

Locked up with God!

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Introduction

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I have always read voraciously since childhood and as much I love to read, I love to write as well! I guess they are twin passions, which are inseparable; however, my joy knew no bounds when God started using me to write spiritual books. I must say, it was an outlet of my pent-up and cramped emotions! My first book project was “My Delight” daily devotional book, released in January 2007, but much before that, I launched my internet ministry and started posting ‘daily devotions’ on the website.

Among the Christian circle, I sensed barrenness in the area of prayer and personal relationship with God, my heart ached to share my intimacy with God to people and encourage them to get deeper with God too. Even before I could start writing this book, I titled it and have specially titled this book “Locked up with God” because revival starts at His Feet. I have been writing this book spread over a period of few years, a brick-by-brick accumulation, at times bits and pieces are put together, hence please forgive me if there is discontinuity.

The world renowned novelist Jeffrey Archer is a recluse when he is writing, nothing comes between him and his book. Mr. Archer says, “The magic moments - moments when you write a sentence you hope will touch a million people, a paragraph that you hope will move a million women to tears - don’t come when you’re half drunk after a party. They come when you’re thinking of nothing else but the book.” After 15 drafts- all handwritten, 1000 hours of work and seven years of research, Mr. Archer was eager to let the sales do the talking for “Paths of Glory.” Why handwriting? Mr. Archer says, “I like handwriting. You get a sense it’s real, it’s yours and there are no outside forces involved when you handwrite. It’s just you and your brain.”

I write this not to hail him, but to salute his sincerity and commitment to his work. His commitment is staggering! This bit of news about Jeffrey Archer made me more passionate about my book. If a man writing a secular novel could be so committed in his work, then I think we need to be much, much more committed. Fidelity in one’s work is important! I determined my heart, that I would do all it takes to have the touch of my Master’s Hand on this book. His touch is enough!

Before we run and think about doing great things for God, we need to learn to stay 'locked up with Him'. This is not easy, though. Shallow-walkers will not be able to enjoy this book, I have written this book for people who would like to jump into the water, get wet and dirty like Peter and do whatever it takes to get closer to the Master. You need to get wet and get out of your comfortable zone, if you want to experience Him in a deeper way. Are you listening? I want this book to create a "volcanic explosion" on the inside of you!

Even before you delve into the first chapter, I want to create an expectancy in you; I have poured out my heart in this book. I have divulged personal experiences of my life, so that people down the line can be encouraged and never despair. Brokenness is the most important qualification, if you are considering to join the Lord's work, without which we can never ever serve the Lord. Are you listening? I have talked about the various

saints of the Bible in the book, who were enriched with valuable lessons behind closed doors. Don't read this book flippantly but read it in the quietness of the night and allow God to do a deeper work on the inside of you. Allow Him to get into the bottom of your heart and speak to you. Let the substance permeate on the inside of you and take lodging there! The subject may be tough, but it is definitely not highbrow as I have kept the language easy flowing, breezy and cool, so that it does not weigh heavy on you. It would be like me by your side, speaking to you!

Wesley L Duewel says, "Delivering the gospel message to every human being is not enough, however, the crucial factor is assuring that the message will be understood and accepted. Prayer is the answer." These few words sends us a strong and sound message emphasizing the need and urgency of spending time at His feet. It is sad and pathetic to see servants of God ignoring this most important factor and running around doing ministry in their own strength. Prayer is the key to unfold the supernatural power of God in our lives and ministry!

I started my writing work, after I resigned from my work with a multinational bank and joined the Lord's full-time ministry. I did not plan to become a writer, because I started my walk with the Lord as a preacher. After giving up a career spread over a period of two decades, I took to writing because of the space available in my life. It takes courage to break away from a structured atmosphere, nothing but a burning passion for my Lord took me from the glossy corridors of the posh multinational bank, to step into the grimy muddy highways of Chennai and villages of Tamil Nadu; but I have no regrets and I am glad I had the courage to do it. Writing has given me a lot of confidence.

Let me tell you, as much as you crave to talk to Him, He wants to talk to you too!
Are you ready?

Chapter 1 **Carried away to Egypt!**

Genesis 37:28"Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt."

