was real.

And more than that, I somehow knew I could always come back. That He would still be there. That He hadn't given up on me. That quiet assurance became my saving grace. It was the whisper beneath the noise, the flickering light that never went out.

I can now see His mercy running through those years. I might have wandered, but I was never truly lost. His hand was always near. And when the time came to return, I didn't need to be convinced. I just needed to remember the way back.

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." 2 Timothy 2:13 "Your right hand has held me." Psalm 63:8

His faithfulness was never based on my performance. It was rooted in His character. And that, more than anything else, kept pulling me home.

CHAPTER 5

A New Church, A New Season

Not long after I was dedicated (I don't know exactly how long) my parents made a significant change. They decided to leave the Full Gospel church where they had been so rooted and joined the local Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) church in the area where they were living.

From what I've been told, part of the reason was that they wanted us, their children, to grow up in an Afrikaans-speaking church. That decision would shape much of my spiritual and cultural upbringing. It meant that most of my childhood, and all of my teenage years, unfolded within the rhythms and expressions of the AFM church.

That church became the backdrop of my formative years. Sunday services, youth groups, and special gatherings all formed the foundation of my early understanding of faith. Though it was a different environment from where I had been dedicated, it still carried the same awareness of God's presence. Even though the church changed, the hand of God on my life didn't. The setting shifted, but the story continued.

I later came to realise something interesting about the name of the church, Apostolic Faith Mission. In a way, it foreshadowed what would become a big part of my life. Years later, I would find myself serving in a mission organisation that was also apostolic in nature, faith based, and deeply committed to missions. It was as if those three words, apostolic, faith, and mission, were quietly written into my story long before I knew what they would mean. It wasn't a major revelation, but it stood out to me as a small, meaningful detail in how God weaves things together.

"The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps."
Proverbs 16:9

Sometimes the decisions our parents make seem ordinary at the time. Yet those choices often prepare the ground for the story God is writing. What may have seemed like a simple, practical decision to move churches was in truth part of God's orchestration in my life.

CHAPTER 6

Little Trophies, Lasting Impressions

Some of my earliest church memories come from those Sunday mornings at the Apostolic Faith Mission when my dad served as the superintendent of the Sunday school. I didn't understand the full meaning of that role at the time, but I remember how it made an impression on me. Seeing him there faithfully involved showed me something about serving God that went far deeper than words ever could.

For me as a child, Sunday school was a place of joy and discovery. It was where faith began to feel real and personal. I remember the songs, the stories from the Bible, and the warm sense of belonging that filled those mornings. Those simple experiences became part of the foundation being laid in my heart, a foundation from which I would one day build my own relationship with God. The lessons, the example of faithful service, and the presence of the Holy Spirit that I sensed, even without fully understanding it, were all reinforcing the reality of God in my young life.

There were moments that stood out, like the end-of-year gatherings filled with small gifts, and recognition for attendance. The little trophies I received were part of those memories, but what truly stayed with me was the steady rhythm of faithfulness that surrounded me. Week after week, being there, seeing people serve the Lord with joy, spoke volumes to my young heart.

Those early years helped me recognize the quiet example of parents who served God faithfully and consistently. Even as a boy, I was learning, without knowing it, that such steady devotion is a life worth living. Those lessons would continue to echo in my life, reminding me that what is built on the foundation of God's truth and His Spirit will always stand firm.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6

CHAPTER 7

A Foundation of Awareness

Growing up in the Apostolic Faith Mission church meant that the presence of the Holy Spirit was not just a doctrine. It was something tangible and evident in the life of the congregation. From my earliest days, I found myself in services where people spoke in tongues, where a message would be given in tongues and then followed by an interpretation. Even as a child, without fully understanding the theology behind it, I sensed something real, someone real, was there.

It wasn't explained to me in scholarly terms. I simply absorbed it, like the way a child breathes without thinking. The reality of the Holy Spirit was woven into my awareness before I could name it. In those moments, I wasn't just seeing people perform a ritual; I was witnessing God interacting with His people.

That environment became a foundation for me, a deep, unshakable awareness that the Holy Spirit is not distant. He is part of our everyday lives. He speaks, He leads, He comforts. And from those early days, I began to understand, first unconsciously, then more clearly, that this was normal for a believer: God's Spirit dwelling with us, guiding us, and making His presence known.

"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." Romans 8:16

Those early experiences did not just shape my theology; they shaped my expectation. I came to believe, without question, that the Christian life is meant to be lived in active fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 8

Can a Name Speak Identity?

My parents named me after my grandfather on my mother's side. His name was Arnold, and they chose Arno as a shorter form of his name. I can remember, they told me my name meant "as strong as an eagle." Those words became deeply planted in my heart. They felt less like a description and more like a quiet prophecy over my life, reminding me of who I was and the strength I could draw from, especially in moments when life felt overwhelming. I carried those words with me through childhood, into my teenage years, and even as an adult, they would come back to me when I needed encouragement the most.

There were times when I faced challenges that left me questioning myself and my ability to keep going. In those moments, the meaning of my name felt like a gentle reminder from God that He had spoken identity and strength over my life long before I even understood it. To a certain degree this also played a role as a child when I had to learn to defend and stand up for myself, when I had to fight back to establish myself and face some of the childlike ridicule I experienced because of the childhood disability in my eyes.

That childhood reminder of strength became part of my journey with God in a very real way. I did not always feel strong, and there were seasons when I felt the very opposite: tired, uncertain, and even discouraged. Yet again and again the Lord showed me that true strength comes from Him alone. He would bring Scripture to mind, send someone with a word of encouragement, or simply give me peace when everything around me seemed unsettled. Just as the eagle does not strive but spreads its wings and is lifted by the wind, my strength was not in myself but in relying on God to carry me through.

CHAPTER 9

Living with Difference

I was born with a disability in my eyelids. I didn't have the muscles to open them fully, so my eyes always looked half closed. From as early as I can remember, this shaped my life in a very big way.

It wasn't just a physical difference. It planted something deep inside me. There was a quiet but heavy sense of shame, a constant whisper that I wasn't good enough, that something was wrong with me. And with that came rejection. Sometimes it was obvious, sometimes subtle, but always present.

I remember the teasing, the nicknames, the curious stares. At times it was cruel, and at other times it came from friends "just joking," but the effect was the same. It left a mark. Walking into a room, I could feel the comparisons before anyone spoke. Seeing my peers, confident, relaxed, and at ease with themselves, reminded me that I was different.

Yet, even as a child, something in me refused to bow to that rejection. I think I made a decision, maybe without even realizing it, that I would not let this keep me back from relationships. So I fought back. Not by becoming bitter, but by refusing to withdraw. I reached out to people. I made friends. I got involved. I laughed. I joined in.

In primary school and high school, I was rarely without friends, and I think my ability to connect with others was partly born from that inner fight.

Two surgeries helped along the way. One when I was very small, before school, and another just before I went to high school. They made a noticeable difference, but they were not perfect. My appearance improved, but the inner struggle remained. The rejection I felt wasn't just about how I looked. It had sunk into my identity.

One thing that became part of my coping, and my identity, was becoming a fighter, not only in my inner man but also physically.

I was well built for my age, did a lot of exercise, and spent time in the gym. I was strong, and if need be, especially in primary school, I would fight back. Over time, I even built a reputation as a fighter. By the time I

was in high school, if someone needed help in a physical confrontation, they would come find me.

In some ways, this gave me a sense of respect among my peers and a certain feeling of worth. But if I'm honest, that toughness was fueled by a deeper anger, a rebellion against the rejection and shame I had felt for so long.

There was a boiling anger inside me, rooted in more than just my appearance. It came from different places and experiences, but it was always there, ready to rise if I felt wronged or treated unfairly.

I was loving, kind, and helpful in relationships, but if someone crossed me, or if I sensed injustice, I could quickly turn fierce and fight for what I believed was right. That intensity was part of who I was for many years. Later in life, God would begin to change that, but back then, it was how I survived.

I was also very insecure as a child and a teenager, and in my understanding, I grew up believing that appearance, wealth, and intelligence determined a person's value. Later, during a season of discipleship and teaching, I came to understand this as the 'three B's', beauty, brains, and bucks, the standards by which society often measures worth. Unconsciously, that was what I understood about life, shaped by my surroundings and experiences.

But as I grew in my walk with God, I discovered that this was a lie. My true value lies in being a child of God, loved and created by Him, and belonging to Him. This truth began to rewrite what I believed about myself and what gave me worth.

Rejection has a way of becoming a voice inside you. Sometimes it shouts, sometimes it whispers, but it always says the same thing: You're not enough. And for years, I had to fight that voice.

I carried on with life, but inside, there was still that silent wrestle, wanting to be accepted, while pushing back against the lie that I never would be.

It took me years to realize that God's voice is louder than rejection's. His Word speaks a different truth altogether: You are chosen. You are loved. You are Mine. "even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will." Ephesians 1:4-5

The enemy may have tried to use my difference to make me hide, but God used it to teach me compassion for others who feel unseen. He used it to shape my resilience, to make me a fighter, not just for my own worth, but for the worth of others.

The truth is, my eyelids may have been half closed, but everything that came with it made me a survivor and taught me to be strong even under difficult circumstances. What the enemy meant for harm, God used to shape resilience within me, preparing me to face life with courage and faith.

CHAPTER 10

The Healing Power of Forgiveness

I was about thirteen years old, just starting high school, when I decided to take a step I thought was brave at the time. I had a good friend from church, a girl I liked, and I thought she liked me too. So, I asked her to be in a relationship with me.

Looking back now, I can smile at how young and unrealistic that might have been, but at the time it was very real to me. She didn't answer right away. She said she'd think about it. Eventually, she came back with her answer: no.

It may not sound like much, but for me, at that age, it was another brick added to the wall of rejection I was already carrying. I heard the same old lie again: You're not good enough. You're not worthy. I carried that wound quietly. The truth is, she didn't do anything wrong. What hurt me most was what I believed about myself in that moment. My perception of rejection became the real battle inside me.

It didn't stop me from continuing with life. I still had friendships during high school and relationships, but that moment stayed with me and quietly shaped how I saw myself until God, in His grace, brought healing to that area of my heart.

Years later, after school, God would do something I never could have orchestrated myself. We were attending the same church, not the one we grew up in, and by then, she was married. We had stayed friends over the years, so when we ended up in the same cell group, it wasn't strange.

One evening, the group leader, her husband, said our topic would be forgiveness. We were to pair up, look into each other's eyes, and think of someone from our past we needed to forgive. Then, out loud, we were to speak the words of forgiveness, not necessarily to the person in front of us, but as an act before God.

When we paired up, I was partnered with her.

It was just the two of us, looking at each other, while everyone else was busy with their own partner. She had no idea what was going through my heart in that moment. I thought back to that 13-year-old boy and to the

sting of her “no.” With a deep breath, I looked into her eyes and said, “I forgive you.”

She didn’t know it was about her. But God knew. I believe He organised that exact moment so that I could finally speak forgiveness, not just toward her, but over the rejection and insecurity that had settled in my heart for so many years. It was His way of caring for me, guiding me to freedom.

In that instant, it was as if something heavy lifted from my shoulders. The wound closed. The rejection lost its hold. The circle was complete. God had brought me back to that place, not to relive the pain, but to heal it completely and remind me that His care runs deeper than I can ever imagine.

Only He can take a moment from our past and redeem it so beautifully.

*"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." Psalm
147:3*

CHAPTER 11

When Love and Conflict Coexisted

Growing up, I knew my parents loved the Lord. They were Christians and truly desired to serve Him, but for some reason our home was filled with frequent conflict. The disunity and conflict in our family deeply influenced me as a child, shaping how I experienced love, security, and connection. I don't fully understand why, but arguments would flare up quickly, and sometimes they escalated into shouting matches.

As a child, I didn't have the tools to process what I was seeing and hearing. I remember standing in our lounge one day, listening to them fight, and thinking, I wish I could record this and play it back so they could hear themselves. In my young mind, there was a huge disconnect. Christians weren't supposed to act like this, were they?

What I didn't understand back then was how much of it came from their own histories, the brokenness, the lack of healthy teaching, the absence of good models for unity. That realization would come years later. But at the time, all I felt was a mix of anger, rebellion, and deep frustration.

One day, my anger boiled over. I can't even remember what triggered it, but I stormed out of the house, past the big glass doors in our TV room. In a moment of rage, I turned around and struck the glass with the clipboard I was holding. The entire pane shattered into a thousand pieces. It was more than just glass breaking; it was a picture of what was happening inside of me.

Looking back, I can see that the constant disunity in our home planted something deep within me: insecurity. I never doubted that we'd have food on the table or a roof over our heads. But relationally, the ground never felt steady. That lack of stability shaped the way I saw life, the way I reacted to people, and the way I processed the world around me, often without even realizing it.

It has taken the healing work of Jesus to address those roots. He has shown me that real security isn't in a conflict-free home or perfect relationships, but in His unchanging love. It was also through the freedom that comes with forgiveness and receiving forgiveness that I began to

experience deep healing. As I built my relationship with Him, He became my strong foundation.

The psalmist says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" Psalm 46:1

I've learned that when human relationships feel shaky, He remains the safe place my heart can run to.

CHAPTER 12

Anchored by His Faithfulness

These memories from my past quietly reveal God's faithfulness and reality in the midst of my chaos. His steady presence carried me through confusion and heartache, and His nearness became my anchor when life felt unstable.

From a young age I felt the need to be the strong one in our home. The tension and disunity between my parents, and the struggles my brother faced, all seemed to push me into that role. It wasn't something anyone asked of me; it was simply the way I learned to survive.

My brother and I fought a lot as kids. I think part of it was that we reflected some of the tension we observed at home, even though our parents loved us deeply and did their best to create a loving home.

He had his own set of challenges, being dyslexic made school a painful place for him. Rejection, frustration, and the lack of understanding from others only added to his burden. While I expressed my frustration by fighting back, he responded differently. Over time, he drifted into rebellion, got involved with drugs, and dropped out of school at a young age to start working.

Because of his struggles, my parents were often occupied with his situations. That meant I had to find my own ways to survive, sometimes by ignoring the chaos just to cope. Yet the emotional strain never really went away. There were many times I was pulled right into the middle of it, going with my dad to fetch my brother from the police station, showing up at the scene of his motorbike accidents, or feeling the weight of responsibility for him at school. He hated school so much that once he even tried to break his own arm just to get out of going.

I lived under this constant stress, always surviving, rarely thriving. My escape became my friendships. They weren't always godly, especially as I got older, but at the time they felt like a refuge from the pressure at home.

Even in all of this, there was something I could never shake: the quiet, steady awareness that God was real. I didn't fully understand His role in my life yet, but deep down I knew He was there. Somehow, that awareness

became the thin but unbreakable thread that kept me from unravelling completely.

As Psalm 34:18 says, “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” I didn’t yet know how much I needed saving, but He was already near.

CHAPTER 13

The Transforming Power of Forgiveness

Years after school, when God led me into missions, one of the first lessons I began learning through discipleship was the power and the necessity of forgiveness. The freedom that comes with forgiving and releasing others is life changing, just as Jesus has forgiven us. Forgiveness is not just a nice Christian idea; it is a command of Jesus that brings freedom to both the giver and the receiver.

As I opened my heart before the Lord, He showed me the people I needed to make things right with, both those I needed to forgive and those from whom I needed to seek forgiveness. My brother was one of them. We had grown up with a lot of conflict and fighting between us, and I knew I had to take responsibility for my part.

One time when I was home, I asked him to meet me for coffee. I remember the conversation well. I shared with him what God had been doing in my life and told him that I wanted to ask his forgiveness.

He looked at me with kindness and said, “Of course I forgive you.” In that moment, something real and genuine passed between us. Then, with equal humility, he asked me to forgive him too. We both experienced the reality of the power of forgiveness.

That day taught me that forgiveness is not weakness; it is strength. It is the kind of strength Jesus showed on the cross when He said, “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34). It is the kind of strength that mends what anger once tore apart. Forgiveness is God’s gift to free us from burdens and release us from carrying unnecessary baggage so that our journey through life can be lighter.

From then on, our relationship carried a new kind of grace. I was able to share with him what God was doing in my life, testify, and encourage him as best I could. This became evident when I invited him to join me at Shalom, the mission organization I was part of at the time, because I longed for him to also receive healing and discipleship. To my joy, he actually came and stayed with me for a couple of months.

CHAPTER 14

Letters That Set Me Free

Forgiveness was not only something I had to walk through with my brother, but also something God prompted me to extend to my parents. As I reflected on my teenage years, I became aware of the rebellion and attitude I had carried toward them. I realised that part of my healing required not only forgiving them where I had held offence, but also humbly asking for their forgiveness for the hurt I had caused.

During my early days in missions, after receiving teaching on forgiveness, the Lord placed it strongly on my heart to make things right. I remember sitting down and making two lists, one of those I needed to forgive, and another of those from whom I needed to seek forgiveness. In some cases, the same names appeared on both lists.

One day, I sat down and wrote letters to my parents, expressing my repentance for the wrong attitudes and actions of my youth and asking for their forgiveness. It was not easy to do, but I knew it was the right thing. When I handed them the letters, they forgave me without hesitation. That moment brought such a deep sense of release. God's peace settled in my heart, and I knew the enemy had lost his hold of guilt and shame in that area of my life.

Through that simple act of asking for forgiveness and extending it, I experienced freedom in a new way. Jesus said in John 8:36, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." That freedom didn't just heal my relationship with my parents; it changed me. Over time, I came to understand the value of forgiveness as one of the most powerful tools God gives us. It became a guiding principle throughout my years of ministry and life, helping me to relate with people from different cultures, nations, and generations with grace, humility, and peace.

The Day Everything Changed

I was only thirteen years old when God did something in my life that would shape everything that followed. I grew up in the Apostolic Faith Mission Church and was faithfully part of the youth meetings specially in my early teenage years. One evening, two ladies came to speak to us about the Holy Spirit and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. At the end of their talk, they invited anyone who wanted to be baptized in the Holy Spirit to come to the front.

Without hesitation, I went forward. I remember clearly. there was one other boy who also stepped out. They took us to separate rooms and began to pray with us. I didn't fully understand what was about to happen, but I knew I wanted everything God had for me.

As they prayed, something beautiful and powerful happened. I immediately received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and began speaking in tongues. In the AFM Church, this was always emphasized as the sign that you had received the baptism, and it happened to me instantly. It felt so natural, so right, like stepping into something I was always meant for.

When I came out, I spoke to the other boy and found out he hadn't received the gift yet. That puzzled me at the time, because for me it felt so easy. Looking back now, I know it was simply God's grace meeting my hunger for Him.

From that day, everything began to change. The Holy Spirit started softening my heart, reshaping me from a rebellious, quick-to-fight boy into someone more tender toward the things of God. I became bold in my faith. radical even. I carried my Bible to school, led Bible studies, and even took my closest friend to a massive revival meeting in a rugby stadium. It was Billy Graham preaching that day, and I believe my friend gave his life to the Lord there.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit didn't just give me a spiritual gift. it gave me a new heart. It was the beginning of God's lifelong work in me, slowly but surely molding me into who He created me to be. For me this was one of the most significant events that ever happened to me in my walk with God.

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”. Ezekiel 36:26

CHAPTER 16

Young and Hungry for God

When I think back to my teenage years, especially between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, what stands out most is how deeply I longed for God. It was a time when worship became more than just songs to me. It was as if my whole heart was reaching out to Him, desiring to know Him and to be near Him.

I remember our youth meetings so vividly. Often we were just a small group gathered at someone's house, but those evenings were filled with amazing times of worship. We would lift our voices together and sing: "I lift my hands to the coming King, to You I sing, for I will serve no foreign god..." Those words became more than lyrics; they were a declaration of our hearts, young as we were, choosing to belong fully to the Lord.

In those moments I often felt His presence so close. It was pure and unfiltered. There was no stage, no microphones, no agenda. It was simply a few young people crying out to God and discovering that He really hears and truly responds. My hunger for Him grew in those times and stirred me to seek Him in prayer and in the Word.

Looking back, I see how those years laid a foundation in my life. God was already preparing me, teaching me to find my strength in His presence and to make worship the place where my soul is renewed.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." Matthew 5:6

I was only a boy, but I was hungry for more of God, and He delighted to meet me there.

CHAPTER 17

The Waters and the Wilderness

My high school years were turbulent, to say the least. Looking back, the years before that had been far more carefree, marked by the innocence of childhood, but that's a story for another time.

After being baptised with the Holy Spirit, I continued to grow in my relationship with God. At the age of sixteen, I made another life-changing decision, this time entirely on my own. I chose to be baptised in water. It wasn't because someone persuaded me or pressured me; it was simply a deep desire in my heart. I wanted to follow Jesus more closely, and in my spirit, it felt like the natural next step.

I met with the pastor of the AFM church and shared my heart with him. Not long after, I stepped into the baptism waters. I still remember the quiet joy and seriousness of that moment. For me, it was another milestone in my walk with the Lord, a public declaration that I belonged to Him.

But life after that didn't follow the straight, upward path I had imagined. Not long after my baptism, some of my most backslidden years began. They carried me through the rest of my high school days and even into my time in the defense force after school.

I never lost my relationship with God, deep down, I knew I was His and He was mine. But I began seeking fulfilment, acceptance, and belonging in friendships and activities that didn't nurture my walk with Him. In fact, many of them pulled me in the opposite direction. I thought I was chasing freedom and joy, but in reality, I was wandering into a wilderness where my soul grew dry.

Even in those years, the Lord's hand never left me. He was patient, watching over me, waiting for the day I would return to the fullness of His embrace.

"The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.", Exodus 14:14

CHAPTER 18

The Lie That Looked Like Freedom

It's strange looking back now, how something so clearly wrong could feel so convincing at the time. The lie the enemy whispered to me seemed small at first, almost harmless. But like every lie he has ever told, it had a hook.

It started with a thought: My life feels boring. What stories will I have to tell my children one day?

It sounds foolish now, but that thought became the seed for compromise. Just like in the garden of Eden, when the serpent asked Eve, "Did God really say?" (Genesis 3:1), he began to plant doubt in my heart about God's goodness and His plan for my life. I didn't hear those exact words, but it was the same deception, suggesting that God was holding out on me, that I was missing out. And maybe it was also my way of finding an excuse to do what I knew was wrong.

Around that time, I made friends with a classmate. We became part of a bigger group, all of us sharing the same mindset: weekends were for drinking, smoking, going out to clubs, and chasing anything that promised a thrill. I would also come to realise later that many of us came from similarly turbulent home environments. It was a lifestyle completely opposite to the leading of the Holy Spirit within me.

