

My Testimony
by
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~ Salvation ~

“I need to give my life to Jesus.” Sitting alone in the family living room, five years old, with this realisation, I slid off the couch onto my knees and simply prayed “Jesus, please come live in my heart.” I then got up and went to my mom in the kitchen and told her, “I just asked Jesus to come into my heart.”

We were not a very religious family at that time. Therefore, I’m not sure where this realisation actually came from. We did however, as a family, attend Emanuel Baptist Church every Sunday. My sister Beverley and I would be sent off to Sunday-school while our parents were in the main adult service. I must have learned the biblical concept of Jesus coming into one's heart from Sunday school, but this doesn't take away from how real this experience and God's presence was to me.

~ God’s Faithfulness ~

Since that moment, throughout my schooling and beyond, I have always been aware of God's consistent, faithful, unwavering closeness to me, despite my own

straying from God through various desperate and some shameful times in my life.

By the time I finished high school at the end of 1983, I was an extremely angry teenager. Angry with life, authority, church and God. This anger was due to many different reasons such as my parent's divorce when I was ten years old, but mainly just due to my rebelliousness at the time.

At that time, all school-leaving white South African males were conscripted into the national armed forces, unless they were going to study further, after which they were then still required to do their military national service.

As I had no plans to study at that time, I was to report to the army on the 4th of July 1984 for my two years conscription. The day before, I was packing my last few things, when my dad asked if I was going to pack my Bible. I said that it was too big and I didn't have space for it. Right then, my father went out and bought a very small leather-bound complete King James Version Bible. Small enough to fit in a top shirt-pocket. I had no further excuse, so I slipped it in among the few possessions that I was to take with me.

About three months in, I had back-slidden so far that some of my fellow soldiers, some of them as amoral as

soldiers can get, approached me and entreated me to stop swearing so badly that it was offending even them. This shook me into realising how far I had fallen. In shame and repentance, I turned back to God. The little Bible that my father got for me, became a constant companion. Through the rest of my army days, I consumed every word. This was a turning point in my life.

~ God's Will ~

From those days on, I found myself seeking God's will in all areas of my life. I believe this is what led me, in 1994, to quit my computer software career and join a Bible mission school from which I ended up as a missionary/relief-aid worker in various wars and conflict zones.

Also, I have undergone two open heart surgeries in my life. This is not just opening the sternum (breast bone) and ribs with a scalpel, saw and clamp, to work on the outside of the heart, but also opening up the heart with a scalpel to work on the inside.

The first surgery was on my fourth birthday, back in 1970. The second, in 2025 at the age of fifty-eight, was to replace my pulmonary artery valve which was one of the things repaired during the first surgery.

Apparently, as far as my cardiologist knows, no one has survived longer than I have, without having this valve

replaced after the initial repair. Most people need to have it replaced after ten to twenty years. I had mine replaced after fifty-five years. Also, being the second time that my heart needed to be opened up, the risk increased exponentially.

This and many other life-threatening incidents, including my extremely high-risk birth, from which I should not have survived without, what I believe to be, divine intervention, has instilled in me a deep sense of purpose.

About two weeks before I underwent the second open heart surgery, I was asked, “Are you not scared or worried?”

I replied, “I find myself in a place where I am deeply aware of constantly and securely being in God’s will. A place that I have not earned nor deserve. It is purely by God’s grace. Therefore, I rest in the fact that whatever happens to me on that operating table, good or bad, is God’s will. Even if it does not go well, it will be God’s will and I would not want anything else.”

There is a profound peace to be found in this.

Someone else once commented on my reliance on God’s will and said “Yes, you have learned to trust that God will always do and have good for you.”

“Up to now He has always had good for me.” I replied, “But that is not what I trust Him for. I don’t know that

He will always have good for me, but I do know that it will always be His will, and I can rest in that.”

~ Relationship & Fellowship ~

I had often heard from the pulpit that attending church was like a coal in a fire. If you remove the coal from the fire, its heat soon goes out.

However, during many of my missionary years (as part of a “desert” experience such as Moses had), I was unable to find a church to attend regularly. I realised then, that the analogy of a coal being removed from the fire, only applied to coals.

I came to understand that if my “fire” goes out when I am removed from fellowship, then the “heat” comes from the fellowship only and not from my relationship with God, and therefore has no solid foundation. We are to, first and foremost, get our zeal from Jesus and then bring that “heat” to the Body of Christ.

Having said this, I do not mean to undervalue the importance of the encouragement, accountability and support that fellowship brings.

~ Miracles ~

I have also found that when you put yourself out on the frontline of God's will, He will do miracles for you.

In my time as a missionary/relief-aid worker, I experienced God's miraculous protection on a number of occasions. I have documented these in the writing of my Zairian, Rwandan and Angolan experiences.

I have also experienced God's miraculous provision, at key watershed moments in my life.

When, at God's prompting, I decided to leave my computer programming career to go into the mission field, I still owed my Edgars account R348.24, which was a lot of money back in January 1994.

I remember this exact amount, because what happened then, had such an impact on me. I prayed, asking God that if I was to quit my job, how was I to pay this outstanding amount. That very same day, I received a letter from SARS (South African Revenue Service) with a refund cheque with the exact same amount of R348.24!

Many years later, I married my wife Jasmina who is from the former Yugoslavia, whom I met through, what I believe to be, providential circumstances.

After three years of marriage, we finally had enough money saved for her to be able to go back home and visit family. One Monday morning, she said that she wished that I could come with her to meet her family. I answered

that, for that to happen, we would need an extra R6,000 and I would need to take unpaid leave, which would never be given and I could not afford.

I then left for work. At the time, I was working as a teacher and back then an extra R6,000 was an impossible amount for a teacher.

On arriving, I was summoned to the principal's office, who handed me an envelope. She explained that a parent of one of the pupils who had graduated the previous year wanted to thank his son's teachers for his exemplary results with cash gifts. These gifts ranged from R1,500 to R2,500. Some got R1,500, some got R2,000, while one other teacher even received R2,500. I was the exception. When I opened my envelope, there was a cheque for exactly R6,000!

I then told the principal about the conversation that I had with Jasmina earlier that morning, and how this amount exactly matched the amount that I said we needed for me to be able to accompany her to meet her family. The principal then said that she would be the last person to stand in the way of God's plan and granted me fully paid leave, which was unprecedented!

More recently, after my second open heart surgery, my medical aid short-paid the hospital an amount of R18,000. I had no way to pay the hospital this amount that I now owed them.

It wasn't long after, that a colleague and friend approached me and said that she had recently had one of

her investments pay out an amount of R180,000 and was praying about where to pay a 10% tithe. She then felt that God was prompting her to give this to me, despite her not knowing of the debt I had to the hospital and that it matched the exact amount.

Yes, God has always been faithful and good to me, despite anything that I have done or not done.