SOMEONE SAID, "THE ADVERSITIES THAT COME ALONG TO BURY US USUALLY HAVE WITHIN THEM THE VERY REAL POTENTIAL TO BENEFIT US!"

Rudyard Kipling wrote a story of a little ship about to go on its first voyage. The captain's daughter christened the ship and named it "Dimbula." Then she said to her father, "Now we have a great ship." The captain replied, "No, daughter, not yet. I must take her to sea." When he took the ship on her maiden voyage, it began to give off creaking sounds which grew louder and louder as though each part was straining and groaning and struggling to fall into its proper place, as though the ship was trying to pull itself together. But after sixteen days at sea, as she sailed back into the harbor, the creaking and the straining and the groaning had been transformed into an even sound -- as if to say, "My master has taken me through the rough spots in which everything seemed to be coming apart, and I have become what I have been made to be. I am the 'Dimbula.' Because I have a master, I am a ship." (Preacher's Illustration Service, Vol 9)

"How can my character grow through the challenges I'm facing? The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." -Martin Luther King, Jr.

How I wish to know more of what Joseph did 13 years inside the prison! Psalm 105:17-19 says, "He sent a man before them --- Joseph --- *who* was sold as a slave. They hurt his feet with fetters, He was laid in irons. Until the time that his word came to pass, The word of the LORD tested him." How did Joseph endure the testing time? It would have been great and awesome, if we had more insight to the times that he was in prison! Such precious details would be a healing balm for people who are going through similar 'prison' situations! With an aching heart I write this! However, explicit details of Joseph spending 13 years in prison and Daniel spending one whole night in the lion's den, are not given because God wants us to see it through our spiritual eyes. We are able to see the glory of God through our spiritual eyes. I like the words of David: "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law." (Psalm 119:18) Yes, an 'opened eye' will perceive the spiritual truths! It is not how much of factual details you read, but how much you understand and see with your spiritual eyes, that is very important.

David has left his tears collected in the book of Psalms, each time we read, we are able to know the path that he had to tread before climbing the throne. We have the Apostle Paul who has left behind a treasure trove for us in the New Testament, the collection of his epistles that are setting the hearts of many on fire for God and many other saints like Job, have left behind their life experiences for us to read. Words like, "...as I was among

the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God”, found in Ezekiel 1:1, sets out heart ablaze to desire for such heavenly visions. Observe, prophet Ezekiel says, “visions of God!”, and he goes on to give us a glimpse of what he saw. Actually, this account of his heavenly vision adds flavor and spice to the

total 48 chapters of the book. Ezekiel keeps referring to this heavenly vision every now and then: Ezekiel 10:22 says, “And the likeness of their faces was the same as the faces which I had seen by the River Chebar, their appearance and their persons. They each went straight forward”, such revelations captures the heart of the reader.

In my life, each time I stumbled and crumbled down, God ministered to me through the life of other servants of God and picked me up from the floor and put me back on the track to run the race. During my initial days of ministry, God knew that a young man along with his wife, who were among the first fruits of our ministry and very much close to my heart, were about to leave us and their Christian faith. Much around this time, two lovely books came to me by courier sent through another ministry, where I had sowed an offering. I tell you, these two books brought revival in my spiritual life. I still preserve them!

Knowing my passion for reading, God sent me the right books, at an appropriate time to prepare me for the attack that satan had planned on me. When the incident did happen and when the young man along with his wife left us, I was shattered beyond words can explain, I cried one whole night. The Word of God expounded by these spiritual giants in their books, helped me dust myself and continue my walk with God. It's great to know about success and victory stories, but we can never get there, unless we endure the rough terrains of life that leads us to the final destiny. En route to our destination, there are million times that we are tempted to give up on our mission and there are many out there who had not completed the race. An avalanche of problems come down on you, to totally bury you under the rubble. But look what Psalm 66:12 says, “You have caused men to ride over our heads; We went through fire and through water; But You brought us out to *rich fulfillment*.” I like the words '*rich fulfillment*'! Surely one needs grit and determination to reach the place of fulfillment! But observe, it is He who eventually brings us to the place of fulfillment! Praise the Lord!