It was also around this time, at about sixteen years of age, that I started smoking. What began as something small soon became a habit that followed me for years, until I finally quit around the age of twenty-two.

Don't get me wrong, I was always aware of God's reality. I knew His presence. But I chose to ignore it, pushing down that still, small voice. There were seasons when I would turn back to Him, moments when my heart softened again, but too often I would find myself sliding right back into the same destructive patterns.

In those years, I ended up in the strangest places, clubs in Hillbrow, deep in the inner city of Johannesburg, places I never thought I'd go. Our group would plan weekend after weekend of parties, outings, and "fun," always looking for the next way to "enjoy" ourselves.

There were times when God's protection was undeniable. I remember one night after coming back from a party, we were in a car accident. The car was badly damaged, but by some miracle we all walked away unharmed. The car belonged to one of my friend's parents, taken without permission, though, of course, that wasn't something we spoke about. On other occasions, that same friend would be asked to look after someone's house and cars. Instead of simply caring for them, he would take the car as his own, and we would drive it everywhere, to parties, to clubs, even as far as Sun City, a gambling resort, just to continue the lifestyle we had chosen.

But the truth is, what looked like freedom to me was actually bondage. What seemed exciting was hollow. The enemy had sold me a lie, and I had bought it. Yet even there, in the smoke-filled rooms and the loud music, God's presence would tug at my heart.

"For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"
Hebrews 13:5

Even while I was believing lies and wandering far from God's path, His grace was already at work in my life. I didn't recognize it then, but He was protecting me from dangers I couldn't see and from choices that could have destroyed me completely. What I thought was freedom was leading me into bondage, yet God, in His mercy, was still keeping me.

CHAPTER 19

Kept by Grace

How on earth did I find myself here? That was the question echoing in my mind as I sat in a dimly lit punk rock club as a teenager. Coming from a fairly conservative background, this was a completely new world to me. The pounding drums, flashing lights, and wild energy of people throwing their heads around in rhythm made me feel completely out of place. Yet there I was, sitting among my friends, caught up in what was considered the in thing at that moment. It was the phase my friends were in, and I simply followed along.

I can still picture that back-alley hall, or maybe it was more like a bar, filled with smoke, noise, and confusion. Then there was another night when I found myself in a crowded nightclub. I remember sitting in an upper room, surrounded by people and loud music. I watched as some began sniffing a substance I did not even recognize. I was witnessing a culture I did not belong to, yet somehow I had become part of it for a season.

Even in the middle of it all, deep down, there was a quiet knowing that none of this could bring any real fulfillment. The excitement was shallow. The atmosphere was empty. I could sense it, though I could not yet put it into words. It was as if my soul was whispering, This is not life.

Looking back, I realize how much the enemy wanted to destroy me in those years. He would have loved to take my life down a path of no return. But God's grace was greater. He protected me when I did not even know I needed protecting. I survived that season, not because of any wisdom or goodness of my own, but purely because of His mercy.

When I think of those moments now, I see the hand of God quietly keeping me, shielding me, preserving my life for the purpose He had already planned. I did not know it then, but He was watching over me, even when I was not watching for Him.

Truly, the words of Scripture ring true:

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." 2 Timothy 2:13

Even when I was unfaithful, He stayed faithful. And for that, I am forever grateful.

The Pressure to Perform

Looking back on my childhood and teenage years, one of the strongest influences that shaped me was the constant value placed on performance and appearances. It wasn't just about doing well; it was about looking like we had everything together on the outside. As a family, it mattered that we appeared "perfect," and that expectation included me.

But behind that polished image, there was a lot of comparison, striving, and a nagging feeling that somehow we weren't good enough. Not rich enough, not successful enough, not measuring up. And when you grow up in that kind of atmosphere, you start to believe that there must be something wrong with you.

My own disability made me feel that even more deeply. Later, when my brother was diagnosed with dyslexia, the weight of rejection he experienced in school created even more strain in our home. The atmosphere became tense, and that tension fed my own insecurities and feelings of low self-worth.

I can still remember how defeated I felt whenever I suggested something new I wanted to do. Instead of encouragement, the negatives were pointed out. "That's too difficult," "That won't work," "That's not for you." Over time, I learned it was easier just to keep quiet and do things without mentioning them at all. The excitement of new ideas was crushed by the fear of disapproval.

It wasn't that performance became my way of coping, it was that no matter what I did, I always felt the pressure to perform. If I didn't, it would only reinforce my feelings of worthlessness. Even in the church environment, where I once memorized a long passage of Scripture for our national church talent competition, the pressure was there. I received the highest marks and was asked to recite the passage at our national church conference in front of a large crowd. On the outside, it looked like a great achievement. But inside, I was trembling with nervousness, weighed down by the fear of failure.

The truth is, no matter how well I did, there was always that strong fear of failure lurking in the background. Every event, every effort, every

attempt carried that same pressure. It was exhausting. And I believe much of the stress and tension I carried during those years eventually pushed me toward finding areas of escape, places where I could hide from the weight of expectations.

Yet, even in those times, God was there. Though I didn't realize it then, He was whispering a different truth to me: that my value was never in how well I performed, or in how I measured up compared to others. He already loved me as I was. But the reality is that in those moments, I didn't hear it at all. To me, the feelings and experiences were overwhelmingly real and they influenced my life in a major way.

I think of Paul's words in Galatians 1:10: "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ."

Years later I would learn that my worth wasn't tied to performance or appearance. But even in those early years of struggle, God was planting seeds that one day would grow into a deeper understanding of His grace. Looking back now, God has shown me through the discipleship of others in my early years in ministry that the key to a fulfilled life is not what you have or don't have, or how you look or don't look, or how you perform, or anything like that. It's knowing your purpose in life, following God's calling, and fulfilling what He has destined you to do. Those other things, appearance, possessions, performance, are not wrong in and of themselves, but if you make them your main source of value, you will never be fully satisfied or fulfilled.

CHAPTER 21

A New Phase and the Lessons of Military Life

After finishing school, I had to step into something that every young man in South Africa faced in those days, two years of compulsory military service. I still remember the day I left home as if it happened yesterday. Thousands of us were gathered at a stadium in Johannesburg, lined up and grouped like cattle, each of us about to enter a new and unknown season of life. After saying goodbye to my parents, I was placed in a group and boarded a train. That train was not just taking me to the army; it was carrying me into the first chapter of living on my own, away from home.

The theme of my life up until then followed me into this new chapter. Once again, no one knew me, and once again, I had to prove myself. I recall one of my very first encounters on that train. A young man mocked and judged me because of my disability, treating me with disrespect. It stung, but I had already learned to stand up for myself. I confronted him, and though I never saw him again after we disembarked, the moment left its mark. It reminded me that survival was not just about endurance, it was about choosing not to let others define me.

Yet, even more than proving myself to people, this season became about seeking God. The army was a strange environment to grow in faith, but it was here that I began to discover what it meant to walk with Him personally. For the first time, I was truly responsible for myself. There were no parents, no one watching over me, and something inside me longed to know God more deeply.

I was not perfect. I stumbled. Old habits, like my addiction to cigarettes, still clung to me. But even in my weakness, I kept seeking the Lord. And He was faithful. I saw His hand of favour in unexpected ways. The very same people who once ridiculed me would eventually come, quietly and humbly, to ask for my help or advice. It was a clear reminder that God was with me, strengthening me, guiding me, and giving me influence beyond my own ability.

During this time, God was also shaping my heart in very personal ways. One lesson He taught me, which I have never forgotten, was about

judgment. We had a major who oversaw our unit. He was an alcoholic and carried many flaws. One habit he had was scratching his ear in this odd, almost silly way. I remember noticing it and mocking it in my heart. Even among friends, we laughed and made remarks about how strange it looked. I thought nothing of it at the time, but a little later, as I walked out of the office, I suddenly found myself doing exactly the same thing, scratching my ear in the very same way.

It stopped me in my tracks. In that moment, I heard the Lord speak so clearly: "You see, you have judged him, but you do the same things." It was a piercing lesson that went straight to my heart. God showed me how quick I was to pass judgment, but how blind I was to my own weakness. That experience left a mark on me, and to this day I carry the reminder of how dangerous judgment can be, and how much I need God's grace to see others with His eyes.

There was another moment, just as clear, when the Lord spoke to me while I was reading the Bible. I came across Isaiah 31:1, and the words seemed to leap off the page into my heart:

"Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord."

That day, God showed me that "Egypt" was a picture of going back to my old ways, of sliding back into sin and trusting in the world instead of trusting in Him. It became crystal clear to me that backsliding was not an option. I understood deep in my spirit that I had to keep my eyes fixed on Him, no matter what came. That verse became like a marker in my heart, reminding me never to go back, only forward with God.

It was also during this time that I had a very real and life-changing experience with God. Deep down, I had always carried a quiet desire to serve Him, though I never really knew how it would look. But one day, while driving a military truck on a routine trip to another town, everything changed. In the stillness of that journey, I clearly heard the voice of God in my spirit: "You are going to become a pastor."

That was the only frame of reference I had for full-time ministry, but I knew instantly what He meant. The moment was so real that chills ran through my body. I knew beyond doubt that it was God speaking. At the

time, part of me was still caught up in the world, still wrestling with my old ways, and I could not see how such a thing could ever happen. But I also knew something had shifted forever. From that day on, I could never escape the weight of that moment. God had called me, and deep within I understood that His word over my life would stand.

That time in the army became a foundation stone in my faith. It was there, in the middle of hardship, discipline, and struggle, that I began to learn what it meant to be committed to God's ways. It was also a time where I learned to trust Him, not just with my circumstances, but with my future, my identity, and my calling. It was a season of growth, a time of discovering His nearness, and a turning point in my relationship with Him.

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Matthew 7:1-2

"Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help... but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord." Isaiah 31:1

CHAPTER 22

A New Season of Study and Seeking

After completing my two years of service, I returned home to my parents' house. My dad, in his kindness, had built two Wendy house-style rooms at the back of our yard, one for me and one for my brother. That little place became my space, and I stayed there whenever I came home on breaks from the army and later during my studies as well.

Not long after, I was given the opportunity to pursue further studies at Rand Afrikaans University. Because of my academic background, I first had to complete one year of a specific course before receiving full release to continue with my degree, something that was partly due to all the partying and fun I had in my matric year, which affected my marks. Even so, I enrolled with determination and stepped into this new chapter.

Since I wasn't living in the university hostels, I became part of what they called the "day houses." Every day, I commuted from home, but I still went through the initiation rituals and activities that came with joining the day house. It was all new to me, but I embraced it as part of the journey.

Through it all, my heart was set on serving the Lord. I was seeking Him earnestly and had a genuine desire to follow Him to the best of my ability. That pursuit showed in my studies as well. By God's grace, I did very well academically. In my second year, my dad arranged a bursary through his workplace, which was very comprehensive and covered all my fees and financial needs. On top of that, my mother was working at the university itself, which meant that my classes were covered. Between the bursary and that provision, every need was met, and even more.

I studied diligently and even achieved some distinctions in my subjects. I have clear recollections of how I would pray and ask God for His help during exam times and truly experienced how He came through for me. It was a time of growth, not only in knowledge but also in faith. I could see how the Lord was helping me, guiding me, and blessing the work of my hands.

It was also during this season that I had a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit. I was attending a small group from the church I was going to at that time, one of the bigger local churches in the area. One evening, we

were standing in a circle while the leader prayed for each of us. As my eyes were closed and he prayed over me, the power of the Holy Spirit suddenly came upon me. I wasn't anticipating it, I wasn't thinking about it, and I wasn't planning it. Yet in an instant, I was on the ground, overcome by God's power. This became one of the first true power encounters I experienced with the Lord, and it left a lasting impact on my walk with Him.

It was also during this season that I reconnected with a former high school acquaintance. We had never been close friends, but during his time in the army he too had surrendered his life to the Lord, and he came back a changed man, passionate and radical in his faith. When we met again, it was as if the Lord knit our hearts together. We both shared a hunger to serve Him, to love Him, and to grow in our walk with Him. Out of that desire, a friendship was born that would deeply shape my journey.

We spent many hours talking about the things of God, encouraging each other, and growing together. Soon we began gathering with a small group of friends for Bible studies. We studied the Word, shared what God was teaching us, and prayed together. Those times were full of life and expectation. Before long, we were organizing outreaches as well.

Through this friendship, I also became involved with an inner-city outreach ministry called "MES aksie" in Afrikaans, (an acronym for Metro Evangelical services and Missions Action). Part-time, we began going into Hillbrow, ministering in the evenings and over weekends. Ironically, the very place where I once went to party and club became the same place where I was now sharing the love of Jesus. It was a stretching but powerful experience.

At the time, I was still focused on my studies and working diligently. But in the background, God was slowly drawing me through relationships and opportunities into the direction He had truly prepared for me, a life of full-time ministry.

During this time, my friend went on to join MES Aksie full-time, while I continued serving part-time. Yet the desire and calling that God had placed in my heart grew stronger with each passing month. Deep inside, I began to realise that perhaps God was calling me into full-time ministry. On the one hand, I was committed to my studies, but on the other hand, I carried this deep knowing, a history of God's call that stretched back to my childhood years. He had spoken clearly to me in the Army, and those

memories came alive again. Through friendships, through prayer, and through the hours of seeking Him with my friend, the Lord began to speak louder and clearer about His plan.

Eventually, in the early part of my second year of studies, I reached a crossroads. My studies no longer seemed like something I could devote my whole life to. Ministry was where my heart burned. I vividly remember one evening when my friend and I went up a small hill in our area called Northcliff Koppie, or Northcliff Hill. There we prayed together, and on that hill I made the decision: I would stop my studies and follow the Lord's call into full-time ministry. Soon after, I joined MES Aksie, the inner-city ministry in Hillbrow, stepping into the path that God had been preparing me for all along. I did not return to university to complete that degree, because from that point onward my life took a new direction into full-time ministry.

"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps." Proverbs 16:9

The Reality of Spiritual Battles

As I was stepping into a new season of studies and seeking the Lord, after returning from my time in the army, an incident occurred that reminded me once again of the reality of the spiritual realm. I had already been aware of it before, yet I saw afresh that the battles we face are not only in the natural but also in the unseen world. Many times I found myself engaged in spiritual battles through prayer.

One night, while I was staying in the small wooden cabins at the back of our garden, I had a terrible dream. In the dream I was on fire and all kinds of torment surrounded me. In the middle of that nightmare, I suddenly became aware that what I was experiencing was not just a dream but a spiritual attack. In that moment, I called out to the name of Jesus. I said His name aloud, and instantly the oppression left. Peace returned.

A couple of days later, I spoke to a friend I had grown up with. By that time he had turned away from God and was involved in the occult and also with drug abuse amongst other things. As I mentioned the day I had the dream, he told me without hesitation, “That night I spoke curses over your room.” When I heard that, everything made sense. The attack had been real, but so was the victory.

That night taught me that no curse or attack of the enemy can stand against the power of Jesus’ name. The spiritual battle is real, but so is our authority in Christ. “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” James 4:7

I walked away from that experience with a deeper awareness that greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world.

A New Chapter in My Life Begins

And so, the next chapter in my life began, my life as a missionary. Looking back now, I can truly say it was the best decision I could have ever made. When God nudged me forward, gently guiding me to take that step of obedience, I had no idea what awaited me. Yet, in saying yes to Him, I stepped through a doorway into my destiny, into the very plans He had written for me long before I even knew them.

At that stage of my life, I couldn't have imagined all that lay ahead. But one thing became clear: God is faithful. He guided me, He led me, and He began to transform me from the inside out. This was not just about going somewhere to serve; it was about God shaping me into the man He destined me to be.

Looking back later in life, I realised that God had to take me out of where I was and remove me so that He could renew me and build new mindsets, new thoughts, and new ways, His biblical way of thinking, into my life. For that to happen, I had to be moved away from the familiar setting where I grew up and placed into a new environment with fresh opportunities for growth. This became even more evident some years later when I moved over 1300 km to the south, to the Western Cape Province, to make my permanent home there.

Over the years, I had heard a lot of preaching, but in this new phase of my journey, the Word of God came alive in a fresh way. This time it came through Bible teachers who shared God's Word in ways I had never heard before. It was no longer only about sermons I had heard; it was about the Spirit of God revealing truth, teaching me how to truly live the Christian life. In those early days of missions, He revealed Himself to me, showed me His ways, and set me on a path of transformation that continues to this day.

The first major miracle that confirmed God's provision in this new season was with my university bursary and the fees I had to pay for accommodation. As I mentioned before, I had a bursary during my studies, and when I stopped, I was supposed to pay it back. But the company that had given me the bursary decided that I didn't have to return everything.

They simply subtracted what I had used up to that point, and the rest I could keep. This was unexpected. Because I had lived at home and much of my study costs were already covered because of my mom working at the university, this meant that not only did I receive my education mostly free, but I had some money left over. So after paying back what was requested of me, the extra was enough to cover my first month's fees at MES Aksie, where I was now staying. This was such an amazing confirmation to me that God was providing and leading me into this next phase of my life.

It was also during those first couple of weeks that I received a prophetic word, one that at the time I could not fully understand or grasp, but which would prove to be true later in my life. One of the ladies who was also a full-time missionary came to me and shared a verse from Isaiah 60. She gave me verses 1 to 3: "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you... Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."

At that stage, I thought to myself, "Well, there are not many nations around me, just the different people groups here in South Africa that I'm working with." But little did I know that many years later I would work regularly in an environment with between 30 and 40 different nations from around the world, and working with different nations would become a major part of my life. When I think back now, I stand amazed at how God had already spoken my destiny over me in that moment, even though I did not understand it at the time.

So there I was, settling in as a missionary and beginning to work in the inner city of Hillbrow in Johannesburg. Little did I know that things were about to change very quickly. I had only been there full time in ministry for about four weeks when everything suddenly shifted.

The leaders of the mission had planned to start a discipleship group outside the city while still keeping a team in Hillbrow to do evangelism. But something happened in their relationship, and suddenly there was a split between them. We were told that we had to choose, either remain in Hillbrow or leave to start this new discipleship group.

I knew I had taken a step of obedience to come here, so I turned to God in prayer. We were asked to seek Him for direction, and as I prayed, I went into my room, opened my Bible, and began to read. The passage that stood out to me was from Deuteronomy 12:9–12: "For you have not as yet

come to the rest and to the inheritance that the Lord your God is giving you... But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to inherit... then to the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you.”

Those words struck me deeply. I knew in that moment that God was speaking clearly. The decision was not difficult. Once again, I had to take the next step of faith, leaving behind what I had just started, and walk into the unknown. Yet in my heart, there was a reassurance and peace. I knew I was obeying God’s leading.

*“Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.” 1
Thessalonians 5:24*

CHAPTER 25

Living by Faith. God's Provision in Missions

I think it is important at this point in my story to share how the mission organizations I stepped into handled finances, because this shaped my entire walk with God in a deep and lasting way. When I first entered full-time ministry, this way of living was completely new to me, yet it soon became part of my everyday life.

The model was similar to Youth With A Mission. Those serving in missions do not receive salaries. Instead, each person trusts God personally for their finances and provision. It is a volunteer system built on faith. Every missionary learns to depend on God as their Provider, day by day.

This is how I lived my first four years in full-time ministry. When I eventually joined Youth With A Mission, this way of life continued and it has remained the same for more than thirty five years. I have lived these decades relying not on a salary but on God's faithfulness and promise that He will take care of me and my family.

Loren Cunningham, the founder of Youth With A Mission, expressed it so well in his book *Daring to Live on the Edge: The Adventure of Faith and Finances*: "We believe that God calls people to serve Him full time, and that He will provide for their needs. This means that we do not pay our volunteers. Instead, we encourage them to raise their own support from friends, family, and churches. This is a great way for people to experience God's faithfulness firsthand."

With time, this principle became more than a policy. It turned into a lifestyle shaped by faith. What began as a model soon became a journey that taught me to know God in ways I may never have known under another system.

In YWAM there is no international salary or global fund that supports everyone equally. Each person steps out in faith, trusting God to move the hearts of people who feel led to stand with them. This has been my journey from the beginning. Since the day I entered missions, I have lived under no

other system. Through it God has shown me who He is as Provider, again and again.

I also want to honour every supporter and friend who has stood with us. Your generosity has made it possible for us to continue the work God entrusted to us. Even though we have been on the mission field, I believe those that give and pray share in the fruit of every outreach, every life touched, and every moment where God's love was made known. Many people have stood with us for years. Their faithfulness carried us through countless seasons and for that I am deeply grateful.

At the same time, our journey often required fresh trust in God. Needs came up that fell outside our regular budget. Mission trips, conferences, unexpected expenses, and even our regular monthly needs brought us back to prayer. We had to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus rather than our circumstances. There were moments when finances did not appear in the way we expected or at the time we hoped for. Still, we learned to wait on God.

His way of taking care of us does not always match our expectations. Many times it would happen in a way different from how I thought it would. His understanding is higher than ours. Looking back, I know I made mistakes in this area. My own unbelief got in the way at times. Yet God remained faithful. His promises held steady, often in spite of me.

This truth became even clearer in our personal family life. We prayed about every need, whether it felt big or small. Ballet shoes, braces, school trips, clothing for our children. These things mattered because they touched everyday life. We brought each request before God. He answered in many different ways, often through people and often in ways we did not expect. These moments strengthened our faith and showed us again that nothing in our lives is too small for Him.

Trusting God was not always easy. Many times it was a real battle in my mind to keep believing that He could provide. Doubt would knock loudly. I often had to choose again to stand on His Word and trust His character. Even in these inner battles, God showed Himself faithful.

This way of living never stopped. Through every season of ministry and still today, we continue to pray and trust Him. We stand on His Word and hold on to what He has spoken. Month after month and week after week, we have watched His care carry us.

This journey has kept our hearts close to Him. It taught us to depend on Him, to wait on Him, and to rest in the truth that He is good. He provides for His children, and we continue to hold onto that truth with confidence in His care.

"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19 "Cast all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7

A Pioneering Season

I now found myself in a pioneering environment, stepping into something new that God was clearly leading me into. Together with the leader who carried the vision for a discipling school, I joined in this dream of creating a place where young people could come, encounter healing in Christ, and then be released to live out their lives with purpose.

I didn't hesitate, because deep down I knew this was where God wanted me to be. He had spoken so clearly, and that assurance gave me peace in the midst of uncertainty. So we moved, first into the leader's house, and not long after that, onto a small piece of land that had a house and some basic facilities. It wasn't glamorous by any means. The place was rough, even primitive at times. But our hearts were fully in it. We threw ourselves into fixing it up, building men's and ladies' dormitories, preparing space for students and staff, creating a dining hall and lounge areas. Everything we did was with the vision in mind, to make a place where people could be disciplined and encounter God.

One of the remarkable things about this time was that we were staying together as people from different cultures in South Africa. In those years this was not common, yet it felt so natural to us. Part of our ministry was not only what we taught or did, but how we lived. Our lives testified that people from different races could live together, love one another, and not only stay together but thrive together under the Lordship of Christ.

It wasn't just about the work though. While we were building, we ourselves were being built. While we were putting up walls and painting, God was also shaping our hearts, teaching us, discipling us. It was a season of both sweat and surrender, labour and learning.

Part of our ministry included running The Divine Plumblane Course (Dr Bruce Thompson), an inner healing and counseling program. Over weekends we would have camps for students, church groups, and others, or receive invitations to present the course at different churches, cell groups, and youth groups. We would go through the teachings, sharing stories and using examples from our own lives. We also had times of worship where many encountered the Father heart of God, followed by

times of ministry. Again and again, we saw the power of God break through. People wept as the Lord touched deep places in their hearts. Burdens were lifted, healing flowed, and lives were changed.

Even though our own living conditions were still basic, it hardly mattered. We were experiencing something far greater: the move of God, not only in us, but also through us. We were witnesses of His healing power, His love reaching people, His Spirit transforming lives. Looking back, I see that God was laying foundations, not only in that ministry, but in my own life as well.

“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.”

Psalms 127:1

And in those days, we knew without a doubt that it was the Lord who was building.

Healing, Foundations, and God's Promotion

It was in these next four years that I came to know the love of God in a way I had never experienced before. His love was not just something I read about in Scripture; it became real to me, often expressed through the people He placed around me and through the unconditional acceptance I experienced. It was also a time of receiving healing for the years of rejection I had carried throughout my life up to that point. God was gently reshaping me through discipleship, healing, and discovery. He was laying down a strong foundation in my life, pulling out lies I had believed about myself, touching old wounds, and replacing them with His truth.

During this season, I began stepping into leadership. I was released as a worship leader and found myself leading countless worship sessions. Each one was not just about singing songs, but about creating space for the presence of God, where He could touch lives, including my own. I did not realize it then, but these moments were shaping the rest of my journey, pointing me in the direction I would walk for years to come.

I deeply appreciate those who walked with me in those days. Friends encouraged me, and leaders invested in me, taking the time to disciple me. There were safe spaces where I could open my heart, share the things I did not understand, bring up the hurts from my past, and allow God to bring healing and restoration. Part of that healing was learning to see myself differently, not as someone defined by rejection, but as someone chosen and loved by God.

I still remember when they first asked me to join the leadership team. I had only been there a few months, and my immediate response was, “Are you sure you want me in leadership?” I could not picture myself in that role. But they looked at me with confidence and said, “Yes, of course. We believe God is calling you in this direction.” In that moment, something shifted in me. People believed in me, and because of that, I could step out in faith and believe that God truly had more for me.

My heart has always been to serve, to give myself fully wherever there was a need. So when this opportunity came, I stepped into it

wholeheartedly. It was not about a title or position; it was about saying yes to God and serving His people. Deep down, I knew this was the right path, the next step in the story He was writing with my life.

Psalm 75 reminds us so clearly that “not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another” (Psalm 75:6–7 ESV). Promotion and leadership do not come from our striving, positioning, or trying to make things happen in our own strength. If I try to get myself into a position, then I have to keep myself there. That is an exhausting place to live. But when it is God who promotes, He is the One who carries the responsibility to sustain and establish me.

This truth has been an anchor for me in my journey. Looking back, I can see how God opened doors I could never have opened myself and how He placed me in leadership roles I did not seek out. It has always been His doing, not mine, and because of that, I could rest in the assurance that He would also keep me there.

Lessons in Giving and the Power of Love

During that season, we received so many teachings on servanthood, leadership, counseling, forgiveness, prayer, intercession, and more topics than I could even name. Guest speakers would often come, leaders who had many years of experience, and they would pour into us truths that opened up whole new worlds of understanding about God's ways and His principles.

But it wasn't only about what was taught in a classroom or during a session. God was teaching me practically, engraving lessons into my life in ways I could never forget. One of those lessons was about giving and receiving.

I remember so clearly a time when we were planning to go to St. Lucia for a holiday camp with a group of young people. I so badly wanted to travel with our own car, as this was shortly after Mariska and I were married, and we wanted to go together as a couple with our own transport. The problem was, I had no money for fuel. Nothing.

One evening, I went along to a Bible study group to lead worship. Most of the people there were already established in their work and lives. During the meeting, I felt God speak to me: Give your last fifty rand to that man in the group. Fifty rand was all I had left, but I chose to obey. I handed him the money, not knowing at that moment that he himself had been trusting God for provision and was in real need. As I left, my pockets were empty, but my heart was at peace, knowing I had obeyed.

Driving home that night, I still wondered how it would all work out. But when I arrived, to my surprise, some of the fellow students and staff met me with an envelope. They said a man had come by, someone who knew me, though to this day I still don't know who he was. He left the envelope with them, saying he felt God told him to give it to me. When I opened it, it was full of cash. Not just a little, but more than enough to cover all the costs for my fuel and the entire camp.

I stood there overwhelmed. God had shown Himself so faithful. That night, He engraved into my heart a lesson about trusting Him in giving. He

is no man's debtor. When we step out in obedience, He always proves Himself faithful.

Another powerful lesson God taught me in those days was the principle of responding in obedience to the Holy Spirit rather than reacting naturally, often choosing the opposite spirit and responding with love instead of the way the world would normally expect.

One evening, while I was leading a time of worship, one of our neighbours stormed in, visibly upset and angry. She wasn't saved at the time, and though I can't even remember what exactly triggered her frustration, she began yelling at us. In that moment, I knew I had to take leadership, and suddenly I felt the Holy Spirit come over me. Instead of reacting back, I walked up to her gently. She sat down on a chair, and I looked her in the eyes and began to speak words of God's love.

I can't recall all I said, but I told her how much God loved her and cared for her. As I ministered to her in the opposite spirit, I watched her whole countenance change. Tears began streaming down her face as she opened up about the pain and struggles she was carrying. In an instant, the entire atmosphere shifted. What the enemy intended for rejection and strife, God turned around through the power of love.

We ended up praying for her and ministering into her life, and that night His peace filled the room.

I carry these stories with me to this day. They remind me that God's provision is not limited, and His ways are higher than mine. And they remind me that love truly overcomes darkness.

Another unforgettable and practical experience and lesson that impacted my life came when God began to teach me about the power and cost of forgiveness, a lesson that reached far deeper than words or theory.

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Luke 6:38

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:21

The Street Came Into My Room and Changed My View of Forgiveness

As a young adult serving at Shalom, I had an experience that left a lasting impression on my understanding of forgiveness. For several months, I shared a small room with a man who had recently still lived on the streets. He was older than me, and the hardship of life was evident in every line on his face. Still, behind that tired look was a flicker of hope and a desire for change. He had come to stay with us from Hillbrow, seeking a new beginning.

My role was simple: to walk alongside him, listen, pray, and encourage him as best as I could. I was still young and learning, but I wanted to be there for him. Over time, as we shared our space and conversations, he began to open up about his past.

He told me the story of how he had ended up on the streets, and it all traced back to one root: unforgiveness. Someone had done something terrible to his wife, something that left him deeply wounded and angry. That pain turned into hatred, and he made up his mind that he would find that man and kill him. That bitterness grew until it took over his life. It pushed him back into alcoholism, cost him his family, and eventually left him with nothing.

What made his story even more striking was that he knew the Bible well. He could quote Scripture and even teach from it with understanding. He had been around believers and had seen genuine Christian faith lived out by others at Shalom. And yet, even with all that, he looked at me one day and said, “I just cannot forgive that man.”

Those words stayed with me. I realized in that moment that knowing the truth is not the same as living it. You can know what the Bible says about forgiveness and still choose to hold onto bitterness. His story showed me how unforgiveness can harden the heart and blind a person to the freedom that Jesus offers.

In the end, it wasn't what others did to him that destroyed his life, it was what he allowed bitterness to do inside of him. His real prison was not the streets, it was the unforgiveness that chained his heart.

That experience marked me deeply. It reminded me that forgiveness is not optional for those who follow Christ. It's the path to freedom, healing, and peace.

Jesus said, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" Matthew 6:14–15

I have never forgotten that man's story. It stands as a powerful reminder that forgiveness is not about excusing what happened, it's about releasing ourselves from the grip of hatred and allowing God to restore what bitterness tried to destroy.

A Young Couple Held by God's Care

It was at Shalom that I met and fell in love with my wife. She always jokes with me about it, because we were supposed to be studying together when we first met, but obviously my mind was on more than just my studies. From the very beginning of our relationship, we tried to walk in accountability, both to our friends and to our leaders. We wanted to follow, as best as we knew how, the Biblical principles in starting and in growing our relationship, and as we had received some guidelines through teachings on relationships, we tried to do our best to follow those. Our relationship grew stronger, and in April 1992 we were married.

Marriage brought a new season of learning to trust God, not just as individuals, but together as a couple. Almost immediately, He gave us a story that became a foundation for our journey together: the story of our first home.

At that time, there was no accommodation for married couples on the property. We began to pray and trust God for a caravan, even though they were very expensive. In a wonderful answer to prayer, someone donated R5,000 to us. That became our budget, and so we started searching everywhere for something in that price range. Yet caravan after caravan seemed either out of reach or simply unavailable.

One weekend, while visiting my parents, I happened to see an advertisement for a caravan priced exactly at R5,000. I immediately tried to call, but the number didn't work. It seemed like another dead end, but I couldn't shake the feeling that this was worth pursuing. I started investigating, and after some searching, I discovered something remarkable. The phone number belonged to a family living just across the road from my parents.

What are the chances? Because their phone was broken, no one else could reach them. But I could simply walk across the road. When I did, I found the caravan, secondhand but in excellent condition. It felt as though God had reserved it just for us. We bought it that very day for exactly R5,000.

That caravan became our first home. With some loving help, my father-in-law fixed up the tent and we laid down a proper floor. It turned into a little place of luxury for us. For two years we lived there, and to us it was more than enough.

But God's goodness didn't end there. When it came time to move on, I sold that caravan for the very same price we had bought it for. Not a cent was lost. It was a reminder that God not only provides but also sustains.

From the very start of our marriage, He was showing us, "I will take care of you. Trust Me."

That caravan was more than just walls and a roof. It was a testimony of His faithfulness. It marked the beginning of our journey as a family, and it became a living parable of Jesus' words:

"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

Holiday Camps Filled with Ministry and Good Memories

One of the fond memories I carry from our time at Shalom was the holiday camps we regularly hosted. These were two-week-long adventures where we took groups of young people to either a resort or a seaside destination such as St Lucia or ATKV resort. During these camps we taught the Plumblin, along with other discipleship teachings and training. We camped under the trees, surrounded by nature. The warmth of the sun and the excitement of people eager to learn more about Jesus filled the atmosphere. It was also often at these gatherings that many of us had our first opportunities to step out and teach. I still remember the first time I was asked to speak about the Holy Spirit. It was a stretching but wonderful experience. During these camps we also shared the gospel, and some of the campers asked to be baptized in the sea. We would gather on the beach for worship, singing with the sound of the waves around us, and then baptize those who asked right there in the ocean. I often led the beach worship, and I also had opportunities to baptize. These were very special moments.

Those camps were always a blend of discipleship and joy. We worked hard, but there was plenty of fun and laughter as well. We were so committed to these times that even just one week before Mariska and I got married, we still ran one last camp together. The camp continued and we left for our final wedding preparations. The rest of the team attended our wedding the next week straight from the camp grounds that was fortunately for us only about an hours drive away.

Mariska often served as the cook for these gatherings, faithfully preparing meals for groups of thirty, forty, or even fifty people. She still laughs when she tells the story of how, one day, she misread the recipe for rice. Instead of three cups, she poured in three kilograms. The pot kept overflowing, and soon we were swimming in rice. For the next three or four days, rice became the main ingredient in every dish we served. Thankfully, one of the older ladies who was like a spiritual mother to us

stepped in to help, and together they improvised all kinds of creative rice meals.

To make things even more interesting, we had no fridges at the campsite. Everything had to be kept cool with wet blankets and other inventive methods. At the time, it felt like a challenge, but looking back now, it is a story filled with fondness, laughter, and gratitude. These were precious days, times of growth, discipleship, and unforgettable memories.

“Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing” Psalm 100:2

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CHAPTER 32

My First Introduction to YWAM Worcester

In 1991 I had my very first introduction to Youth With A Mission in Worcester. At that stage I had not yet done a Discipleship Training School, but by God's design, a door opened for me and a friend, along with two others from another organization, MES Aksie, the organization I originally joined, to join a two-month Leadership Development school. Even though we weren't officially part of YWAM, they made an exception and welcomed us into the school. Looking back, I can see how it was the Lord's hand preparing me for what was to come.

My friend from Shalom and I packed my little yellow Volkswagen Beetle and set off for the town of Worcester. I still clearly remember that about a third of the way there, the little Beetle's speedometer cable broke, and for the rest of the trip we simply judged our speed by how fast the cars around us were driving. It added a bit of humour to the journey, and we laughed about it as part of the adventure. This was my first time there, and I loved the beauty of the majestic mountains and the lovely landscape from the start. Honestly, as far as I could remember growing up, I never even knew about the town of Worcester in the Breede Valley in the Western Cape.

The school itself was such a rich experience. It taught me not only about leadership but also about people. One of the courses we did was the DISC personality profile, something I had never been exposed to before. It opened my eyes to the incredible variety of ways God has made us, and it gave me tools to better understand and work with people of all different temperaments. That was the beginning of a lifelong lesson for me; valuing and understanding people as God made them and learning to relate in ways that build trust and connection.

At the same time, Mariska and I had just been dating for a couple of months, and this season became a good test for us as we spent two months apart. Thankfully, our relationship flourished. I still remember the excitement of writing letters to one another each week; physical handwritten letters, since there was no WhatsApp or email in those days. I

eagerly looked forward to the post arriving with her words, and she felt the same on her side. In the middle of the course she even surprised me by showing up one weekend without me knowing. I was overjoyed, and we spent a wonderful time together with friends, even traveling to Cape Town to do some sightseeing and visiting. Those moments remain very special to me.

Those two months were a foundation stone in my journey. I had no idea at the time that YWAM would one day become such a significant part of my life. But God knew. He was already planting seeds, shaping me, and preparing me for the calling that would unfold in the years ahead.

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:10

Learning the Sound of His Shepherd Voice

It was during my time at Shalom that I received a lot of teaching and input about hearing the voice of the Lord and recognizing the gentle leading of the Holy Spirit. Looking back, I realize that God had been speaking to me throughout my life. Often I would follow those nudges in my spirit, though at the time I didn't fully understand how He speaks.

Through different teachers, I began to gain understanding, and what made it so valuable was that it wasn't just theory. We were given opportunities to practice, especially during our counseling sessions. We would pray, listen, and share the words we believed God was speaking. Time and again, we saw how those words impacted lives during the Plumblin counseling sessions. Those moments began to confirm to me that hearing God's voice was not only real but also vital in ministry.

One experience especially stands out to me. I had gone to see a doctor, and while I was waiting in the reception room, I began reflecting on what I was learning about hearing God's voice. As I sat there, I noticed a man across from me, quietly reading. I had never seen him before and had no idea what he was reading. Suddenly, I felt the Holy Spirit stirring in my heart and challenging me to go and tell this man that God had called him to be a pastor and into ministry.

Immediately, doubt came. What if I was wrong? This was not a vague word; it was very specific. But I sensed God urging me to step out. With trembling courage, I walked over to him and said, "I don't know you, but I'm a Christian, and I feel God wants you to know that He has called you as a pastor and into ministry."

The man looked up, surprised, and then he showed me the book he was reading. It was a Christian book. With a mixture of shock, almost as if he had been suddenly unmasked in the middle of his private thoughts, and conviction in his eyes, he told me that he had been praying and contemplating whether he should take the step of obedience and enter into ministry. He thanked me for my obedience, and I left. In that moment, I knew it was God.

Of course, there were also times when I got it wrong. I remember once at a youth gathering, I shared a word with a young man. Afterward, I asked him if it made sense to him, and to my surprise he said, “No.” Now it was my turn to be a little bit shocked that he would so bluntly say that. But I actually appreciated his honesty, because this is how we learn. It is okay to make mistakes. God uses even those moments to train us, humble us, and shape us in the process of hearing His voice.

That encounter at the doctor and others like it became faith builders for me. They were early times where I saw how stepping out in obedience to God’s voice could make a real impact. More than anything, it showed me how patient and gentle the Lord is in teaching us. He gives us opportunities to practice, to grow, and to be part of His work in people’s lives, if only we are willing to listen and obey.

*“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”
John 10:27*

Learning to Rely on God

As we were being taught about hearing God's voice, we were also given the opportunity to step out in ministry. Much of our training involved the Plumblin teachings, sharing our testimonies, and counseling others.

I still remember those early days of counseling. For example, at one specific Plumblin counseling weekend at a campsite, my friend and I would walk up a little hill that was close by before the counseling session, taking time to pray for the evening ahead. We knew we couldn't do anything in our own strength. If God didn't come through, nothing of eternal value would happen. That sense of dependence was not just a discipline, it became our lifeline. Prayer was woven into everything we did, because we were learning to trust that the Lord Himself would guide us. This same dependence carried into every aspect of ministry I was involved in, whether it was leading worship, leading a small group, counseling, sharing my testimony, or teaching. In each of these, I leaned on God in the same way, knowing I could not rely on my own ability but only on the ability of the Holy Spirit in and through me.

And He did. Time and again, we saw God's hand moving in the lives of people we ministered to. Those moments were not just about others being touched; they were also about us being shaped. We were learning what it meant to truly step out in faith.

The verse that carried me in those days was one I often spoke aloud and clung to with childlike faith:

*"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth,
to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to
Him." 2 Chronicles 16:9a*

I believed that His eyes were on me. That He was supporting me. That His strength would be enough where mine ended. And over and over again, I discovered that He is faithful.

Christianity is More Than Sundays

One of the things that really began to stand out to me during this time of discipling and having foundations laid in my life was the simple yet profound truth that Christianity is not just something you do on a Sunday by going to church. It is a lifestyle. It is day to day, moment by moment, and it touches every area of life.

I came to understand that God has given us principles all throughout His Word. These principles are not merely suggestions, but keys to living the abundant life Jesus promised when He said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). His Word is like a manual or a playbook for life. For every area of life, God has given us principles and guidelines to follow so that we can live according to His ways. When we live by the Spirit, rely on His promises, and walk in obedience to what He says, we find that He has already given us everything we need to live this life well.

I realised that this truth is not just for Sundays. It is for every day. It is for every situation, every challenge, and every moment of decision. God has shown us how to live through principles like laying down our lives, giving up our rights, walking in forgiveness, serving others, and showing kindness. These are not just noble ideas. They are pathways. When we obey Him in these things, we begin to walk in the way He intended for us to live here on earth.

Unexpected Journeys

I started to do things that I never imagined myself doing, things that had never even crossed my mind. One of those was traveling internationally and nationally to other countries in Southern Africa for ministry.

The first opportunity came when we created an outreach to Zimbabwe. A group of us went there for two weeks, and it was such a rich time. We had the chance to minister, to pray with people, and to step into different cultures. I still remember this one church service where the whole congregation prayed together at the same time. To someone unfamiliar with that, it might have seemed a bit chaotic, but to me it felt like heaven itself. The atmosphere was filled with the presence of God in such a powerful way. I also remember during this meeting standing up, stepping out in faith, and going to the front to bring a word I felt God had laid on my heart.

Not long after that, I was asked to help take a group of young people to Botswana for a holiday camp that would include ministry. Together with a friend, we led two buses filled with eager young people. The journey itself was unforgettable. On the way, we slept our first night right out on the salt plains, under the wide open African sky. We made a fire, cooked some food, and slept under the stars. I can still see that night in my mind: the stillness, the vastness, and the beauty of God's creation.

When we arrived in the Okavango Delta at the campsite, we spent the following weeks surrounded by breathtaking nature, but even more, we witnessed God move in powerful ways. It was a time of ministry, encouragement, and growth for all of us. One moment that has stayed with me ever since happened during a ministry session, when someone spoke a word over me: "God will make your feet like those of a deer on high places, and you will feel safe." That word sank deep into my heart, and it has carried me through many seasons of life since then.

God used these unexpected journeys not only to stretch me beyond what I thought I was capable of, but also to confirm His promises over my life. He was the One who took me to places I never thought I would go, and He was the One who kept me safe.

“He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; He causes me to stand on the heights.” Psalm 18:33

CHAPTER 37

The Hidden Classroom of Faithfulness

My time at Shalom was more than just a season of serving. It was a training ground, a place where God gently and faithfully shaped me for what was still to come. Looking back, I see how He used those days to give me opportunities to be faithful in the little things so that later He could entrust me with more.

The roles I carried at Shalom might have seemed small at the time, but they were seeds of something bigger. The very things I did there would later be repeated on a greater scale when I stepped into leadership as the vice director in Youth With A Mission Worcester. There we were pioneering a new base in a town, and the responsibilities felt similar, only now they were broader and more international in scope.

Through His grace and gentle leadership, God allowed me to practice and to learn. It was also a time of being tested in a good way, tested in faithfulness. Would I steward well the things He had placed in my hands? Could I serve wholeheartedly, even when the platform was small? These were the questions my life was answering in those early years, not so much through words, but through daily obedience.

I am so grateful for that time. It was precious, not only because of the work I was able to do, but because of how much I grew in the Lord. I experienced His love, His goodness, and His faithfulness in such tangible ways. My heart was turned toward Him with a deep desire to learn and to follow. And in His kindness, He was preparing me for the road ahead.

Jesus said in Luke 16:10, “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much.” That verse captures exactly what Shalom meant for me. It was a season of proving ground, not for God to discover who I was, but for me to discover who He is and how trustworthy He is in every stage of the journey.

Letting Go When God Says Move

At Shalom, I was committed and loyal. In my mind, I had already settled that this was where I would be for the rest of my life. I pictured myself serving faithfully, continuing year after year, rooted and planted there. But God had other plans.

About four years into my journey, I had a dream one night. In the dream I heard these words clearly, spoken in Afrikaans: “You are going to leave. You are going to leave soon.” When I woke the next morning, the words were fresh in my memory. I could not shake them. Yet, because of the deep commitment in my heart, I reasoned them away. I thought, No, this cannot be God. This must be the enemy trying to distract me, trying to pull me away from where I am called. And so, I pushed the dream aside.