In the opening chapter of this book, how I wish I could say, “I never stumbled, I never fumbled and I never grumbled during my walk with God!” No, I can never say that! If I say so, then it would be unfair and untrue! God picking up an emotional wreck like me to preach the good news of His amazing love to many broken hearts, is by itself the greatest miracle. I felt like giving up, running away and throwing the towel in despair, a million times during my days of ministry. But today the very fact that I stand despite the several tornados and hurricanes that were aimed at destroying me is only because of His grace and mercy. I just did one commendable thing and that is, each time I was attacked, I would run to Him and never run away from Him. No matter what I scold or shout at my dear children Shalina and Joshua, teary-eyed they would come back to me the next minute. Such was their love for me! Likewise, more than being anything else to me, Jesus is my Heavenly Father. I tasted fresh, unpolluted, unadulterated, pure unconditional love ONLY from Him. I never forgot that, at any point of my suffering! I have stated my fears, tears, confusion and despair in this book, so that readers who are going through similar situations would know that they are not alone, but “I had been there too!”

Several years back, oblivious to the crowd, the hustle and bustle around me in the railway station, I stood holding the hands of my mom, with my eyes transfixed on her. Even now, I remember her telling me, "I will come back soon!" For those of you who know the pain of separation will understand my feelings. My mom was leaving the city

I was residing and moving into another city due to various reasons. Till date, I cannot forget the agony and pain that tore my heart to see my mom leave me, though only to a city within the country. Sounds silly? Yes, it is! After marriage, I stayed close to my mom's place, I was able to see my mom walking in and out of her place from the window. My life revolved around her, now that she was leaving, the thought that I may not be able to see her anymore from my window, made me miserable! I was clinging to my mom's hands with desperation and crying shamelessly. I just could not think of the fact that she was moving far away from me. When the train moved, I literally ran behind the train with tears rolling down my cheek. I was sobbing and running behind the train. I stood there waving my hand at her, as her figure slowly diminished little by little. The pain and anguish I suffered is indescribable! I got to tell this 'silly bit about me' so that later on you would marvel how God had changed this 'silly woman' into a vessel for His use.

Being the eldest daughter in the family and having gone through severe poverty, it was sheer determination that made my mom and dad give me the best of education, in one of the excellent schools in Chennai. After my dad fell sick, my mom single-handedly struggled and supported me in my education and never gave up on me. Through the days of poverty, dad's sickness and uncertainties in our life, I was able to complete my graduation. Praise God! I love my mom dearly and closely and my life's ambition was to become someone 'big' just to please my mom, God had different plans, though. I was a 'dead' Christian with no God in my life and with a head-strong passion to make it big in life. I was planning to run abroad and do anything to make it in life. Just about that time, the "Creator of the Universe" entered my life! I know now, that God's mighty Hand was right there at the railway station 'breaking me' for a greater purpose! I recall my Master's iron words in the book of Mathew 10:37,38 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." An emotional, weak, fragile and delicate woman was being shaped for a 'higher' purpose. Then after this, one by one, things started rolling in my life!

Within the next couple of years, five months pregnant, as I lay abandoned with pain in the hospital bed, (I have given details of my sickness in the coming chapters) I rolled my eyes upwards to look at my Master. I had never looked up at Him that way in my life! I had too many distractions, too many people around me. God had to remove them away and bring me close to Him. What a privilege! It was not enough, God wanted to drag me more closer to Him. I had refused to abort my child and I was determined to complete the pregnancy period and deliver my child which was impossible according to the doctors. Hence, we took a risk and returned home. Now listen, when I came back home, I was now brought back in a stretcher in an ambulance van. Four people carried me back home!

I now remember the way Joseph was carried away to Egypt by the Midianite traders. Mark it, it was no small pain for Joseph, he had to be carried away from his loving dad, family, home land and everything, besides the pain of being betrayed and hated by his own brothers at home. Friend, the hurt can cut you deeper when the attack comes from

your own loved ones. Jesus foresaw this and that's why He said: Mathew 19:29 " And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life."