But the Lord is faithful, and He knows how to guide us, even when we do not fully recognize His voice at first. In the weeks that followed, His gentle leading became unmistakable. Over the next six weeks, circumstances began to align and doors began to open that pointed in only one direction: my time at Shalom was drawing to a close.

One significant turning point came when our leader sent us to find out more about Youth With A Mission. He wanted us to connect with a seasoned YWAMer, perhaps with the idea of exploring partnership or integration. Whatever his reasoning, it was part of God’s plan to speak to me more clearly. As this YWAMer shared with us, something stirred deeply in my spirit. I knew that God was confirming: This is the next step. This is what I want you to do.

It was not entirely unfamiliar. About two and a half years earlier, I had done my Leadership Development School with YWAM, so I already had a taste of the vision and calling of the mission. But now, God was highlighting it again as the new season He was inviting me into.

Mariska and I talked and prayed together, weighing the direction we sensed. Both of us felt peace, God’s peace, that this was the way forward. With hearts settled, we shared the decision with our leader. And just as God had spoken in that dream weeks before, the time came for us to leave.

We packed our bags and loaded the car, not entirely sure what lay ahead but confident that God was leading. At that point, the only place open to us was to return to my parents-in-law. They graciously welcomed us in, and from there we began making preparations for the next step, doing a Discipleship Training School in Worcester in the Western Cape.

Looking back, I see so clearly the faithfulness of God in this transition. Even when I hesitated and tried to reason away His word, He guided me with grace. He opened doors and gave confirmation until His plan became undeniable.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.” Proverbs 3:5–6

God's Word, God's Timing

Growing up in the Christian circles I moved in, I had never even heard of an organization called Youth With A Mission. It simply wasn't on my radar. Looking back now, it was already God's grace at work that I would even be introduced to YWAM. Through the years that He had been leading me, those four significant years of shaping, He was preparing me for what was next.

When Mariska and I decided to do a Discipleship Training School, we applied at the YWAM base in Worcester, in the Western Cape. By then, we were staying with my parents-in-law, trusting God for the next steps. You would think that since God had placed it on our hearts, everything would just fall into place easily. But it didn't work out like that.

When we applied, the leaders at the base responded warmly. They said they would love for us to come, but there was one problem: they simply didn't have space for couples. The small space they had was already taken. That door seemed closed.

I found myself caught between two paths. One option was to stay in Johannesburg and pursue pastoral studies. The other was to step out in faith and follow this stirring toward Youth With A Mission. I prayed, seeking God's guidance, fully open to whatever He had for me.

One evening, at a large church in the area, I went forward for prayer. I didn't share anything with the man who prayed for me, but he simply said that God had given him two words for me: "Go" and "Wholeness."

The moment I heard "Go," I knew it was God's answer. My heart leapt. This wasn't about staying where I was, it was a call to move forward. The second word, "Wholeness," I couldn't fully grasp yet, but I carried it with me.

Still, in the natural, the doors weren't opening. Every day, we prayed: "Lord, what are You saying? What should we do?" It was a time of stretching faith, of learning to lean not on what we could see but on His voice.

Then, just one week before the school started, the phone rang. The base told us that one of the staff members who had been living in the caravan,

where couples could stay, had a family crisis and had to leave suddenly. That opened a space for us.

We were overjoyed! It was so last-minute, yet so clearly God. We packed our car in Johannesburg and set off for Worcester, knowing that this was His hand making the way. I still vividly remember driving through the gorge-like mountain pass at De Doorns, the two large rocks standing like a great door on either side as we entered Worcester. It felt symbolic, as though we were passing through a doorway into a new season, stepping out in faith, believing that we were doing the right thing, yet carrying a mix of anticipation and a little fear of the unknown.

In the very first week of our DTS, the speakers prayed over us one by one. When they came to me, they spoke these words: “In the name of Jesus, receive wholeness. Receive wholeness.” I was stunned. It was the exact word spoken over me weeks earlier in that church.

“Go” had been fulfilled, we had stepped into His call. And “Wholeness” was now being confirmed, spoken into my life again as we began this new season. It was God’s seal, His way of saying, “Yes, you are exactly where I want you to be.”

Over time, I have come to see how tenderly and firmly the Lord leads His children. He closes doors, He opens others, and He confirms His word in ways that leave us amazed.

Truly, as Proverbs 3:6 says: “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”

CHAPTER 40

Doors to Destiny

The Discipleship Training School was such a meaningful experience for both me and Mariska. Even though we were already a bit older and had gone through some training before, it was still deeply valuable. The school was made up of just over thirty students, most of them younger than us. I think we were probably the only married couple there, which made our journey a little unique. Yet in spite of the age difference, we felt welcomed and connected, and God knit our hearts together with those around us.

During this time, we were given a little caravan to stay in. It was a funny setup, divided into two parts with a partition in the middle and a separate door for each side. We would joke later, when looking back, that in the mornings, when Mariska needed space to get dressed, I would have to step out and go through the other door so she could have enough room, and then later she would do the same for me. It may have been small and a bit unconventional, but it was private, it was ours, and we loved staying there. That simple caravan became a special part of our story.

I also remember some of the fellow students who made that season so memorable. One young man from South Africa had a vision to go and work in the Amazon. He even brought his own bow and arrow with him, and sometimes he would simply camp out on the front lawn of the YWAM base where we were staying, because that was just who he was by nature. True to his vision, after the DTS he later went on to Brazil and served in the Amazon for some years. Another of the students, a young woman, would eventually become a ministry base leader together with her husband. It was wonderful to see how God was shaping lives in that school and to later witness the fruit of what He had done through those students.

When it came time for outreach, we were told that our team would be going to Windhoek, Namibia. That was where we would minister, and so that is where God led us. Because of my age and prior experience, the school leader often asked me to minister or to preach, which stretched me in new ways and gave me opportunities to grow in sharing God's Word. During that time, I spoke in different settings, preached the gospel, and stepped into ministry opportunities I had not expected.

One of the highlights was the dramas we presented. A fellow student with experience in this area trained us, and because she had previously worked in the arts and even had opportunities in Hollywood, our dramas were of a very high standard. Those presentations became a powerful tool to share the gospel.

Interestingly, that same student would later become a long-term missionary with us in Youth With A Mission, and to this day she continues to serve faithfully. She would also go on to start a Redeeming Cultures performing arts ministry with mostly locals from Worcester. This ministry grew into a powerful work that travelled internationally, performing and sharing about the redemptive power of God.

I remember one particular prophetic exercise we did as a school during the lecture phase of the school. We were asked to give words without knowing who they were for. When it was my turn, I sensed God saying clearly that the person was being called into long-term missions and full-time ministry. When I turned around, it was her. Years later, when I introduced her as a speaker at one of our community meetings in YWAM Worcester, I shared that story. It was not that it was a rare event to see her, as I had often seen her throughout the years, but that evening it stood out as a moment to remember God's faithfulness and to recall where our story began. Looking back, we could celebrate how God's word had come true, as she had already been faithfully serving in missions for more than thirty years.

Looking back, I can only describe that season as a gift from God. It was not just a training school, it was really our doorway into joining staff with Youth With A Mission. It marked the beginning of a new chapter where God was setting the course for the years ahead.

"The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in His way." Psalm 37:23 ESV

The Farm, the Flood, and the Nations

To give a little background to the part of the story I stepped into, the first YWAM Worcester base was established in 1986 in the Scherpenheuvel area, about 16 kilometres outside of town. It stood on a farm where a farmer had donated five hectares of land, including an old tobacco store, to YWAM. That old building was restored and became the first base. It was a peaceful and beautiful farming district surrounded by other farms, and this became the setting in which our early years of ministry unfolded.

Directly after Mariska and I completed our Discipleship Training School, we joined the staff at the YWAM Worcester base. Once again, I was invited to serve on the leadership team, a responsibility I accepted with joy. Those next four years became a season of steady service and growth. It was a time of learning to walk deeper with the Lord, while He faithfully shaped and prepared us for what was still ahead.

During this period, my main responsibility was serving as Pastoral Coordinator and Personnel Coordinator for the base. Mariska served alongside me, sometimes in these roles but also investing her gifts in areas such as DTS staff and other ministries close to her heart. These were rich years of ministry and learning, as God continued to shape both of us for future seasons.

It was also during this time that God began to teach me more deeply how to work with people who held different beliefs and theological understandings. Some of our staff, even those in leadership, had perspectives that clashed with my own, and at times it even felt as if they were actively opposing certain ideas. This raised the very real question: how do you navigate and work in a mission that is interdenominational and incorporates people from so many different backgrounds? It was not easy, but God used it to train me in forgiveness, humility, and walking in the opposite spirit. He showed me how to navigate leadership in such situations, and I also saw firsthand the consequences when unity was broken. Those years became a training ground of character, where the Lord reminded me that leadership is not only about vision and direction, but also about learning to love, forgive, and walk humbly.

Another great privilege was serving on the leadership team alongside the first coloured base leader in Youth With A Mission South Africa. This was just a few years after South Africa's national transformation, and what a blessing it was to be part of this historic moment, seeing God's hand in both the mission and in our nation. To live and serve together across cultural and racial lines was itself a testimony of God's kingdom and an example of what He could do in South Africa.

In 1996, I also had the opportunity to staff a Leadership Development School on the base. A few weeks before the school ended, however, we received the news that my father-in-law, Mariska's dad, had passed away. I left the school early to be with the family during that time of grief. This was a painful season for us, yet even through loss we experienced the Lord's comfort, grace and faithfulness.

One of the other things I fondly remember from this season is how close-knit we were as a base. Perhaps it was because we were not that many, but as a leadership team and staff we built a deep bond. I have wonderful memories of those times, gathering together, sharing our hearts, bringing prayer requests, and being vulnerable with one another. We prayed, supported, and cared for each other in meaningful ways. As a leadership team, we would also regularly take time once or twice a year to go away together for a short retreat. These times were used for planning and strategizing for the term or year ahead, but they were just as important for bonding together as a team. There were also moments of fellowship and relaxation, simply enjoying friendship. Even though the responsibilities were heavy and at times stressful, including the challenge of making difficult decisions, those moments of closeness bonded us together and created fond memories in the midst of carrying leadership for the base.

During these same years, we also moved into our very first house, just a kilometer from the base, on a farm where a farmer had kindly made a house available for YWAM couples over the years. What a privilege it was to live there for a couple of years.

The house was situated right across from a dairy, so we often received fresh milk straight from the source. Some mornings we would even wake up to find our whole garden filled with cows that had wandered out of their enclosure. Real farm experiences like these became part of our everyday life and added colour to those years.

This became even more special when, after five years of marriage, our first daughter, Rozelle, was born. We carry many fond memories from those early days with her as a baby.

One of the most memorable stories from that period was when heavy rains caused the water channel near the base property to overflow, flooding the entire base. That night, after we had guests over for supper, I suggested to Mariska that we leave the dishes for the morning, something she almost never did.

At midnight, one of the staff members from the base phoned us and asked if the whole base community, about twenty people including the regional director who was teaching that week, could come and stay with us because of the flood.

Mariska quickly jumped up and washed the dishes before everyone arrived, determined that she could not let the guests walk into a kitchen full of dirty dishes.

We welcomed them all into our home, and afterward all the YWAM Worcester staff faced the big task of cleaning and repairing everything. The flood was so extensive that we even have photos of ourselves rowing in rowboats across the property and into the buildings, the water rising so high that it covered much of the property.

Looking back, it is one of those funny stories that still makes us smile. Mariska often teases me about that night, reminding me how I convinced her not to wash the dishes, only for the whole base to end up in our house a few hours later.

Around this same time, within YWAM worldwide, God was leading us to focus more intentionally on the unreached people groups of the world, those living in countries and communities that had never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a base community, after much prayer together, we sensed God leading us into this same new phase of missions. In unity we decided to adopt four unreached people groups to pray for and to reach out to. One of them was the Uzbeks of Uzbekistan. Not long after that, Mariska and I had the incredible opportunity to join a team of students and staff on an outreach to Central Asia.

The journey itself was an adventure. To get our visas, we traveled through India, and on the way back we were able to visit the Taj Mahal. But the true treasure of that outreach was the time we spent among the Uzbek people. While we stayed with a South African family who had a

home in Uzbekistan, we also went out to one of the villages for a couple of days.

There we spent those days in the home of an Uzbek family, sleeping in their house and sharing meals that were lovingly prepared by them. One of those meals was Osh, the famous and well-known Central Asian dish of Uzbekistan. It was delicious, prepared outdoors over a fire in a large dish, with rice, meat, and vegetables all combined into a hearty meal. I can still picture the scene clearly in my mind as I think back on the dish being made. The simplicity, hospitality, and warmth of those days remain with me to this day. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience and a glimpse of the Father's heart for the nations.

Even after we returned, every time we heard news about Uzbekistan, we rejoiced. We were reminded of the missionaries faithfully serving there and of the seeds that God continues to water in that land. It filled us with gratitude to know that, in a small way, we had been part of what He is doing among the Uzbek people. Some years later, I attended a University of the Nations conference in India, and while there I met a young Uzbek woman who was doing her School of Biblical Studies in a neighboring country with Youth With A Mission. I remember contacting Mariska with such excitement, sharing how moved I was to see fruit beginning to come from that land. What an honor and privilege it was to know that so many missionaries had faithfully been serving there, and that we too had played a small part in what God was doing in Uzbekistan.

"Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples." Psalm 96:3

Toward the end of those four years, in 1997, the base leader at that time felt led to move to Durban to start a new ministry. Myself and two other members of the leadership team were asked to cover the leadership of the base. It was during this season that a new transition began, as we started considering and praying about moving the base to a new property in the center of town at Hospital Hill, the old hospital. We sought the Lord together, trusting Him for clear guidance as to whether this was the right step for us to take.

Into the Heart of Worcester: The Move That Opened New Doors for Growth

As I remember that season, during 1997, the leadership from Muizenberg began looking for a new property. One of our previous base directors from the Worcester base introduced them to the old hospital in town. This was in fact the very first hospital in Worcester, with the date on the main building showing it was completed and opened in 1912. I have always been impressed by the beauty of the building, built in the Cape Dutch style with beautiful gables and graceful lines. They started praying about the possibility of moving onto this property as an option for them. Interestingly, God had already spoken to YWAM Worcester about this same property in earlier years. At that time the season was not right and there was no release to move forward. Now, however, things had shifted and a new process was beginning.

Along with the rest of the YWAM Worcester staff, we began to earnestly seek God for His direction. We met with the leaders from YWAM Muizenberg and had discussions together as they shared their vision and thoughts about the possible move. The possibility before us was that the Muizenberg base and the Worcester base would in a sense become one, moving together onto this new property in town. This was not a decision made lightly but was shared, discussed, and prayed over together by the whole YWAM Worcester community and later also processed and the final decision confirmed by the YWAM regional leadership in our area.

I still remember so clearly the morning when the three of us drove out to the property. We parked in front of the old, dilapidated hospital building, which at that time was being used for housing. We sat there in the car and prayed. As we sought the Lord, peace filled our hearts. We all felt strongly that this was the right step to take. That assurance gave us the confidence to go back to the Muizenberg leaders and say that from our side we had peace and believed God was leading us to move into town.

So it turned out that in the beginning of 1998, after also hearing that the Muizenberg leaders were ready, we packed up as a base and moved onto

this new property. It was the old hospital, neglected and worn down in many ways but it was the place God was sending us. Once again, we found ourselves part of a pioneering team, starting afresh on a property that needed much work yet filled with the promise of what God wanted to do. In the words of one of the Muizenberg staff members, “When I got there I saw that the area was so beautiful but the buildings were really run down.” The leader from Muizenberg who came stepped into the leadership role and moved out in front, shouldering much of the responsibility in this new pioneering phase, and together we began shaping this new ministry with a sense of anticipation and purpose.

What is interesting is that he and I had already done our Leadership Development School together in YWAM Worcester in 1991. Even before that, he had once come to Shalom and ministered through prophetic ministry to the staff and students. I still remember the prophetic word he gave me from 1 John 2:12–14, which spoke about a time coming when God would use me in the role of a spiritual father, but that the time was not yet. That word stayed with me as part of God’s confirmation along the way.

The Muizenberg base, however, went through their own processes and in the end it turned out that not everybody moved. A group came together with the YWAM Muizenberg base leader who joined us, while the Muizenberg base continued to function and grow in its own location. God has continued to use that base powerfully, even as He also had a different plan for us here in Worcester. For us, this meant stepping into the next phase of what He had for us as a base, and also for Mariska and me as a couple, as we entered into a new season together.

It was God’s plan all along. The old base had a great impact and saw much fruit while it was there, as He had established it for that season. Yet being so far out, about sixteen kilometers from town, made reaching into the town and being accessible to the people more of a challenge. Now this changed, as by God’s leading we were established right in the heart of Worcester. Looking back, I can see how this step was not just a physical relocation but also a spiritual positioning, where God was aligning us for greater impact in the town and beyond. In those early years, and for some years after that, we often received prophetic words for the base saying that we were, and would be, like a light house on a hill spreading the light of the gospel over the town.

A great testimony came years later. About 24 years after we had moved onto the new property, during the orientation and welcoming of new Master's degree students, we were sitting around the firepit, which at that time was the newest addition to the improvements on the base. It had only recently been completed, so gathering there for the first time with the new students felt meaningful and special. As we sat together, we heard from one of the original staff members of the old YWAM Worcester base, out on the farm. She was part of a team running a Master's degree University of the Nations course on our base at that time. She had since married, and together with her husband they became international leaders in YWAM. They had also pioneered and led a base in Nigeria and had a great influence in that nation, even working with the militia and seeing many of them surrender to Jesus. She shared how, while they had been doing ministry in town, she once walked past the old hospital property. As she passed by, she stepped onto the property, prayed, and claimed it for God, to be used by Him and for YWAM Worcester. Little did she know that years later she would be able to testify of how God had indeed given us this very property to be used for His kingdom purposes.

Let me also mention here the testimony of God's strategic placing and His foresight in bringing us into town. When we first received the property, we were actually more on the outskirts of town. Yet in a way that only God could have seen ahead, developments began to spring up around us. Just above our property, by the Worcester Central Dam, a new mall was built and across the highway new housing developments were established. In time what once seemed the outskirts became the very center. Suddenly, we found ourselves right in the middle of town, close to shopping facilities on both sides whether walking into town or going to the mall. This made it so much easier for students and visitors and truly placed us in a position where we were accessible and reachable by many.

*It was not just a decision made by logic or need, but one rooted in prayer and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding
Philippians 4:7*

Staying in My Lane

As I reflect on this part of my story, stepping into a new season at the base in town, I was reminded once more of this deep conviction. Looking back, I could see how God had been teaching me for years that the most important thing was to remain faithful and committed to the lane He had called me to run in, the specific calling He had spoken over my life, and for the season He had placed me in. Over the years, many opportunities would cross my path, some that seemed good and promising, but they were not what God had spoken to me.

When I was still at Shalom, there was an unspoken expectation I felt that I might one day lead the ministry. Although it was never directly said, I could sense that this was the expectation, at least in some people's minds. Yet deep down, I knew that God had not confirmed this in my heart. Later, just after the transition to the new base property in town, I was asked to take over and repioneer a YWAM work in an area just north of Pretoria and lead the base there. Again, I prayed and sought the Lord, but He had not released me from what He had originally spoken.

There was even the possibility and choice of going to Uzbekistan. This was during the time on the old YWAM Worcester base when we were sending long and short term teams to that country. We had been there on a ministry trip, and the idea of going full time was presented, but again, that was not what God was speaking to us in that season. In each of these moments, I prayed and sought the Lord, but He had not released me from what He had originally spoken.

Even in our local church, which I love and appreciate dearly, there were times when I was asked to step into more of a full-time pastoral role. On paper, it made sense. I enjoy the people, and in many ways, it would have been a joy to serve them in that way. Yet, when I prayed about it, the Lord kept bringing me back to the original word that had brought me to where I was now.

Through all these moments, I believe God was teaching me to remain faithful and to move only when He says move, to go only when He says go. It can be tempting to be drawn by prestige, recognition, or even

financial security. But none of those things can replace obedience to God's voice and staying in His purpose for my life.

The key for me for staying faithful to where God had placed me was not ambition or opportunity, but faithfulness to the clear word God had spoken to me. That word became my anchor, reminding me again and again: stay in the lane God has set before you. And so it came that the new YWAM Worcester property and ministry in the town of Worcester would become my home and calling, not only for me but also for my wife and two daughters who grew up there, and where I still am at this moment, having served for the past 27 years.

“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” Hebrews 12:1–2

CHAPTER 44

Led by Obedience, Amazed by His Provision and Surprised by His Ways

After moving from the farm base out in Scherpenheuvel, we had to quickly find a place in town since the YWAM Worcester base itself had relocated there. At that stage, there was no accommodation for us on the new property. Through the kindness of friends of YWAM, who owned a block of flats in town, we found a place to stay. It was really the only option available at that stage, yet we sensed it was the door God was opening for us.

Our first flat in town was memorable in many ways. Other ex-YWAMers were also living in the same building, which gave us a sense of connection and community. But what stood out most was that our direct neighbor, living right across from us, was the local Muslim imam. His front door and ours were opposite each other.

That opened a unique door for relationship. We prayed for him often and saw it as a God-given opportunity to stand in the gap for his life. Mariska especially, with her ministry of intercession, carried him before the Lord faithfully. During Ramadan, he would bring us food, and in return we would sometimes share some of our treats with them. I still remember when he went through a painful time of being rejected and even attacked by members of his own congregation because he came from another country. Even then, we trusted that God would reveal Himself to him in the midst of his struggle.

We stayed in that flat for about a year until new houses were built on the YWAM Worcester property and we were able to move into community living. For most of our lives in Worcester, living on the base has been our reality. It shaped us, our children, and our ministry.

There was only one other time we moved off base for a season. When our second child was born, the small house we were living in on the property started to feel too small for our growing family. We prayed about it and felt God was leading us to find bigger accommodation. That weekend we prayed specifically for a house. The very next Monday morning, after worship, one of our staff came forward with an

announcement. A neighbor living right next to the base was moving out and had a house to rent. If anyone was interested, it was available.

What an answer to prayer! We had prayed that weekend, and on Monday the opportunity was laid before us. We spoke to the owners, and they gladly rented us the house. We stayed there for about a year until they returned, and then, two years later, we were offered a house on the base by the leader at that stage. God had opened another door for us to move into a bigger house back on the base. Again, we prayed, and again we felt peace that this was His will.

That house was not large, but for me personally it was such a beautiful answer to prayer. It also had enough bedrooms so that each of our daughters could have their own room, which brought great delight to them and also to us as parents. For years I had often prayed and asked the Lord that if we were to stay in Worcester, I would love to have a mountain view because I love the mountains and the beauty of God's creation. The home we moved into on the base had a stunning 180-degree view of the mountains in front of us. Every day, looking out at that view, I was reminded of God's kindness in even the smallest details of our hearts' desires. What a wonderful gift and testimony of His faithfulness.

Through all these seasons, our hearts and goal was never to pursue a certain kind of accommodation, but rather to obey God. Our decisions were not based on what kind of house we could stay in, but on where God was opening the doors, where He was leading us, and where we would be in His will. That was our guiding compass. From my own belief and understanding, I have nothing against living in big or beautiful accommodation if that is where the Lord leads you, but it should never be the focus. The true focus must always remain obedience to God, where He wants you to stay and what His purposes are for your life. Sometimes that may include beautiful homes, and sometimes it may not, but the joy comes in knowing you are where He wants you to be.

Looking back, I can only testify of God's faithfulness in every season. From a small flat across from the imam, to a rented house off base, to a larger home on the property with a mountain view, God always made a way and provided what we needed in His perfect timing.

"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

Building a Home for the Nations and a Place for His Glory

Within our very first year on the new property in town, we were already running both a Discipleship Training School (DTS) and a Community Counseling School. I remember the many hours of painting and preparing the new classrooms, making sure everything was ready for the students who would soon arrive. In the midst of this effort, another opportunity came our way: we were asked to host large international schools. That meant preparing the new property as well. These schools would bring people from many nations together, right here in Worcester.

During that season, I was asked once again to become part of the base leadership team. I gladly accepted because I knew deep within my heart that this was what God wanted me to do. Our leadership team was already international, with members from Zambia, New Zealand and South Africa. This was a clear sign of what YWAM Worcester was destined to become, an international base with a global heartbeat. As soon as our base began to grow in numbers our leadership team would also start to grow and it would not be uncommon to have up to ten team members with most of them from different countries.

Our new base leader, himself the child of missionaries, carried a remarkable heart for the nations. God had given him both the ability and the anointing to call forth people, not only to join us here at YWAM Worcester but also to be sent out as missionaries into the world. I deeply honour him for the calling on his life, for his ability to draw people, and for the enormous impact this had on my own journey and on the community around us. His obedience to God shaped the future of the base and rippled out into Worcester itself.

It was also during this time that we built what became known as the Glory Hall, a space large enough to welcome more than 300 people. In the years that followed, the Glory Hall would live up to its name. We often experienced the presence of the Lord there in meaningful ways and saw many lives touched by the love of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit. It

became a place where God met people, brought healing, and stirred fresh calling and purpose in many hearts.

Not long after completing the hall, YWAM Worcester had the privilege of hosting two significant international schools: the International Leadership Training School, led by Darlene Cunningham, and the International Community Development School, directed by Christene Colby. These gatherings brought leaders and students from across the world and infused our base with fresh vision and strength. Many of these students would later go on to different parts of the world where they pioneered ministries that had a meaningful impact for the Kingdom of God. Some would even go on to play influential roles in YWAM internationally and became instrumental in helping to shape and lead the mission in significant ways.

Before long, our community blossomed into a beautiful mosaic of people from over 52 nations. Looking back, I see how God's hand was upon us, weaving together cultures, languages, and hearts into a living testimony of His kingdom on earth.

For me personally, I was amazed, maybe even a little overwhelmed, but also excited to see what God was doing.

Having so many nations living among us was a brand-new experience, especially as we had just welcomed our first child into the world. Our hearts were simply to be obedient to what God had for us and serve wherever needed to help to establish the new thing that God was doing. I served as pastoral coordinator and later as registrar, while also carrying my leadership responsibilities. At times, it felt overwhelming. Standing before so many people, speaking in front of crowds, and carrying responsibility for so many. I would have never thought this up for myself or even foreseen it, as I was willing to give myself wherever God wanted to place me. Whether big or small, to me the important thing was to be where God wanted me. But God had much greater things for me than I would have been able to imagine, and His thoughts are truly higher than ours. Yet the faithfulness of God was incredible.

In those moments, I learned to run to Him again and again. To pray, to trust, and to rely completely on His strength. I remember before speaking in meetings, or even when asked to deal with difficult situations, I would cling to His word and trust Him to lead me. One verse became my anchor: "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those

whose hearts are fully committed to him” (2 Chronicles 16:9a). I would personalize it and say, “The eyes of the Lord go to and fro throughout the whole earth to strongly support Arno, whose heart is toward Him.” That truth gave me peace and courage to do what He called me to do. Time and again, God showed Himself faithful, equipping me beyond my own ability. In my weakness, I found His strength, and in my inadequacy, His word became the firm foundation that carried me.

Another area that was revitalized and reintroduced into the YWAM Worcester base during this season was the power of the Holy Spirit. Our newly appointed base leader carried such a heart to encourage people and to share the reality of the Spirit’s presence and power. In my opinion and experience, coming out of a recent season in our history where there had been less openness in that area, this was a meaningful time of renewed awakening. Some of this was simply due to differences of opinion in earlier years, where the work of the Spirit and the expression thereof had been understood in different ways. This can naturally happen when people from various denominations and doctrinal backgrounds come together.

I remember a specific time when we as the new leadership team, during those beginning stages, were praying together. I clearly remember the setting. It was at the highest point on the base, in the main building, the top section of an old lift shaft that had been turned into a small room. We were sharing about where we were at concerning our expectations of the Holy Spirit, and I admitted honestly that I had not had much expectation of the Holy Spirit. To be honest, for me this was such a relief and I was so grateful, because I knew that I desperately needed the power of the Holy Spirit to do what needed to be done. They prayed for me, and in that moment God came to do something new. He gave me fresh fire, renewed expectation, and a release of moving in the Holy Spirit. From that point forward, I also knew that the spiritual atmosphere would be ready and prepared to allow the Holy Spirit to move as He desired. This would become another foundational building block for our community in the years to come.

“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” Revelation 7:9

CHAPTER 46

A Gateway to Africa and the World

As we stepped into the closing months of 1999, we sensed a fresh stirring from the Lord for our base. God was calling us to become a gateway, a place where missionaries could be sent into Africa and where African missionaries could be equipped and released to the nations of the world. We also became very focused on reaching out to and embracing the nations. In fact, the motto we felt God prompting us to pursue was Gateway to Africa and the World.

Over the years, we would see many nations come through our base. Students and staff were trained and then went out, not only into Africa but also back to their own countries or to other parts of the world to live out their calling after receiving training here at YWAM Worcester. Some of them became major influencers, impacting nations through their passion, ministry, and testimony. A few years ago, as we reflected on the overall reach and impact, we had welcomed more than ninety-two nations here at YWAM Worcester and sent outreach teams to at least thirty-six countries. Since then we have stopped keeping track, and the number has likely grown even further. Many of those countries were visited more than once. At any given time, we would often have between thirty and forty nations represented, either being trained or serving as missionaries in Worcester and the surrounding areas.

God then opened doors for us to pioneer and be part of starting new ministries and bases that carried this same heartbeat. This included places like YWAM Jeffrey's Bay, YWAM Maputo, YWAM Kruger Park, YWAM eSwatini, YWAM Kilimanjaro, YWAM Arusha, YWAM Livingstone, YWAM Drakensberg, YWAM Blantyre, YWAM East London, YWAM Nation Builders Pretoria, YWAM Gordon's Bay, and others.

Gateway to Africa and the World became like a compass for us, guiding the direction of our ministry. So much so that at the first opportunity we had, we painted this motto on the entrance wall of our newly built Glory Hall. It was accompanied by a life-size map of the world that stretched across the entire front wall of the hall. The entrance doors

were also on that wall, so in a sense, as you walked through the map into the hall you had the feeling of stepping into something bigger than yourself. Perhaps even into the destiny in the nations that God had planned for you.

The story about the painting of the big map and the words Gateway to Africa and the World on the Glory Hall is more than just about painting but also about God's timing and how He sent us someone who would transform that plain wall into an image that would become a symbol of who we were. During that season, God sent us a man with a beautiful testimony. He came out of a rough background, but he was an artist and a painter, skilled in creating murals on a large scale. He joined us to do his DTS, where he experienced God in a new way. Afterwards, he joined us on staff for about two years. He was the one who painted the large map and words for us on the entrance of the Glory Hall. He also created a number of artworks that we could hang in our offices and communal areas, as well as the flags of the nations that surround the inside of the Glory Hall. Each one of his paintings carried his unique trademark. Hidden within the painting, whether a normal landscape or another scene, was the name of Jesus. It was well hidden and you had to look closer to see it, but it was there. This was his way of expressing his faith and prophetic calling through art. He was also the first to paint the underpass just outside our base that leads into town. Once covered in graffiti, he transformed it with uplifting images that changed the atmosphere and created a beautiful walkway for those making their way into town.

As we welcomed and trained so many nations through the years, it became deeply rewarding to see individuals go on to fulfill their callings. Just recently, one example of this came when I received a message on Facebook from a former DTS student from Korea, who did his Discipleship Training School in Worcester in 2000. He wrote, "Hi! Good to see you active in missions. I am serving God as a missionary in the Philippines." It was deeply encouraging to hear from him and to learn that since 2007, he has been faithfully serving there, now leading two churches and ministering to others through programs like the Vocational Bible School at his church. He also shared that he got married in 2004 and has a daughter. Hearing from former students like him always stirs a sense of gratitude in my heart. It is a reminder that the seeds sown during their training continue to bear fruit in many nations. Seeing how God multiplies

what began in Worcester, raising up men and women who now carry His heart to different parts of the world, remains one of the greatest joys and rewards of this journey.

Another beautiful example of this came some years back when one of our former students returned to visit Mariska and me. He had just gotten engaged and wanted to show his fiancée where his journey with God had begun and where he had grown up as a teenager. We spent time together in our home, sharing stories of how God had been leading him since his training days. He had come to us as a young refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, having faced many hardships. During his time with us, he not only completed several YWAM schools but also served on staff for some years, growing in faith and in his calling as he discovered his purpose in God. Today, he serves as a humanitarian and digital activist in Congo, using his voice to bring awareness and hope to his people through his work. Hearing his story once again reminded me how one life touched by the love of God can go on to impact nations.

From the start, it was never just about expanding an organization. The heart was always to equip and empower people who would go out and give their lives fully to the Great Commission. That continues to be our passion, to see men and women released to carry the love of Jesus into Africa and from Africa to the world.

Not Just What I Could Do, But Who I Was

The next step in bringing me to the place where I believe God intended for me to serve for the next season of my life came when I was asked to take on the role of vice-director of YWAM Worcester, which marked the beginning of a journey that lasted more than twenty years.

When I prayed about it, I had peace in my heart. I knew this was from God. Even though I did not feel fully equipped, I trusted Him. I knew that if I placed my faith in Him and obeyed His leading, He would give me what I needed and walk with me through the process. Looking back now, I can see more clearly what God was doing.

To some degree I knew and I felt that everything in my life before had led up to this point and was part of my preparation for what God had for me in this next season. Even my time at Shalom and the leadership there was, in many ways, a smaller version of what I would now be doing on a larger scale. That season taught me many lessons about responsibility, faith, and walking with people, all of which became building blocks for the future.

I could see how God had been preparing me throughout the years, shaping me not only through opportunities but also through challenges and tests of faith. Part of His plan was not only about what I could do, but about who I was. My consistency and stability were qualities He could use to bring continuity to the base. This created a steady foundation while others were able to live out their passions, callings, and visions.

Since being in full-time ministry, I have come to understand the heart of servant leadership, where titles mean little compared to faithfulness and service. God has given each of us different gifts, and those gifts do not increase or decrease our value. Each one simply contributes its unique ability to the body of Christ in the place God has positioned us.

When I was appointed as vice-director, I remember it felt a little strange to me. Titles have never held much weight in my heart; what mattered to me then, as now, was simply serving faithfully where God placed me. Even before this time, while serving in leadership

responsibilities at Shalom, we never emphasized titles. It was never about a position, but about being where God wanted you to serve.

This was also the culture in YWAM, as even the founders Loren and Darlene Cunningham would always encourage us to call them by their names. That has always been my heart as well. So stepping into this new role, I did not see it as a matter of worth or status, but simply as an area of service and responsibility. Within ourselves, we viewed leadership not as a position that made anyone more valuable or better than others, but as a role entrusted to us to fulfill the purposes of God.

For that reason we have always had the culture in YWAM Worcester that we call each other by name. Granted, for some cultures this was very difficult because it was totally contrary to what they were used to. In certain cultures, the way people address a leader often reflects deep respect and honour. Titles such as “Pastor,” “Doctor,” or “Sir” are commonly used, and calling a leader by their first name without the title may be seen as disrespectful or too casual. The title itself carries weight, because it affirms the leader’s role and the relational authority entrusted to them.

In light of this, the structure we had in place proved to be both helpful and necessary. The base had grown to a point where we needed clear systems to function in a healthy and manageable way. It also served legal and organizational purposes. Yet at the core, it was never about hierarchy. It was about serving. Leadership, as I have come to see it, is not about holding a position but about carrying responsibility and walking in God’s calling.

It was never a threat to me to see others step into their callings. On the contrary, it was a joy and encouragement to me. My heart was to see people flourish in the gifts and purposes God had placed on their lives. That was what I wanted to foster and encourage.

This made working together with the base leader a beautiful partnership. For him, it meant traveling widely, speaking around the world, and recruiting people into the mission. For me, it was about bringing stability and consistency to the local base, faithfully serving where God had placed me.

It was a combination that God used, and together we served side by side for the next ten years. Later, when the leadership was handed over, I had the privilege of working with someone else, but that first season laid a foundation that I believe God intended for His purposes.

The value I found in being faithful became a guiding principle through all these years. The truth of being faithful with what God has entrusted to you was laid as a foundation early on in my full-time ministry. I learned that as we are faithful with what God places in our hands today, He can entrust us with more tomorrow.

This principle is beautifully illustrated in the life of David, who would later become king. He started by faithfully tending sheep where no one saw him, but God saw his heart and chose him for His purposes. In much the same way, I came to understand that faithfulness in the unseen seasons prepares us for the greater responsibilities ahead.

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” 1 Corinthians 4:2

Ministries Growing and Multiplying

When I look back, I can see that alongside the YWAM schools that were established on the base, God was also stirring something powerful in the area of ministries. From the very beginning, we started a preschool right on the base, and my own children had the joy and privilege of attending there. That little preschool was a picture of what God would continue to do: bringing together different cultures and nations to serve, love, and build into one another's lives.

In those early years, we also experienced the beauty of the nations joining together in public displays of prayer and worship. I remember when all our staff and students marched through the streets of Worcester, praying for the town while carrying banners that represented their nations. It was a sight that caught the attention of the community. Dressed in their traditional clothes, the nations made for a colorful and vibrant display. The Koreans, the Africans, and many others stood out with their bright garments, and together they testified to the unity of God's people from every tribe and tongue.

As missionaries were called to South Africa, and specifically to Worcester, I saw how many carried a deep passion not only for the gospel but also for the people in the surrounding communities. Their hearts longed to share the love of Jesus in both word and deed. Soon, ministries began to spring up like seeds planted in good soil. Before long, there were around thirty different ministries touching lives in all kinds of ways. Some worked with children, others with the poor and needy. Preschools were being planted in the communities, and for families in need we built Wendy houses (small prefabricated wooden structures) to provide them with shelter.

Prison ministry also began, reaching those behind bars with the hope and love of Jesus. There were individuals serving churches faithfully, and there were even some missionaries that planted churches in the community. It also opened wonderful doors into some of the local schools. In fact, one of those school ministries has continued for more than twenty years. We had the privilege of sending outreach and ministry teams from

the base, as well as individuals, to go in and minister to the children. Over the years this consistent presence allowed God's love and Word to touch generation after generation of young lives. Alongside this, afterschool care groups were also started to help children develop in practical and personal ways, and even computer classes were offered, giving young people valuable skills for their future. These efforts also started giving us much favor in the community. Often, when individuals from other nations went into the shops, the owners or people would ask, 'Oh, are you from YWAM in Worcester?' They began to recognize that many of the international faces they saw in town were connected to YWAM, and this awareness opened even more doors for ministry and relationship.

One of the stories that encouraged us during that time came through Mariska, who was then leading our intercession. From the very start we had established a rhythm of meeting every Wednesday morning as a base to pray together. One morning, Mariska felt strongly that God was leading us to pray for the town, not only by going to the outskirts and different key places, but also by praying for the mayor. She phoned the mayor's office and, to our surprise, we were invited to come and meet with her. Soon after, our leadership group found ourselves waiting in the reception area of the mayor's office before being invited in. The mayor at the time, as we discovered, was also a believer who loved God.

As we listened to some of her needs and concerns, we began to pray with her. To our amazement, the power of God moved in a very real way. The Holy Spirit touched her deeply, and she was overcome by His presence. That moment became the start of a new kind of favor with local leaders. She later visited one of our Thursday night community meetings and even shared a short encouragement with us. This opened the way for relationships with other mayors in the years that followed, giving us opportunities to work together with the local government to see change and impact come to our community.

During our early times of preparation and intercession for Worcester and for the new base, we discovered that the town's official motto was, 'We scorn change.' Deep in our hearts we knew this was not right, and as a community we felt led to take prophetic action. Together as the base we acted this out by symbolically breaking a wooden gate that we found lying around on our property, declaring in faith that Worcester would no longer reject change but would welcome the new things God desired to bring. On

that day with the mayor, we shared with her about the motto and the conviction that God wanted to bring something fresh and new to the town. She agreed wholeheartedly, saying that this was not what she believed should represent Worcester. Today, Worcester itself does not have a distinct officially stated motto, but it falls under the Breede Valley Local Municipality, which carries the slogan: 'A caring valley of excellence.' This has become the most relevant and current guiding principle for the town. It was as though a curse over the city had been broken, making way for God's plans and purposes to flourish.

What struck me deeply was how this growth happened not through tight control or rigid oversight, but through freedom.

As a leadership team, we discovered the power of releasing people into their callings instead of trying to control every detail. It was not always easy, but it was key. When people were trusted and empowered, they stepped into what God had placed on their hearts, and ministries flourished.

I am convinced this openness to let God lead His people, rather than us trying to hold everything too tightly, was one of the main reasons why ministries grew strong and took root in Worcester and beyond. It reminded me that our role was never to control, but to release, encourage, and make room for God's Spirit to work through willing hands and hearts. And as I reflected on how ministries flourished, I couldn't help but be reminded that long before our time, God had already poured out His Spirit on this town in a mighty way. The story of Worcester is not only one of ministries multiplying, but also of revival wells that were first opened generations ago.

The Well of Revival

In 1860, Worcester became the birthplace of what history now calls the Andrew Murray Revival. Under the ministry of Andrew Murray, God poured out His Spirit in such a powerful way that it not only shook this town but spread across South Africa and even reached into the world. That church building where it began still stands today, a silent witness to the move of God that marked our land.

Andrew Murray himself went on to write many books that continue to inspire believers around the world. And here in Worcester, his legacy has carried a deep longing in many hearts for revival. For years, we at Youth With A Mission Worcester have prayed for those revival wells to be reopened. We have asked the Lord again and again to let His Spirit come in the same way as in 1860.

One day as I was sitting in the Glory Hall and thinking about this, I came to the realization that God has already answered in part. To a certain degree, the well has been flowing again. Not only do I see this in the many hundreds, even thousands, of missionaries who have been trained here and sent into South Africa, Africa, and the nations of the world, but I also see that the well has been flowing right here in Worcester and in our surrounding area. We have seen God touching lives locally, communities being transformed, and people in our own valley being impacted by the Spirit of God. The water is not only flowing out to the nations, it is also bubbling up right where the well was first opened, refreshing and reviving hearts in our own land.

To me, it does not feel like any coincidence that God sent people to start a missions training base and organization again in this very area, right where the previous revival had taken place. We have seen this well grow stronger and stronger over the years. And as we opened a new base, with a greater international inflow and outflow, it was as though the stream of this well began to gush with greater force. What has come forth from that well has been missionaries, ordinary people touched by God, trained, and sent to the ends of the earth.

I am convinced that what we have seen is only the beginning. The well of revival has been opened, and we are trusting God for the flow to increase. More missionaries will go out. More nations will be reached. More lives will be changed. And we thank God that we can stand on the soil where He once poured out His Spirit in such a mighty way and witness that He is still at work today, both here in Worcester and around the world.

As Jesus said, “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them” (John 7:38).

That river is still flowing from Worcester, out into Africa and the nations, and also right here in our valley. And I am trusting and believing with all my heart that the best is yet to come.

One of the ways I have seen this river flowing most clearly is in the fruit of changed lives: young and old, local and international. Their stories testify that revival is not just history but living reality.

CHAPTER 50

The Privilege of Seeing Fruit

One of the great blessings of walking with a ministry for a long time is that you get to see the fruit of what has been planted. It is not always immediate, and sometimes years pass before you truly notice the growth, but over time you begin to recognize how the seeds sown by different people from many nations into our community have taken root and multiplied in ways only God could orchestrate. This long journey allows you to look back and see not just moments but generations shaped by the faithfulness of God.

I have seen young people who once lived as street children in our town being drawn into our ministry, cared for, and disciplined through the years. Some of them later stepped into their own training with us and eventually became missionaries themselves, carrying the gospel far beyond what they could ever have imagined when they were children on the streets. Others spent a season in missions and then moved on to different parts of the world, raising families and making an impact wherever God placed them. Their stories testify that the love and truth of Jesus can break cycles of hopelessness and bring new life wherever it is planted.

I have also witnessed gang leaders, once feared and hardened, encounter the saving power of Jesus in a way that transformed them completely. Some of them came into our Discipleship Training School, and later even served on staff, giving back to the same community where they once brought fear and destruction. Others have remained in the local community, faithfully working and serving the Lord. To see a man who once caused pain now lifting his hands in worship, or mentoring young men who are walking the same path he once did, is deeply moving. There is no greater evidence of the power of redemption.

One of the boys who grew up in one of our areas around Worcester, Rodewal, is a shining example of this. Today he is serving with the very same ministry that once reached out to him when he was a child. He now stands as one of the staff members working there, encouraging and serving the street children as well as other children from that community. He has become a husband and father, with two children of his own, and he is

faithfully investing back into the lives of those who are walking a path he once knew so well. His story is a testimony of God's redeeming power and how He calls us to pour back into others from the grace we ourselves have received. It is a reminder that the fruit does not just end with one person. It multiplies into families, communities, and even future generations.