Joseph' brother Judah made the suggestion that they should sell Joseph to the Midianites, to be carried far away to Egypt, where, in all probability, he would be lost, and never heard of anymore. But now watch, God's plan in this is totally different. Sometimes we are never able to understand the plans of God immediately but when we look back, we surely can see His fingerprints throughout our lives. Perhaps you are passing through the deep waters of trial and disappointment? Does everything seem to be going against you? These apparent misfortunes are not accidents. The Lord allows such things for a blessed purpose. So, patiently trust Him, someday you will praise Him for it all!

Joseph is introduced in chapter 37 of the book of Genesis. Now read what is said of him in Genesis 37:3 "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all the children, because he was son of the old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors." Now, God had plans to change Joseph into His beloved son and for this purpose he was taken far away from his dotting father, brothers and home land. When God has a special purpose in your life, He has to carry you far away from comfort and luxury where He could break you, melt you and mould you into His image and use you for His divine purpose. Now watch friends, God was planning to use Joseph for a mammoth task of being a ruler over a great nation. God was not going to use a lad who was not even able to keep the dreams to himself. A lot had to be done in the life of Joseph and hence God had to carry him away from his familiar surroundings, in order to make him a ruler. Joseph being 'carried away' to Egypt was God's plan! Did you get that? If today you are going through a period of loneliness and separation, do not despise it, may be God has carried you to this place, in order to speak with you. I know of a young man working for a bank in Dubai, but his parents were in India, though. One day while I was just having a chat with him, he said, "God has brought me to this wilderness to speak to me." This statement certainly bewildered me, because I thought, here he was in an affluent country, working for a bank and yet be cribs;however, he explained to me about the persecutions that he was facing in the hands of his boss and also the pain of being away from his beloved parents. Nevertheless, this separation had done a lot of good in his life, in terms of spiritual growth. There was none, but God and him all the time in that foreign land. How many of you would love to be cornered like this to be with God?

Dear friend, when God wants to carry you away to a destination of His choice, then the airfare would be paid by God. Did you get that? You don't have to struggle for visa and passport, it would come. I repeat, it would come! He would send the sponsors. Just watch this, the Midianites paid twenty shekels, bought Joseph and took him royally on the camel. Royally? Genesis 37:25 says that the Ishmaelites were coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm and myrrh. These were commodities which were not available in Egypt and they were exporting it to Egypt. Joseph was carried along with such precious commodities. Why? Because he was precious in the eyes of God! Right from that journey, God Hand's took charge of Joseph' life and He never let him go. Praise God!

My spiritual journey also started right there in the stretcher! The 'invisible Hand of God' carried me through the trial period. As I look back at the events of my life, I could see

God orchestrating everything in my life to fulfill His divine purpose. I can now say like Job, "I thank God for the affliction, because he has refined me as gold." (Job 23:10)

What sets apart great athletes from similarly gifted competitors, is their overwhelming will to win, their cut-throat mindset and the tenacity to lift their game on the biggest stage. Let us never be satisfied to be mere 'survivors' but let us aim to be 'conquerors'. Some live such lukewarm, prayer-less, wordless, passionless lives, that they're afraid to

initiate anything, because they're afraid they can't back it up. Are we happy with where we are right now in our spiritual growth? Many of God's people are content with a shallow walk with God, but one needs more than these en route to become over comers and triumphant over the enemies of this world.

Abraham Lincoln said: "Success is not letting dead ends kill you."

Chapter 2 **God drags you to His Presence!**

1 Samuel 2:11 *"Then Elkanah went home to Ramah. And the boy ministered to the LORD in the presence of Eli the priest."*

Elkanah went home, but the boy ministered to the Lord! The boy mentioned here is no ordinary boy, he is none other than prophet Samuel! In order to bring Samuel to the Lord, God had orchestrated a chain of events in the life of Hannah to bring them to Shiloh. Friend, there was a need in Shiloh, God does nothing without a divine purpose. We read in 1 Samuel 1:3, "Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD."