And then there are the missionary children, those who were part of Mariska's children's ministry. Many of them were YWAM missionary children whose parents came as long-term missionaries to South Africa and to our base. They arrived as little ones, some even as babies in their mothers' arms, adjusting to life in a new culture while their parents served the Lord. Over the years, I have watched them grow up before our eyes. While not all of them chose to follow the same path, some stepped into their own callings as missionaries, carrying forward the very heart of what they once received as children. To see them now, taking their own steps of faith, reminds me that God's work is not confined to one generation but continues to ripple outward. Even those who chose different paths still carry the influence of those early years, and I trust that God is faithful to complete the work He began in each of them.

What a joy it is to see lives changed, families restored, and destinies reshaped by the goodness of God. Truly, this is a privilege not everyone gets to experience, but one that fills my heart with deep gratitude. I am often reminded that we are simply sowers and waterers, but God gives the increase. When I think of the many faces, young and old, that have been transformed through His presence in our midst, I can only lift my heart in thanksgiving for His faithfulness.

And this fruit is not limited to one generation or one setting. God's redeeming power keeps breaking through in the most unexpected places, sometimes even behind prison walls.

"So then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth." 1 Corinthians 3:7

CHAPTER 51

Generations of Fruit: A Missionary's Son and the Prison Testimony

Over the years, I have heard many testimonies of lives being changed in our community through different ministries. But one that stands out so vividly to me is a story from our local women's prison.

A Brazilian lady had been caught carrying drugs and ended up imprisoned here in South Africa, far from her family and without anyone who spoke her language. She was isolated, unable to communicate, and in a hopeless situation. Then, one day, someone from our church phoned me and asked if there was anyone from Brazil in our community who could reach out to her.

I immediately thought of one of our long-term Brazilian missionaries here at YWAM Worcester. She has been with us for more than twenty years, faithfully serving in many different ways. She agreed to visit this prisoner, and on her very first visits, she shared the gospel. That day, this woman surrendered her life to Jesus. Her heart was transformed, and a new hunger for God was awakened within her.

From then on, our Brazilian sister continued to visit, sometimes weekly, sometimes every second week, discipling her faithfully. Later her son, who grew up here in South Africa and although Brazilian speaks Afrikaans fluently as well as English, also joined in. Together they invested in this new believer's life. Over time, the change was undeniable. She became so passionate for Jesus that she began leading others in the prison to Christ. She read her Bible eagerly, and the last time I heard, she had only one book left before completing the entire Bible from beginning to end.

Because of her faith, she also experienced persecution from some of her fellow inmates. Yet, in the midst of this opposition, she witnessed God's supernatural hand at work. As she prayed and trusted Him, miracles happened, strengthening her faith even more and testifying of God's power to those around her.

The impact of her faith did not stop there. Another woman in the prison, whom she had led to the Lord, was later released. That woman

joined a local church in her home town and shared her testimony of what God had done in her life through this prisoner's witness. Inspired, that church began sending people back into the prison to support and encourage the work that was happening.

It still amazes me: what are the chances that a Brazilian woman, caught and imprisoned in South Africa, would be discipled by Brazilians who had come all the way across the world? Only God could orchestrate such a story. He not only saved her, but He also surrounded her with people from her homeland to disciple and encourage her. Today she speaks fluent English and continues to grow in the Lord, shining His light even in such a dark place.

As Scripture says: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" John 1:5, NIV

God's Provision Before We Knew the Need

In 2001 our second daughter, Chané, was born, and with her arrival a new chapter in our lives began as our family grew. Looking back, her birth and her first couple of years were not only a joy but also a clear testimony to God's faithfulness and goodness, and to the way He took care of us as a family.

When our first daughter, Rozelle, was born, we had a private doctor, but the birth took place in a public hospital. By the time we were preparing for our second child, I had already been praying and trusting God for something more. Even before Mariska became pregnant, I remember asking the Lord specifically for a hospital plan, so that when the time came, she would be able to give birth in a private hospital in town.

One day, as I was sitting in my office at Youth With A Mission, right at the entrance of the main building, a man unexpectedly walked in. He asked if he could speak with me, and I welcomed him. As we began to talk, it turned out that he was an insurance broker. He told me that God had spoken to him to take out insurance and hospital plans for a number of missionaries on our base. To me, the fact that someone could just walk in like that and offer these policies was already a miracle in itself. I was surprised and deeply moved, especially because I had been praying for this. At first, I wondered how this would even work, but he had a clear plan, a way to do it, and the resources to make it happen. In the end, he arranged hospital plans and life insurance for about twenty missionaries, and we were among the ones that got a hospital plan.

When the time for Chané's birth came, Mariska was able to give birth at the private hospital with the same doctor we trusted. That in itself felt like God's kindness, but He was preparing us for something even greater. Chané was born with jaundice and had to remain in hospital for some time, even after Mariska came home. We were shocked as this was our first experience with something like that, but she received the best care, and eventually she came home.

About six months later we travelled to Johannesburg to introduce our new baby to our family. On the way, Chané became ill again. After a few

nights of coughing and struggling, one of the neighbours, who was a nurse by profession, told us to take her to the doctor. We did, and the doctors told us to book her into the hospital. They immediately rushed her in, admitted her into ICU and told us that she was very sick and not doing well at all.

Here is where God's hand was so evident. Because of the hospital plan we had been given, we could take her to one of the best private hospitals in the area. She received excellent care, just in time, and it truly saved her life. The most amazing part is that the hospital plan only lasted for two years. After that, the man stopped supporting it. But it was exactly during those two years that we needed it most.

This to me was one of the clearest testimonies of how God goes before us. He knew what we would need before we even knew it ourselves. He provided in a way that was both practical and lifesaving.

It reminds me of the promise in Matthew 6:8, "Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him." God had already seen the road ahead, and in His goodness He placed provision at just the right time. Chané's life today is a testimony of His care, His timing, and His faithful love.

Learning to Lead with Empathy

Stepping into the responsibilities of vice director was not always easy. Leadership came with weight, challenges, and even spiritual and emotional attacks. Though I was part of a team, carrying that burden together did not always make it lighter. I felt deeply the seriousness of my calling, and with it came many moments of inner struggle.

As a young leader too, there were many examples of things happening on a big base where we had at times between 100 and 200 staff and students. With so many cultures represented, tensions were inevitable. There were times when sin had to be addressed, or when individuals needed to be confronted about the way they treated others. Sometimes people simply struggled to get along, and as leaders we had to step in. These moments were not only about correction or problem solving, but formed part of discipling people and caring for one another within community life. In the early years there were no department leaders, only different functions and areas that needed to run. The role of the leader and my role as vice director was to make sure things happened and to deal with problems as they came up. This meant overseeing many different facets of the organization and carrying a broad spectrum of responsibilities to ensure that the base functioned in the best way possible. In many ways it was a managing role, requiring me to receive and respond to issues as they arose. These situations affected me emotionally and spiritually, and they tested my ability to lead with both firmness and compassion.

Often, my empathy, something that shaped the way I experienced leadership, also made it more difficult. Empathy is more than just noticing what people feel; it is entering into their emotions, sensing atmospheres, and sometimes even carrying the heaviness of their struggles. Sometimes it was hard to distinguish whether what I was feeling was my own emotions or the feelings of others that I was sensing. Learning to discern that was important, though at this stage I had not yet discovered that empathy was a significant part of how God had wired me. Without that knowledge and understanding, I had to struggle and process these experiences in a much less clear way. This meant that when people around me went through

trials, or when there was tension in the community, I felt it keenly in my own emotions.

There were many nights when sleep escaped me, and I would find myself awake, praying for the base, for relationships, or for individuals who were walking through difficult seasons. These nights pressed me deeper into the Lord. I learned that the only place I could find clarity, peace, and wisdom was in His presence. Time with Him often brought me perspective, reminding me of the truth of His Word, giving me insight into situations, and strengthening my spirit when I felt weak.

One of the ways God helped me process these things was by sitting down at my laptop and writing them out, something many would describe as journaling. I would pour out the situations before Him, asking for His direction, and write down the thoughts and answers He impressed on my heart. Through this practice I often gained clarity about what was true, what was right in a situation, and what God was saying or wanting to do. Many times it brought me peace, and also the realization that I could not bring all the solutions or answers myself. It became a matter of surrendering the situations back into His hands and trusting Him to bring the outcome.

Of course there were also many beautiful moments and privileges in this life of leadership, especially when I had the opportunity to lead meetings and see God at work in them. Our Monday morning prayer times stand out to me, when we would gather as a community and often experience the Holy Spirit moving among us. At times all I had to do was facilitate or share what God had placed on my heart, and I could visibly see Him working and changing us as we worshiped and prayed together. These times deeply encouraged me and strengthened my faith.

Because I was often present on the base, and since the base leader was regularly away speaking internationally, I frequently represented the community. At times the base leader himself did so when he was present, but often when he was away I was drawn into town events. This included speaking at local prayer gatherings alongside pastors and leaders, or attending pastors' meetings and representing our mission in different settings. These responsibilities were a privilege, yet I never took them lightly or for granted. Each time I had to depend on God, pray, and prepare my heart, relying on Him to give me the courage and words to step out and serve in those moments.

I also came to realize that leadership carried with it very real spiritual battles. At times I felt as though I was standing on the front line, facing the brunt of the opposition. We often had to discern and contend with spiritual resistance, whether through gossip, misunderstandings, or even darker influences seeking to hinder or oppose the work God was doing through the mission. These were sobering realities that reminded me that leadership was not just about practical decisions but about standing firm in Christ, interceding, and engaging in spiritual warfare to see His purposes prevail.

Leadership in God's Kingdom is far from glamorous. It is not about position, power, or finances. It is about serving, giving of yourself, and depending on God for strength and direction. Through it all, I came to realize that I could not carry this calling in my own ability. I had to press in, trust God for breakthroughs, and continually return to Him for His wisdom and perspective.

As Paul wrote, "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God" 2 Corinthians 3:5

Leadership and Harmony

One of the abilities God gave me in leadership was to foster harmony and create an atmosphere where people could feel safe and valued. On the base, this was always close to my heart. In most of my dealings, especially when I was in a leadership role, my priority was to maintain harmony and peace through my actions and the way I treated people.

This was not always easy. Problems needed to be dealt with and sometimes they were big ones. But while working through them, I also wanted to make sure that people still felt respected and that harmony in the community was preserved. For me it became a guiding value that no matter what the outcome, people should walk away feeling honored and heard. Even if I could not always bring the solution they hoped for, I wanted them to know that their voice mattered and that I had truly listened.

I once heard someone say, “People will not always remember what you say, but they will remember how you made them feel.” That has stayed with me. My goal in leadership was not only to solve problems but to leave people with the sense that they were seen and respected. At times what they asked for was simply not possible, yet even then I tried to communicate the truth in a loving and kind way.

Part of this process also meant discerning how best to address situations. Sometimes it was wiser not to confront a person immediately, but to wait for the right timing and trust God to bring the solution. Sometimes, depending on where the person was at, the wisest choice was to overlook an offense and wait for a better opportunity to disciple them, as Scripture reminds us: “A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.” Proverbs 19:11, NIV. At other times, it was more fitting for someone else on the team, perhaps a person with greater understanding of the situation or a particular authority, to speak into it. I learned that leadership is not only about making decisions myself, but also about leaning on God’s wisdom and the abilities of others in the team to help preserve harmony and clarity in the community.

This, to me, is part of Christlike leadership. Jesus never compromised truth, yet He always met people with grace. He was full of truth and full of grace at the same time (John 1:14). In my own way, I sought to reflect that by dealing with the real issues, but always honoring the person in front of me.

Misconceptions About Leadership in Ministry

In my opinion, there is sometimes a misunderstanding that when you lead or work in a Christian organization, everything should just come together smoothly and without stress. After all, we are all Christians, so shouldn't it just work well? I once spoke to an elder, a senior person that I looked up to, and as we were discussing I shared that I was experiencing some stress. He looked at me with surprise and said, "Do you guys experience stress? " That conversation stayed with me, because it showed me how easily people assume there is no stress in Christian ministry. Yet I quickly learned that this is a misconception many people hold, and it is far from the reality.

The truth is, we are working with people. And people, no matter how sincere, are still in process. We all carry different backgrounds, cultures, ages, and life experiences. On top of that, we are all sinners who are still being sanctified. So when you bring people together from across the world, especially in a multicultural ministry environment, you inevitably face conflicts, misunderstandings, and clashing perspectives. The bigger the organization grows, the more diverse it becomes, and the more effort it takes to hold it all together in unity.

It's not simply about coordinating work. Ministry leadership often requires walking alongside people in their inward journey, their character formation, their emotions, and their spiritual growth. That makes it both beautiful and challenging, because while you long to see truth and Christlikeness formed in them, you also carry the responsibility of keeping the organization healthy and functional.

When running an organization that grows and becomes demanding in many areas, it is not only about working with people but also about the pressures that come with it. There are the realities of paying the bills, ensuring everyone is accommodated, and managing in such a way that people feel loved and not used. You want to lead in a way that when people eventually leave, they can wholeheartedly recommend others to

come and be discipled and trained. This balance between stewardship and care is something I have had to trust God for continually.

In some ways, it is like leading any international organization, but in others it is far more demanding. The stakes are higher because the call is not only to manage tasks but to disciple lives. I came to see this reality very clearly during my time as a leader: the call of leadership in God's kingdom is not about avoiding difficulties but about walking with people through them, pointing them to Christ, and trusting Him to do the work of transformation. This does not always happen, but often it does, and then you get to witness someone grow in the Lord and in their calling. The principle that stands out for me here, and that so often plays a deciding role, is how teachable a person is. And this goes both ways, because I also have to keep checking myself to see how teachable I am.

As Paul reminded the Galatians, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" Galatians 6:2

That is the heart of Christian leadership. It is not a stress free environment, but a Christ centered one where even in the midst of challenges, God is forming His people into His likeness.

Serving Together: Mariska and Our Family in Missions

Getting back to our story, while I was busy with my own responsibilities, Mariska was faithfully walking out the calling God had placed on her life. From the very beginning, our stories were intertwined in missions. We were both already in ministry when we met, and even in those early days I could see the depth of her heart for prayer and for people.

Intercession quickly became a defining part of her ministry. At the Worcester base, she led the intercession department with great faithfulness. It was not just organizing prayer meetings, but truly pressing in to hear from God and then carrying those burdens with passion. When she had a vision, she would pursue it with all her heart, making sure every detail reflected God's direction. Her leadership in intercession had a very big influence on the atmosphere of the base for many years.

As our own children were still young, the Lord also stirred in Mariska a deep passion for children's ministry. She started what became known as the Army Rangers, a weekly gathering for the children of YWAM staff and students from all over the world. It became an international ministry in its own right. I remember how carefully she prepared each week, thinking through the lessons, activities, and ways to minister to the children. Her joy was to see these young ones equipped and trained to know and follow Jesus from an early age.

Her heart also beat strongly for the nations beyond our borders. She had a particular vision for frontier missions and often organized events in our local church to promote and support missions, often inviting and integrating the nations from our YWAM Worcester base into those events. Her growing passion for missions opened doors for her to take up the role of a mission mobilizer, inspiring others to step into God's global purposes.

Within the church, she also led the missions department, continuing to express her heart for the nations through leadership and coordination of mission activities.

Over the years, she also stepped more and more into her prophetic gift, encouraging and imparting God's word wherever she had the opportunity.

Looking back, I can see how those years were deeply formative for Mariska. She was faithfully serving and living out what God had placed on her heart, and through that He was also teaching her valuable lessons in the midst of it all. Each step of her obedience became a building block for the future, laying a foundation not only for ministry but also for our family life together in Him. Seeds that were sown then would grow and not only impact our own children but also many other children within and beyond our YWAM community.

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10

From YWAM Base to University of the Nations

In 2003, I received an unexpected invitation from our base leader to accompany him to Singapore for the University of the Nations conference. I had attended University of the Nations conferences before, as YWAM South Africa hosted one at Goudini Spa in 2001, where our base had been an anchor base because of our initial connection and close proximity to the Goudini Spa holiday resort. Still, in Singapore we met with thousands of other YWAMers from around the world, representing many nations, all with a vision to reach the nations with the love of Jesus, and I experienced the privilege of visiting Singapore and being part of such a global gathering.

While attending the conference, we were given the incredible privilege of joining the very first Base Leaders' Gathering for the forty largest YWAM bases in the world. This was no ordinary meeting. Lauren Cunningham, the founder of Youth With A Mission, had been stirred with the idea to regularly bring these leaders together. He recognized that these bases carried great influence, as they were training thousands of students who would go on to serve across the nations. His desire was to invest directly into those leaders so that the fruit of their leadership would multiply even further.

We had not planned to be there, but in God's way of weaving things together, Lauren personally invited our leader to stay on after the main conference. Because of that, I too had the honour of remaining for a few extra days and stepping into that historic gathering, what is now called the President's Gathering. That first meeting was the seed of something that continues even now, as leaders still meet regularly for encouragement, sharpening, and investment.

For me, being present at that first gathering was more than a privilege; it felt like a signpost of where God was taking us as a base. Somewhere along the way, we shifted from simply being a YWAM base to functioning as a University of the Nations campus, with training as a central focus. That training then overflowed into ministries that touched lives far beyond

our immediate context. Attending the gathering confirmed in my heart that God was leading us deeper into this calling of training and equipping, not just for our region but for the nations.

It was a great experience to sit in the room, to hear directly from Lauren as he poured into leaders, and to meet others from across the world who were carrying the same heart for God's mission. I left Singapore deeply blessed and honoured, grateful for the reminder that when God opens a door, it often points toward the bigger story He is writing. And although I did not attend many of these meetings again afterwards, it was in a sense also for me just a confirmation of where God had placed me and my role in the bigger picture of what He was doing on our campus and through the YWAM Worcester ministry.

"See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut."
Revelation 3:8

From Rough Beginnings to Kingdom Tools - Developing the Property

Slowly but surely, we began to see God's faithful provision unfold in the development of our property. What had started so small and rough began to take shape as the Lord sent us people with the skills and ability to organize and help establish what was needed in that pioneering phase. I particularly remember a retired couple who joined us, each bringing their unique skills. The husband, who had once served as a mayor of a town, had strong organizational and business skills and helped with all the practical projects such as the new buildings and the swimming pool. His wife, a teacher, played a vital role as she established and planted the English Language School.

One of the first big steps was the building of a double-story structure. The upper floor became dormitories, housing young people from around the world who came to be trained. The bottom floor became home to our English Language School, one of the first pioneering schools we started on the base. That school has endured over the years and has become a key part in preparing and equipping a great number of young people for the mission field through English, enabling them to step into it with confidence. Looking back, I can only marvel at how God multiplied that seed into a consistent stream of fruit for His Kingdom.

In time, we were able to build a swimming pool for the hot summer months, something that students continue to value and enjoy. Later, we added a soccer field. One of our Zulu staff members took the project to heart: organizing, planning, and making sure the field was properly leveled. That soccer field quickly became more than just a place to play. It was used daily by students from across the nations, especially those who loved soccer. It also became a training ground where missionaries with a heart for sports began discipling and equipping young people. Even people from the local community came to play soccer, and later our school ministry would make full use of it. Beyond the practical work, this project became a stepping stone for him personally, shaping his leadership and organizational skills. It was part of the journey that led him to become a

national leader and speaker in the mission, a YWAM base leader, and much later also a pastor of a church.

What started as simple additions, the swimming pool and the soccer field, turned into vital instruments in God's hands. They not only served our students but also opened doors for outreach, training, and ministry into the community. Once again, I was reminded that God's provision never comes in vain. Everything He gives, He gives with purpose, for the building of His Kingdom and the blessing of His people.

"Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain." Psalm 127:1

Adapting Through the Stages

As I look back over the years, one of the things I noticed is how the different seasons of development carried their own atmosphere. In the pioneering days, the sense of family was very strong. We were small, close, and everyone did whatever was needed. We worked together, prayed together, and lived life shoulder to shoulder. There was such a deep sense of togetherness in those times, not only through the work but also through the relationships we shared.

As the years passed and the ministry grew, things naturally shifted. Departments and responsibilities developed, and while the heart of family was still there, it did not always feel as close or as intense as in those first years. Instead, that sense of family often became more noticeable in smaller groups or within specific departments.

I came to realize that this is simply part of the growth of any community or organization. Just as in a natural family, seasons change as children grow and dynamics shift, so it is in a spiritual family. But with that realization also comes the need for adaptability. It is important to discern the stage of growth you are in and to adjust both your perspective and your expectations accordingly. Holding too tightly to the way things once were can cause frustration, while recognizing God's hand in each stage brings peace.

For me, this meant learning to embrace change, to celebrate the closeness of the pioneering years, yet also to rejoice in the maturity and structure that came with growth. Each season had its blessings, and each one required me to adapt, both in how I served and in how I related to others.

I saw this reality play out at times when people who had previously been part of our staff, or who had been with us in the earlier years on the farm, felt led to return and join us again. Often they came with a clear picture in their hearts of how things had worked in the past and how the community had felt during that earlier season. Yet many years later, sometimes ten or fifteen years on, the context had changed significantly.

The structure was different, the size had grown, and the way things functioned no longer looked the same.

For some, this difference was difficult. They arrived with the hope of stepping back into what they remembered, only to discover that the season had moved on. At times, the gap between expectation and reality felt too wide. In those moments, a few chose to step away again, not out of disappointment or conflict, but simply because the current season was no longer what they were looking for. This reinforced for me how important it is to recognize seasons for what they are, and to adapt our expectations with grace as God leads communities through growth and change.

What matters most is to hold on to the essence of what God has called us to be, a people walking together in love, serving His purposes side by side, regardless of the season.

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! "
Psalm 133:1

Connected to the Family of God Expressed in the Local Church

During those early years in Hillbrow and then at Shalom, our lives were full of ministry. We were always going to church, yet for a season it was hard to really commit ourselves fully to one local congregation where we could serve wholeheartedly. That changed in 1994, after completing our DTS and settling in Worcester. We began attending a local church, which at that time was in its pioneering phase and being planted as a new church in town. It was a season of forming and transition, both for the church and for us.

In the middle of that season of change, Mariska and I made a decision: we would throw ourselves fully into serving there. And so we did. Mariska had the gifting to teach, and naturally stepped into the children's ministry. Together we gave much of our energy to the children's church, especially in those years when our own kids were still young. I served with worship mainly in the children's church, though there were also times I helped out in the main church services. Over time, our service grew wider. Mariska became the missions coordinator, and both of us gave many years to leading cell groups. Whether it was out on the farms with the farmer community, or later in town, we always stayed connected to small groups. Even today, we remain part of a cell group.

As the years went by, the church became more than just a place where we served. It became a true home for us. We are deeply grateful that our relationship with the church was never one of control, but rather one of partnership that reflected genuine care, mutual trust, and unity in purpose. They never tried to control us in any way, but came alongside us, standing with us in our calling and journeying with us in what God has called us to do. Their partnership has been such a blessing, helping us to continue in full-time ministry while knowing we are not alone. Because of our own full-time calling, we knew our main time and energy was invested in Youth With A Mission, Worcester, where God had first placed us. Yet we also had the opportunity and made the decision to be part of our local church and community, staying connected in that way.

Looking back, I can see how important it was not only to serve within Youth With A Mission, but also to be part of the wider body of Christ in our town. Having relationships beyond our immediate mission community gave us a broader sense of fellowship and belonging. The church became an anchor, a place of encouragement and accountability, and a reminder that we are all part of something greater. God's family in Worcester and beyond.

"Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." Psalm 92:13

Guardrails for the Long Journey

As I look back on 35 years of full-time ministry, one of the key lessons that stands out to me is the importance of setting boundaries and cultivating healthy rhythms for the long haul. Ministry has its demands, and especially during my years as vice-director, there were countless needs pressing in on me, drawing from me, and demanding my time and attention. If I had not learned to set clear boundaries, I don't think I would have lasted this long in missions.

I came to understand that I needed to guard my time with my family. I made the decision that certain hours of the day would be open and available for the work, but evenings were family time. That was a line I sought to hold as best I could. Protecting that time was not only important for my wife and children but also for me, so that I could stay grounded and not lose sight of the calling God had given me to my own household.

I also realized that in order to remain effective in ministry, I needed to nurture other interests that helped me relax, refresh, and regain perspective. Photography became one of those outlets, as did technology and simply going for walks. For a season I also played tennis and even joined the local club. I found life in music too, whether playing the piano or guitar, or later teaching myself to play the harmonica. These hobbies were not just pastimes; they became lifelines that helped me to de-stress and switch off when ministry responsibilities felt overwhelming.

Over the years I've watched many people join the mission and begin at full speed, taking on more and more responsibilities. Their motivation often came from a good heart and a genuine desire to help and serve, yet they overloaded themselves. Within months, or sometimes a year, they reached burnout and then had to spend many months, if not years, recovering before they could fully serve again. It does not have to be this way. I could name countless examples, but what I've learned is that setting healthy boundaries and rhythms right from the start makes all the difference.

Part of what helped me personally was having a clear understanding of my calling and a settled belief in my heart that I was responding to God

out of obedience. This freed me from striving or feeling the need to constantly validate my role or prove my worth. I came to see that it was not my responsibility to carry everything or to hold everything together. It was God's grace that enabled me to do what He had called me to do. From that place, applying boundaries became possible and even necessary. These boundaries were not signs of weakness, but guidelines for a healthy life and a sustainable way of serving.

There were certainly times when I came close to exhaustion, when my body felt the strain, but for the most part these rhythms protected me from burnout. I see now how vital these practices were in enabling me to continue serving and living out the calling God had placed on my heart.

The journey of long-term ministry is not a sprint but a marathon, and I am grateful that the Lord taught me how to set guardrails along the way. They did not weaken my commitment; instead, they sustained it. I believe this balance is part of what has allowed me to keep going, to keep serving, and to still find joy in the calling God has placed on my life.

Yet even with healthy rhythms in place, I found there was another area I had to guard carefully: my heart. One of the greatest threats to longevity in missions is not just physical exhaustion, but the subtle danger of taking offence.

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize." 1 Corinthians 9:24

Guarding My Heart Against Offence

One of the most important principles that I had to learn and apply in order to continue in full-time missions was the principle of not taking offence. I later came to understand that the Greek word for offence, *skandalon*, refers to the trigger of a trap, the very thing that causes it to snap shut. In the same way, offence can easily become a trap that catches the heart if it is not dealt with. Over time, I discovered that this came in two forms: first-hand offence and second-hand offence.

First-hand offence is when someone says or does something that hurts or upsets you directly. Second-hand offence is when you see someone else being treated unfairly and you begin to carry that offence on their behalf. Both can be equally destructive.

I have watched, with much sadness, how many people over the years have left the mission field because they took offence and could not forgive or release the ones who wronged them. Sometimes it was because of how they themselves were treated. Other times it was because of how they felt others had been treated. In both cases, offence became a wedge that separated them from the community and from the calling God had placed on their lives.

The problem with offence is that once it takes root in your heart, it begins to grow. You start to see other things in a negative light. Things that never used to bother you suddenly become issues. Those issues seem to get bigger and bigger. One thing seems to confirm another, until it builds to the point where you feel overwhelmed. Whether it is directed at a person, an organization, or even a whole group of people, offence feeds on itself. In the end, many feel they cannot deal with it anymore, and they leave the situation altogether.

I vividly remember one of our long-term staff members who started taking offence on behalf of a certain people group. It was not even his own people group, but another. Because of this, he began to blame another group from a different nation and even judged their intentions of the heart. Perhaps it was because of his own hurt that he had not dealt with, but instead of resolving it before God, he carried offence on behalf of others as

well. This eventually caused a great deal of disunity and hurt in the lives of many people. Even after we dealt with it as a group, he could still not make peace, and in the end he left. Although God had done wonderful things through his life in the past, his involvement with us as an organization came to an abrupt end.

It reminds me of a burning coal that gets pulled away from the fire. At first it still glows, but over time the glow fades, and without the heat of the fire around it, it grows cold and eventually dies out. Offence does the same thing. It isolates, and it quenches the fire of God's calling.

I cannot count the times in my own life where I had to choose not to take offence, to forgive, and to walk in humility. Scripture exhorts us to "in humility value others above yourselves" (Philippians 2:3 NIV). That is not always easy. I have had to remind myself that I do this not because I am capable or strong in myself, but only because of God's grace. His grace keeps me, and His calling is the higher priority. Not my own happiness, not my desire to feel vindicated, but my commitment to fulfil the calling He has placed on my life.

Dealing with offence has meant going to God in prayer, asking Him to show me the truth in each situation, choosing forgiveness, and standing on His Word. It has also meant allowing God to be my defender instead of trying to defend myself. There were times when I needed to speak to others, to repent where I was wrong, or to make things right. Each of these steps has been part of staying faithful to my calling.

I have also learned that releasing and forgiving somebody for an offence is not about waiting until everything feels good. Very often the feelings do not immediately line up. But forgiveness is a choice. It is a choice to come in the opposite spirit, to act in the right way, the Biblical way, as God directs us to act toward people. As I continue to obey and walk in God's ways, my emotions eventually come into line with the truth. Forgiveness brings release, but sometimes it takes time for the feelings to fully adjust.

This principle is not only for missionaries, but wherever God has placed you and in whatever community He has set you, it is vital. I have learned that dealing with offence quickly and humbly is not optional. It is vital for long-term fruitfulness in missions. Without it, bitterness creeps in and clouds your heart. With it, however, the fire of God's calling continues to burn bright, fueled by His grace and love. And when hearts stay free

from offence, something truly beautiful begins to happen. People from different nations, languages, and cultures can walk, live, and work together in harmony. I have seen this with my own eyes, and it remains one of the greatest testimonies of God's love in our community.

A Beautiful Picture of Unity in Diversity

One thing that I have come to take for granted, though I now realize it is not something everyone experiences, is living with so many different nationalities in one community. Over the years, I have shared life with between thirty and fifty nationalities, people from across the world, as well as from many different South African cultures. We have lived together, worked together, and shared meals and laughter as one family in Christ, through seasons of joy and also through difficult times, at times even with tears.

Of course, there have been times of misunderstanding or cultural difference. Yet, time and again, by talking, praying, and walking through things together, we have found unity and peace. It has become a living testimony of what the power of Christ's love can do.

Not only have we had wonderful friendships ourselves, and still do, with people from many nations and cultures, both within and beyond South Africa, but I have also seen countless friendships formed between others who have passed through our base. Students and staff from all over the world have built relationships that have lasted for years, and in many cases, a lifetime. Watching people from such different backgrounds come together, share life, and remain connected long after they have left has been deeply rewarding.

In a country like South Africa, with its history of division and conflict, this reality feels especially precious. We have not just tolerated one another but have truly come to love and value one another. We have celebrated the richness of our differences and learned to respect one another's ways, seeing the beauty of God's design in each culture. One of the key things that has helped us find and maintain this unity has been our common ground in the Bible, the Word of God. Alongside this, we have shared a clear and simple purpose: to know God and to make Him known. This shared mandate has drawn us together and helped us look beyond our differences. It has been the firm foundation that keeps us centered, reminding us that our identity and unity are not found in culture or background, but in Christ alone.

When I think back on my life, growing up in a world where I knew little beyond my own culture and maybe a bit of English influence, this has been a remarkable journey. To live in such diversity and see harmony birthed through Christ's love has shown me what is possible when He is at the center.

It is a glimpse of heaven, many tribes, tongues, and nations worshiping the same Lord, standing side by side as one.

“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” Revelation 7:9

A New Season of Leadership

In 2010, it was once again time for a leadership transition. For the first time in Worcester's history, our base was led by someone from outside Africa, a leader from Switzerland. Up to that point, all our leaders had been South African, so this was a completely new experience for me.

Working with someone from Europe brought fresh perspectives and new ways of thinking. It was also the first time I worked alongside someone who viewed South Africa not from within its cultural framework but through the eyes of someone coming from the outside. This presented both challenges and opportunities, new leadership styles to adapt to, different expectations, and another layer of cross-cultural learning.

New perspective also meant new vision, which was added to and built upon the existing vision of the base. There was a focus on skills training and business learning, initiatives that aimed to equip and empower our local South Africans with practical tools for employment and financial sustainability.

This would eventually lead to the purchase, restoration, and establishment of a Skills Center in the heart of Worcester, ideally located to serve people from all the different communities and suburbs. The Skills Center has become a place of empowerment and transformation for the surrounding community.

Through practical and accredited training in areas such as computer skills, office administration, welding (including both arc and MIG welding), carpentry, hairdressing, sewing, and social auxiliary work, people have been equipped not only for better employment but also to start their own businesses. Many of the students are already working individuals who attend these courses to improve their opportunities. Our expectation is that the range of skills on offer will continue to grow, creating even more opportunities for training and equipping. In the long term, we also carry a vision to see this model multiplied into other locations across Africa.

Beyond equipping hands and minds, the heart of the Skills Center remains to share the gospel with everyone who enters. Each training

session provides an opportunity to bring hope and introduce people to the love of Jesus. Over the years, many have been trained and touched by the message of Christ, carrying that light back into their homes and communities.

It was exciting to see how this emphasis on training complemented what was already in place, opening doors for people to step into new opportunities, grow in confidence, and make a tangible impact in their communities.

It was also during this season that we saw the birth of a new school, Lifestyle Christian Academy, established by a Korean couple who were part of our staff. I remember sitting with the husband many times in my office, hearing his heart and vision for the school, and helping him draft letters and communication to our local municipality concerning property matters and permissions.

He was still learning English at the time, so in that way, my assistance was also particularly helpful in ensuring that the needed communication was clear and effective. Even though my natural giftings were not particularly visionary, we had leaders who were, men and women gifted with a strong pioneering vision and creative ideas for growth.

I found joy in serving those visions through my administrative strengths, supporting and helping to bring structure to what God was revealing through them. While they brought the vision, I could contribute with my administrative skills, serving behind the scenes to help make that vision a reality.

My heart has always been to see people and ministries develop and grow into their full potential, so it was natural for me to encourage and motivate others, like this couple, to pursue the calling God had given them.

The primary school was built right here on our YWAM Worcester base, and later, the high school was established about five kilometers away on another property. Together, these schools became a beautiful expression of serving the community, providing quality education grounded in Christian values, and continue to do so to this day.

It was also during this period that the Deaf World Discipleship Training School was pioneered at YWAM Worcester, in a town that is recognized as one of the main centers for the Deaf community in South Africa. This made it a fitting and strategic location for such a ministry, reaching and equipping people within the Deaf community.

Around this same period, we also began to see new YWAM bases pioneered from our own, both within South Africa and in other parts of Africa and the world. Some of these remained part of YWAM, while others later continued their work under the covering of different organizations.

This wave of growth and expansion, I believe, was part of our legacy and was carried forward under the new leadership that had now been established. That same spirit of vision and pioneering continued to make room for further growth and expansion, both on our base and beyond.

Looking back, I can see that God was using this season to bring our base into greater alignment, not only in our property and structural regulations but also in how we functioned as a team. It was a time of realigning and strengthening the foundation for what He wanted to do next.

Once again, I sensed God's quiet assurance: "Stay where I have placed you." I was asked to continue in my role as vice director, and I had complete peace about it. Even though it required adapting yet again, I knew this was part of my calling, to bring stability and continuity in seasons of change.

And through it all, I learned. I grew. I discovered new perspectives I might never have seen otherwise. God was shaping me, teaching me to see His bigger picture, that leadership is not just about position or familiarity, but about faithfulness and the willingness to keep learning through every new season He brings.

When God Became My Defender

Two principles that have become deeply foundational in my life are learning not to defend myself and choosing to stand on the truth. These lessons have carried me through some of the most challenging seasons of my life. I have come to know that when I choose not to defend myself, God steps in and becomes my Defender. And when I choose to stand on the truth, even when surrounded by misunderstanding or accusation, that truth has a way of setting me free, strengthening, and empowering me.

“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.” 1 Peter 2:23

This became very real to me during a time of deep personal loss. My brother had just passed away, only a few months after my mother’s passing. It is important for me to honour him here, because for many years he was one of our faithful supporters in missions, standing with us in what God had called us to do. I was responsible for handling both funerals, which was emotionally very heavy. In the months leading up to my brother’s death, he had been facing a difficult season due to substance abuse that had been ongoing for nearly two years, leaving him emotionally unsettled and confused. Unfortunately, in that season, some of the things he said caused misunderstandings among certain family members. Not everyone was aware of what he had been facing, and some of the things he communicated to them painted a picture that was not true.

As a result, I found myself being wrongly accused and misunderstood. There were moments when I wanted to defend myself and set the record straight, but each time I felt the Lord reminding me to leave it in His hands. I remember going before Him again and again, asking for His wisdom and grace to stay calm and walk in love. I sensed that my part was simply to stand on the truth and to let my actions and my peace speak louder than my words.

That season stretched me deeply, but it also drew me closer to God. I learned to rely on Him as my Defender and to keep my heart free from bitterness. Then, on the day of my brother’s funeral, something remarkable

and completely unexpected happened. As his friends unexpectedly stood up and shared about the struggles he had gone through, the truth came to light naturally. It was as if God Himself brought everything into the open at just the right time.

Not long after, one of my family members who had misunderstood me and had come across the strongest in her opinions reached out with great humility. She apologized, acknowledging that she had been wrong in how she viewed things. I could only thank God, because I knew it was not something I could have achieved on my own.

That moment was a powerful reminder that when we choose to walk in truth and humility, God truly becomes our Defender. His timing is perfect, and His way of bringing justice is always marked by grace. I learned that my peace and my integrity were worth far more than any argument I could win.

“The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Exodus 14:14

Through that experience, I learned in a very real way that God truly is our Defender and that standing on His truth in times of confusion, accusation, or misunderstanding brings strength, clarity, and peace. His truth not only sets us free but also protects and upholds us when we trust Him completely.

Understanding God as my Defender has gone hand in hand with learning to live in the freedom He gives. The same trust that releases my need to defend myself also releases me from the weight of guilt and condemnation. Both flow from the same source, the finished work of Christ.

Living in the Freedom Christ Paid For

An ongoing journey and process throughout my Christian life has been learning to live in the freedom that Christ has made possible for us. The Bible says, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1). Over the years, I’ve come to understand that this freedom means living free from guilt, condemnation, accusation, and judgment.

These have often been the very things that tried to hold me back and to paralyze me in my service for the Lord. The feelings of guilt, the thoughts of not being good enough, and the weight of internal accusations. Yet the reality is that this is exactly why Jesus died for us: so that we can live free from the grip of guilt and condemnation.

The Bible calls the devil “the accuser of the brethren” (Revelation 12:10), and I’ve learned that one of his greatest strategies is to remind us of our shortcomings and failures to keep us from walking boldly in God’s purposes.

Over time, I’ve also come to see that not all guilt is the same. Some of it is false guilt, accusation that comes either from others, from the enemy, or even from our own self-condemning thoughts. These are burdens that we were never meant to carry.

But when there truly are things we need to deal with, God in His mercy gives us a way to bring it into the light. We can come before Him, ask for forgiveness, and make things right with people around us. And then, we can receive the beautiful freedom that follows repentance, the kind that lifts the weight off your shoulders and restores peace to your heart.

This plays out in my everyday life in very practical ways. There have been times when someone would ask me to do something, and deep down in my spirit, I knew it was not what God wanted me to do at that moment. It might have been stepping out of my lane or saying yes to something that was not part of His plan for me then.

So I would say, “No, I don’t think I can do that,” and almost immediately, I’d have to deal with the wave of guilt and the fear of rejection that followed. I would feel bad for saying no and worry about disappointing someone. But through those moments, God has been

teaching me that obedience to Him must come first and that I do not have to carry the guilt or condemnation that tries to attach itself afterward.

In those times, I've learned to stand firm in peace, knowing that I made the right decision by following His leading. It is in those times that I have also learned to keep my eyes on Jesus, to place my trust in God, and to take them off the people or current circumstances that might feel and look overwhelming.

God's truth silences those feelings of accusation and rejection and replaces them with the assurance of His freedom and love. Confidence comes from trusting God and believing His Word. As I have learned to keep my eyes on Him, that confidence has deepened, reminding me that true peace and assurance flow from placing my trust fully in His promises.

Walking in this freedom has become a lifelong journey for me. I've realized that Jesus not only saved us from sin but also called us into abundant living. As He said in John 10:10, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." And I believe that as long as guilt and condemnation continue to linger, they will always hold us back from stepping fully into the life and calling that God has prepared for us.

True freedom in Christ is not just about being forgiven; it is about living forgiven, knowing that the debt has been paid, the accusations silenced, and the way opened for us to walk boldly in His grace.

Looking back over my life, I can see how this has been one of the areas that has truly brought me great freedom and release. Thinking back to my teenage years and young adulthood, I can remember how overwhelming guilt and self-condemnation felt at times.

Yet now, experiencing the freedom that is in Jesus, I can see how far He has brought me. I am still growing and learning, but I am much further along than when I first started on this journey of living in His freedom.

As I think about the many ways God has worked in my life, I am reminded again of His steady faithfulness through every season. That same faithfulness has carried us as a family, shaping our journey and allowing our children to grow up surrounded by the goodness of God in ways we could never have planned.

Growing Up Among the Nations

Raising our children in a multicultural environment has been one of the great privileges of our lives. What we often took for granted at the time, we later came to recognise as something truly extraordinary. Few children get to grow up surrounded by so many nations, languages and cultures right from their earliest years. Our children's circle of friends was like a glimpse of heaven's diversity, from Nigeria, Korea, America, Brazil and others, while also interacting with different cultural backgrounds within South Africa.

For them, this blend of nations was normal life. Learning from different people and ways of living became an everyday activity. I remember how naturally they embraced it, having American friends over, discovering new customs or learning to enjoy coffee the Brazilian way. They would sit around tables where meals reflected a variety of cultures and traditions, each one offering something new to experience. What might seem extraordinary to others was simply the rhythm of their growing years.

One particular moment stands out as a beautiful reflection of what it meant for our children to grow up among the nations, and of God's quiet faithfulness woven into their everyday lives. It happened on Rozelle's seventeenth birthday.

By that stage our children had already grown up surrounded by different languages, foods, accents and ways of doing life. For them it was normal. For us as parents, it was a gift we never took lightly. We had trusted God with their upbringing in a mission community, and again and again He showed us that He is faithful.

For her seventeenth birthday we decided on an Indian themed celebration. One of our Indian missionaries was part of our community at the time. She entered into the joy of it wholeheartedly. Then she did something that deeply touched us.

She gave Rozelle a brand new sari. It was not something she had bought casually. It had been sent from India by her own mother, specially

packed for a significant occasion. It was new and carefully prepared for something important. Yet she chose to place it into our daughter's hands.

We later realised that it was not an older sari that had already been worn. It was one made ready for a special event. In God's kindness, Rozelle would be the first to wear it on the evening of her own celebration. In that moment we saw not only the generosity of a missionary, but the faithful hand of God.

Here was Mariska, carrying a mother's desire to give her daughter the very best she could on her seventeenth birthday. And here was our daughter, stepping further into young womanhood, with her own quiet hopes for that day. At the same time, a mother in India had sent a special sari to her daughter, not knowing how God would use it. Somehow, in a way only God can arrange, He honoured these hearts. He saw Mariska's longing to bless her child. He saw Rozelle's joy and her desire for the celebration to be meaningful. Through the obedience and generosity of another family, He brought those desires together in one beautiful gift.

There was something deeply significant in that moment. It was more than clothing. It was honour. It was love. It was the nations blessing our child.

We remember watching Rozelle wear that sari. She did not only look beautiful. She looked embraced. Surrounded by friends from different cultures and backgrounds, she stood there as a young woman who had grown up in the middle of God's family from many nations.

As parents, we felt deeply grateful. Our children did not grow up with abundance in material things. They grew up with people. They grew up with shared meals, prayer times, laughter and stories from across the globe. They witnessed generosity from those who often had very little. Through it all, we saw the Father heart of God caring for them.

That sari became a symbol to us. It represents the richness of community life. It reminds us that when we give our lives to God's purposes, He weaves our children into something far bigger than we could arrange ourselves. He sees the details. He sees the desires of hearts. And He provides in ways that carry both tenderness and meaning.

In time, we began to see how moments like that shaped them. What we did not know then was how the Holy Spirit was already at work in ways we could not see. During her university years Rozelle would travel to India on two different occasions, serving in two different locations. We did not

connect it to the sari each time, yet we recognised the gentle leading of God. The same God who had provided through the nations for her seventeenth birthday was now guiding her steps into India.

Looking back, we see how moments like that shaped all of us. They reminded us that God is attentive to the quiet prayers of a mother and the unspoken desires of a daughter. He is able to take what one family prepares in love and use it to answer the longing in another home. Nothing is wasted in His hands.

Of course, just like us as adults, they also experienced the other side of living among the nations, the parting and goodbyes that come with a life of missions. Many times, when families returned to their home countries, their children would go too, and our own kids would feel the loss of close friends they had grown up with. Sometimes they would stay in touch through email or other ways, but often life simply moved forward in different directions. This rhythm of welcoming and releasing, of meeting and parting, became part of their story, just as it has been part of ours as missionaries. It taught them early on that love is not limited by distance and that friendships rooted in Christ can stretch across borders and time.

We never pushed them into activities. Instead, we gave them the freedom to participate as they desired. They joined youth camps and international gatherings from an early age, often taking part in the events Mariska led, like the army rangers programme. Yet their lives were not confined to YWAM alone. They also lived what you might call a normal South African school life. We enrolled them in one of the local public schools, where they joined the choir, took ballet lessons and made friends outside of missions.

Looking back, I see how God used both worlds to shape them, the local and the global, the ordinary and the missional. They learned flexibility, empathy and appreciation for diversity, lessons that can only come from living closely with people from every walk of life. I am deeply grateful that they had the privilege of growing up among the nations. These memories and experiences have formed part of who they are and will remain with them for the rest of their lives.

As I watched our children being shaped by these experiences, I realised God was shaping me as well. Growing as a family also meant that I had to grow in my faith as time went along. In the beginning, when I was single, I only had to trust God for myself and for His provision for my needs. Then

I got married, and we began trusting God together as a couple. When our children came, our faith had to broaden. We now needed to trust God for His provision for our entire family. I am so grateful to God for His faithfulness through every season and phase of life. I have seen His provision increase as our family grew, and within that, I have watched our children learn to trust God for themselves. As they became teenagers, they too began stepping out in faith for certain things they hoped to do or have.

That seventeenth birthday became for us a picture of how God cares for the details. When we entrust our children to Him, He does not overlook them. He provides. Sometimes He provides through sacrifice. Sometimes through obedience. And often through the nations. What we witnessed that evening was simple, yet profound. Our Father knows how to give good gifts, and He delights in doing it through His global family.

Through all these seasons, one thing remained constant: our dependence on God. Over time, prayer began to teach me that reliance on Him was not a last resort but the starting place for everything. Whether it was trusting Him for provision, wisdom or grace, prayer became the thread that ran through every part of our family and ministry life. It was not simply something we did. It was how we lived, and how we saw God's faithfulness unfold again and again.

The Essential Place of Prayer

Prayer has always been an absolute necessity in my life and ministry. I honestly cannot imagine doing what I've done over the years without it. Prayer has not only been a discipline but a lifeline, the quiet place where I receive direction, strength, and clarity from God.

Even before my years in ministry, prayer was already a vital part of my life. I remember back in school, and later during my time in the army and at university, whenever a need or difficult situation arose, my first response was to bring it before God and ask Him for help. From early on, I learned that prayer was not just something you do in church; it was the way to live life with God. Looking back, I can see how He was teaching me dependence, one situation at a time.

As responsibilities grew, both in leadership and in family life, prayer became even more essential. Whether it was trusting God for finances, for health, or for wisdom in making decisions, prayer marked the difference between trying to sort things out in my own strength and truly relying on Him.

Oftentimes in prayer, I would wait on God for a word, listening for His voice, and He would drop a specific verse or a word of encouragement into my heart. Those moments were precious because they became my anchor. When going into situations that were uncertain or challenging, I would hold on to that rhema word, that living word God had spoken, and stand on it. I would choose not to look at the circumstances around me but to keep my faith rooted in what He had said. Many times, that word became the very promise I needed, the assurance of God's deliverance and breakthrough in the situation.

Before meetings, I often spent time in prayer, seeking God's wisdom and asking for His anointing on what was to come. Many times, when I expected confrontation or a difficult discussion, I prayed and placed it before God, and by the time we met, the atmosphere had completely shifted. Hearts were softened, attitudes had changed, and what could have been tense was met with peace. It wasn't coincidence. It was God working in the unseen, moving long before I ever entered the room.

Prayer has also been central in the area of spiritual warfare. There were times when I would walk around the base, praying, trusting God for breakthrough and protection. Sometimes I prayed for clarity on issues that seemed confusing or heavy, and as I waited in His presence, the Holy Spirit would drop a word of wisdom or knowledge into my heart, something that brought understanding and light to what was happening.

One of the things that God showed us as a leadership team early on during the pioneering of the new property, something our base director at that time helped us to understand and teach, was the reality of spiritual influences that can rest over an area. We became aware of a particular atmosphere marked by manipulation, domination, and control. Whenever that kind of spirit tried to manifest in our environment, we would recognize it and immediately pray against its influence. We chose to respond in the opposite spirit, choosing to forgive and speak blessing over the person or situation involved, asking God to bring His breakthrough. Time after time, we witnessed how God moved, bringing release, freedom, and peace where there had been tension or control. These moments were powerful reminders of the authority God gives through prayer and the reality that the spiritual battle is fought and won in His strength, not ours.

It was through prayer that I was sustained, encouraged, equipped, and motivated. In times of weariness, it gave me the ability to cope, to stay standing, and to receive creative and new ideas to move forward. Prayer became that place of inner strength, the place where the truth of God's Word became reality in my life. I think for me, prayer also indicated my reliance on God and not on my own strength. Whenever I felt inadequate, it would be in prayer that I found encouragement and whatever I needed to do the task before me. Again and again, I would experience that it is not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit. Relationship with God and prayer truly are foundational, the key to living and serving in His strength.

In leadership, prayer became not only my preparation but my protection. I prayed for my family, for my children, for staff and leaders, and for those God entrusted to my care. So often, the key was not to rush in and try to fix things in the natural but first to take them into the spiritual realm, to pray them through until peace came.

Prayer was never simply a tool I used for ministry; it was the very heart of it. In prayer, I met with God, listened to Him, and joined Him in His work. Those sacred moments of communion became the place where

partnership with God was formed, and that relationship has shaped every part of my journey.

Prayer also plays a crucial role in sanctification and growth in our relationship with God. It is often in those quiet moments before Him that He speaks to our hearts, aligns our thoughts with His truth, and transforms us from the inside out.

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” James 5:16 “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4 “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts. Zechariah 4:6

A Journey of Transformation

Over the years, in my journey as a Christian and in full-time ministry, I have come to see that growing in sanctification and holiness, and becoming more like Jesus, is truly a lifelong journey. When we are born again, our spirit is made new and comes alive. As Scripture says, “Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Yet while our spirit is instantly renewed, our body and soul still carry the marks of old habits, weaknesses, and patterns of sin.

God, in His mercy, begins to work on us. Sometimes He removes certain things instantly, but often He chooses to lead us through a process. It is a lifelong transformation, one that He patiently unfolds layer by layer, as we are ready to receive His work, also by renewing our mind and aligning it with His truths and Word. It reminds me of peeling an onion. At first, the outer layers are removed, the visible things that everyone can see. In my life, that began with the more obvious habits from my younger years: drinking, smoking, swearing, and other things that clearly did not honour Him.

But once those layers were peeled away, God began to deal with deeper things: my attitudes, my character, and the unseen issues of my heart. He started touching areas like pride, fear, unbelief, feeling unworthy, and never feeling good enough. There were times when I became impatient with myself, feeling guilty and wondering why I wasn’t overcoming as I thought I should. I had this misconception that once you become a Christian, you should be able to do everything right. I often asked myself, “Why am I still failing? Why do I still struggle with unbelief, guilt, or even moments of discouragement?” I had the wrong expectation that those things should have completely disappeared because I was a believing Christian. Over time, I came to realise that sanctification is not instant perfection but a continual process of growth and surrender.

Having an understanding of this truth helped me come to a place of peace within myself. I realised that I am not perfect and do not have to be perfect, and that released me from guilt and shame, knowing that I am in the process of growth and change. It helped me see that it is a process, not

a one-time event. The misconception and lie I once believed had to be replaced with the truth of continual growth and dependence on God, trusting Him to help me become more like Him, living as He intended in His Kingdom as His child and as part of His family.

The reality is that God is still at work in me. I am not where I used to be, and though I am not yet where I want to be, I can see how far He has brought me. I have grown in each of these areas and continue to grow as He patiently transforms me from the inside out.

Even now, this process continues. There are truths I grasp more deeply today, and yet there are still areas where I need to stand firm on God's Word and not give in to the lies of the enemy. It is a daily choice to align my life with who God says I am and to walk according to that truth.

Through it all, I've learned that transformation is not something I achieve by effort alone. It is the work of the Holy Spirit within me, shaping, refining, and strengthening me to live as the new creation I already am in Christ.

"And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18

The Battle Against Discouragement

One of the greatest battles I have faced has been the onslaught of discouragement. It is something that can creep in quietly, yet become so debilitating that it drains your strength and hope. Its goal is often clear: to make you stop moving forward, to silence your steps of faith, and to keep you from walking in what God has prepared for you for that day, that week, or that season.

For a long time, I lived with the misconception that I should be immune to discouragement, yet the truth is that I am not. Ministry life, in particular, brings unique challenges. There are moments of disappointment, misunderstandings, financial pressures, or times when you trust God for a breakthrough that doesn't seem to come. There are also moments when you become your own harshest critic, feeling like a failure for not meeting your own expectations or for falling short again in an area you thought was already conquered. These are the moments when discouragement strikes the hardest.

I have faced many such moments. There were times when I trusted God for healing in one of my children, but the healing did not come in the way I thought it would. At other times, I felt that I had failed in a relationship with one of our supporters and that I had not handled it wisely. I would accuse myself, replaying my words and actions over and over, and blame myself for not having done better. Then there were the times when I trusted God for financial provision, expecting it to come in a certain way and within a certain time, only to find that it didn't. All these moments left me feeling discouraged, sometimes even overwhelmed.

Through it all, I have learned that the devil is a liar. He tries to twist what I see and feel into doubt about God's goodness and faithfulness. But even when my expectations are not met in the way I hoped, it does not mean that God is not answering my prayers. Time and time again, I have seen that His outcome is always better than mine, and the way He does things is often very different from how I would have expected them to be. Looking back, I can see His wisdom, His timing, and His care woven through every delay and every detour. Included in these processes is often

also my own growth: learning His principles, learning to keep trusting, not looking at the storm, but keeping my eyes on Him.

Life can feel full of failures when we focus only on what seems to have gone wrong. I have learned, however, that the key is not to run away from God in those moments but to run to Him and pour out my heart. In His presence, He lifts my head and reminds me of His faithfulness and His perspective.

David once cried out, “Why are you downcast, O my soul? Put your hope in God” (Psalm 42:5). He did not deny his pain; he turned it toward God. That is where the power of hope comes in. Hope in the Lord anchors us to the truth of who He is, to the finished work of Jesus, and to the promises in His Word.

When discouragement comes, I have learned to take it to God in prayer. I tell Him honestly how I feel and where I am. Sometimes He gives a specific scripture, other times a rhema word that strengthens my heart again. And sometimes I do not hear anything at all, yet it builds my faith knowing that I have shared it with God and can now leave it in His hands. These moments in His presence restore my strength and renew my perspective. And oh, what joy there is when the answer or breakthrough does come, knowing that I have not turned away but have turned toward God and persevered in faith.

I have also found that discouragement often comes when I am tired or when I have poured myself out. It is then that the enemy tries to whisper lies of failure and hopelessness. Recognizing that pattern has helped me to stand firm and not give in to those thoughts. Each time I choose to fix my eyes on Jesus, hope rises again, and the heaviness begins to lift.

Discouragement may come, but it does not have to stay. It loses its grip when we turn our hearts to God and allow Him to renew our strength.

“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31

Knowing in the midst of my discouragement that my life is part of a bigger purpose has given me the strength to endure and persevere through those times. It has reminded me that even when I cannot see the full picture, God is still at work, weaving every season into His greater plan. That assurance has carried me through many valleys and has kept my heart anchored in

faith. It is from that place of trust and obedience that I have learned to live not just day by day, but with purpose; the kind that comes from choosing obedience to God and knowing that my life belongs to Him.

A Life Shaped by Obedience

From the beginning of our journey as a family, our choices were shaped by one deep desire. We wanted to follow God with a sincere heart. The places we stayed and the things we did were never about comfort, preference, or personal ambition. They were responses to what we believed God asked of us and where God was leading us.

That is why we stayed on the base. That is why we lived in a caravan in our early married years. It was not because we dreamed of that kind of living or because we wanted a certain lifestyle. The simple truth is that we felt God leading us, and our hearts were set on obeying Him. When there were no houses available and the caravan was the only option, we took it with peace because we trusted His voice.

Our lives were shaped by a longing to walk where God guided us. We chose to keep our focus on what He placed before us rather than pursuing our own ambitions. We did not try to build our own plans. We chose to be faithful to what God placed in front of us, even when it looked small or humble. That is what gave those years meaning. Obedience brought purpose and joy in places where others may have seen very little.

Obedience also shaped our willingness to go wherever God might send us. As a family we kept our hearts open to the possibility of serving abroad. We prayed about it, we prepared for it, and we even made sure our children received good English training so they would be ready if God opened that door. We waited on Him with open hands and we held nothing back. Yet in His wisdom He kept us rooted in Worcester and guided us into the work He had prepared for us. Looking back I can see His hand in that. He knew where He wanted us and He knew the people He wanted us to walk with.

I have come to see that obedience is a daily choice. It is a quiet yes to God again and again.

Jesus said in John 14:23, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word and My Father will love him and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

That truth carried us through simple beginnings and shaped our journey in ways we could never have planned ourselves.

Those early years taught me that honouring God in the small steps becomes a foundation for the greater things He brings later. Obedience has always been the doorway through which His grace flows, whether in staying, serving, or learning to trust Him with what comes next.

As the years passed, I began to realise that obedience does not only shape how we begin. It also shapes how we continue, and how we release. The same listening heart that teaches us to stay, to serve, and to remain faithful in small and unseen ways must also learn to recognise when God is inviting us into a new season. Obedience is not static. It moves with God. And sometimes, the most faithful response is not to hold on, but to trust Him enough to let go.

Letting Go in the Right Season

There comes a moment in every journey when God begins to shift the season. Sometimes it is loud and clear. At other times it is gentle and almost quiet. After about thirty five years of serving in leadership, including my time at Shalom in the early years, I came to the point of transitioning out of direct leadership on the YWAM Worcester base and into an eldership role. I knew this was God's timing for me, and that He was gently leading me. I had peace about it. It was one of those gentle shifts for me. It did not feel dramatic or heavy. It felt right.

Because leadership was never about position, it was never about control or status. It was simply about obedience. I believed God had placed me in the roles I fulfilled over the years, and that it did not come from my own striving, manipulation, or scheming. In many ways, this took the burden of performance off me. If you place yourself into a role, whether leadership or something else, you often feel the pressure to keep yourself there. But when you know God has placed you there, and you have responded out of obedience, you can trust Him to also be the One who enables you to remain faithful in it. God asked me to serve in a specific role, and I did so with an open heart. I carried the responsibility He entrusted to me, knowing that it belonged to Him and not to me. I was not chasing something. I was responding to His voice.

In the same way, stepping out of that role was not a loss. When the time came, God confirmed it in different ways. Through prayer. Through peace. Through circumstances aligning. The timing felt right. His timing often does. What once required my full attention was now being entrusted to others, and I sensed that my assignment was changing.

This transition into eldership has felt natural. It is not a withdrawal. It is a repositioning. I am still present. Still available. Still caring deeply. But my role has shifted. I am now overseeing, supporting, and making room for younger leaders to step forward. That, in itself, is a great joy.

One of the principles that became clear to me over time is the grace to let go when the time comes. Even when others encourage you to stay. Even when you could continue. Even when you still have something to

offer in that same space. Letting go is not stepping back from obedience. Sometimes it is the very expression of it.

Holding on too tightly can quietly become an obstacle. What once was faithful service can turn into resistance if we are not careful. God is always doing something new. If we refuse to release what He is no longer asking us to carry, we may stand in the way of what He wants to do through the next generation.

Letting go does not mean disengaging. It means trusting. I am still here to support, to encourage, and to love. But I have also learned the importance of not stepping in where I am not invited, and not offering my opinion where it is not asked for. Space is a gift we give others so they can grow into what God has placed within them.

This season has reminded me that leadership is never ownership. It is stewardship. We hold it with open hands, knowing that God gives and God releases. Our role is to listen, to obey, and to move when He says move.

If you find yourself at a similar crossroads, I want to encourage you. Ask God for clarity. Pay attention to His timing. Do not be afraid of transition. What He has ahead is not less. It is simply different. And different is often where growth begins.

“Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.”
Proverbs 16:3

May we always have hearts that are open and hands that are willing. Willing to serve. Willing to release. Willing to trust God with every season He leads us into.

Living with Purpose

Living with purpose has given my life meaning, fulfilment, and direction. It has built a deep confidence in what I do and in what I aim to do, because I know that my work is part of a greater plan, God's plan for my life. This understanding has brought inner stability and a quiet assurance to follow His calling. It has also given me the courage to step out in obedience when He speaks.

Purpose has taught me to rest in God. I no longer feel the need to plan, push, or try to figure everything out by myself. I've learned that it's not up to me to make my destiny happen. My part is obedience; God's part is direction. He opens the right doors and closes the ones that should be closed. I've also discovered that it is better to wait until God speaks than to move ahead in my own strength, doing things my own way and in my own time.

This truth has freed me to serve without striving for a name, recognition, or position. Fulfilment comes from knowing that when I obey God, I am already walking in His plan. That awareness brings peace and quiet confidence, the kind that comes from trusting that God is in control.

Looking back, I realise that I could never have planned or directed my life the way God has. The people I have met, the places I've been, and the opportunities that came my way were far beyond anything I could have imagined. None of it was the result of careful planning as a teenager or deciding what my future should look like. It all unfolded one step at a time, each step of obedience leading to the next. For that, I am deeply grateful for God's faithfulness in leading me.

A life with purpose is truly a life worth living. When I understood that life is about fulfilling the purpose for which God created me, everything else found its rightful place. The blessings, opportunities, and relationships became the "added things" Jesus spoke of when He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Fulfilment doesn't come from possessions, position, or popularity. It comes from knowing that my life aligns with God's purpose and that I am

walking in obedience to His Word. Even if what I do seems insignificant to others, it doesn't matter. What matters is that it brings glory to God. My peace comes from knowing that I am running my race faithfully, keeping my eyes on the finish line, and pressing forward with all my heart.

Even in seasons that seem ordinary, when nothing remarkable is happening, I can rest knowing that God is still at work and that where I am is part of His plan.

It is never too late to start living with purpose, a purpose shaped by God, not by human effort.

There is really no such thing as a divide between secular and sacred work. Everything we do can be holy when it is done with a heart that honours God. Whether we are preaching, teaching, running a business, or sweeping a floor, each act can carry God's presence and purpose when it is done for Him.

I have also seen over the years that some people with excellent skills in areas such as engineering, or in any profession for that matter, believe that to truly serve God they must leave their work and go into preaching because they think this is the only way to serve Him. Yet, for many of them, things do not work out as they expected, because this is not the clear calling God had for their lives. His intention was for them to use their abilities to make a difference right where they are. Serving God is not limited to ministry, but includes using the talents and skills He has placed in our hands for His glory.

The Holy Spirit does not only empower those in full-time ministry; He works through every believer who is willing to serve Him where they are. When we live with that awareness, every task becomes an opportunity to worship and serve God. In His eyes, no work is ordinary. It all matters when it is done with love and obedience. Whatever our gifts, work, or skills may be, they find true meaning when we partner with Him and seek His heart for our lives.

As the Bible reminds us, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" Colossians 3:23.

Together with my relationship with God, this sense of purpose brings joy and peace, even when storms rise. There is deep security in knowing that I am walking in obedience to His call, living not merely to survive, but to fulfil the very reason He placed me on this earth.

As I think about all God has done, I realise that living with purpose is not just about doing the right things or fulfilling a calling; it is about walking closely with the One who called me. Every season, every lesson, and every step has been part of His greater story of faithfulness. And as I look back, I can see that His hand has been there through it all: steady, patient, and sure, leading me onward in His purpose and grace.

Epilogue: His Faithfulness Through It All

As these pages draw to a close and I pause to look back on the journey they hold, my deepest desire is that together we will glorify God for His faithfulness. I hope you will see His hand at work through a life that has always been, and still is, very ordinary, and in many ways broken. Yet, through this ordinary and broken life, His extraordinary grace has flowed. You will have seen His faithfulness in leading me step by step, and us as a family, into His purposes. None of it was orchestrated through my own ability, planning, or organization, but entirely because of His voice speaking, guiding, and drawing me forward, from before I was even formed, until this very day.

It humbles me to realize that He has had a plan long before I ever knew it. To have the privilege of walking in full-time ministry, witnessing His Kingdom come and His will continue to unfold in my life and in the lives of people around me, is something that still leaves me in awe. As I look back over the years, I stand amazed at His goodness and His guidance.

My desire is also that those who are stepping out in ministry and leadership will be able to learn from my journey. I know my story is far from perfect; I have not been the perfect leader, nor have I played the biggest role. Yet I have simply tried to walk faithfully in what I believed, and still believe, to be my part. My hope is that as you read, you might learn from some of these lessons or be inspired by some of the stories shared throughout this book. As you look back with me over these thirty-five years of ministry, may you be encouraged to say, “If God could do it for him, He can do it for me.”

May you be stirred to develop the gifts and calling that God has placed within you and to step forward with courage and trust, knowing that He who calls is faithful.

My prayer is that as you read this book, you will be inspired to know, not just believe in theory, but truly know, that God is real. The events that unfolded in my life are far too intertwined, too beautifully orchestrated, to be mere coincidence. They are living proof of a higher hand at work, a loving Father deeply involved in the lives of those who trust Him.

If we are willing to humble ourselves, to surrender, and to follow Him, He is more than willing to get involved in every part of our journey. For me, His continual faithfulness in leading, drawing, and guiding me has been one of the clearest testimonies of His love and goodness.

He is Almighty. He is all-powerful. He is all-knowing. And He is more than able to complete the work He has begun, not only in my life but also in yours.

I look forward to the future as my family and I continue this journey with God, walking in His plans and purposes for our lives.

“He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Philippians 1:6

Thank You for Reading

This book is made available freely so that it can reach anyone who would like to read it.

If you have been encouraged through these pages and would like to support this work, you are welcome to make a contribution in any amount. Your support helps me to continue sharing, writing, and encouraging others.

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About the Author:

Arno Pienaar has served with Youth With A Mission in Worcester, South Africa, for more than three decades. Over the years, he has served in leadership and as vice-director of YWAM Worcester, with a heart to love, care, encourage, and see others develop into their God-given potential. Arno and his wife, Mariska, have two adult daughters, and currently live in Worcester, South Africa. Awaken to Purpose is written from his journey of faith, family, ministry, and God's faithfulness, with the prayer that every reader will be encouraged to trust God and walk confidently in His purpose for their lives.