Now, I want to take you deeper into the background of the time Elkanah lived. It was a time when the people of the nation ignored God, yet Elkanah dutifully took his wives to the house of God. We also have an account of the state of the family into which Samuel the prophet was born. His father Elkanah, was a Levite, and of the family of the Kohathites. Despite the bickering between the two wives, we see the godly man Elkanah visit the temple year after year. Even here, I see the Hand of God working in the life of Elkanah. I guess God stirred his heart to bring his family to Shiloh year after year. He was the one who dragged Hannah to this place, it is here that she wakes up from slumber, wakes up from misery, wakes up from her ordinary life, wakes up from bitterness, wakes up from barrenness; to enter into the Holy of Holies. Praise God! God had to use Peninnah the other wife of Elkanah to nag and drag Hannah to the feet of the Lord. Have you seen the chisel that the sculptor uses? With the hammer and chisel, the sculptor gets the desired effect he wants. Same way, God had used Peninnah as a 'chisel' in the life of Hannah in order to disturb her from her comfortable position.

Though the Lord had closed her womb, Elkanah loved Hannah very much. On the day when he sacrificed to the Lord, he would give double portion to her, and while she wept, he comforted her saying, "Am I not more to you than ten sons?" Some of us are too comfortable that we do not want to move, it is now that God intervenes in the form of 'various events' to prod us into His Presence.

God breaks the heart of Hannah at Shiloh through Peninnah, who harasses and hurts her deeply. Though much loved by her husband, she understands the true condition of

her life and her barrenness. She now wakes up to make a deal with God! God nudges us and brings us to this stage where there is no turning back! No force on earth can intervene in your decision. I am speaking to someone out there! When you reach this stage, you will never ponder about resigning your job and joining ministry, there is a volcanic eruption on the inside of you that no one can understand. It's you and God! If God wants you for Himself, no force on earth can stop it. Hallelujah! How rightly Jesus said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself." (John 12:32) If God wants to do a great work in your life, He first has to get your attention, and make you a vessel of honor to receive the blessing. Hannah deeply depressed, weeps bitterly and gets into the Presence of God. May be you would have wept earlier but that was out of self-pity, the 'poor me' tears, but now Hannah got up to weep at the feet of the Lord. When sudden disaster strikes your life, I dare you to look at the mess in your life and tell that mess, 'you are going to bring me closer to God.' If your marriage is on the rocks, your body is racked with pain, bankruptcy and failures are all means to bring you to the place where God desires you.

Hannah through her deep affliction makes a vow, 1 Samuel 1: 11 "O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head." After this prayer, she leaves the place with peace and joy. Do you know the reason? God filled her with peace! She was not the old, bitter Hannah any more. She had changed in the presence of the Lord! Hallelujah! It was not over, after the birth of her son Samuel, she keeps up her word and delivers the boy at the feet of the Lord.

Now the young mother Hannah sings a beautiful song of praise. It was no lullaby as the other mothers sing for their babies, but here it was a song of praise. She sings, "*There is none holy like the LORD; there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.*" (1 Samuel 2:2)

We see here an absolute high form of worship by Hannah, it was not only a thanksgiving song of praise but it was a prophetic song of praise as well. Her heart swelling with love for God, we can see her just going crazy over God. She has just tasted the goodness, kindness and faithfulness of God through the birth of her son Samuel. In the path of affliction and humiliation, she encountered God. An awesome revelation of God draws you to your knees, strips you of all dignity and takes you to the Holy of Holies where nothing else matters, it is just GOD and His beauty. I noticed something else also here, when Hannah prayed the Bible says that Hannah was "speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard." (1 Samuel 1: 13) But now while praising God, she not only opened her mouth but her whole heart to God!

As Hannah praises God, she does not make any reference of the 'gift' (Samuel) she received from the Lord but her eyes were on the GIVER. Oh, how lovely! He is adorable! All praises and glory were showered on Him! She goes on to say, "*there is none besides you!*" After an encounter with the Almighty, you become oblivious to the world and the surroundings! After the birth of my miracle son Joshua, my eyes lingered on the beauty of my Lord, who saved my life and also gave me a son. Within me I sensed a serenity that was unfamiliar; somehow, I knew in my heart, that my life would never be the same after this. I had a new and voracious appetite for the Word, and I read from the Bible every spare moment. As a young mother nursing my son, I turned into a vigorous missionary. No force could stop me, within a month I went on the road, market place,

anywhere and everywhere, to share the miracle I received in my life. I never knew that I would turn into a full-time servant for God! God used the affliction in my life to bring me to His appointed place!

Now let me come back to Shiloh, God had a greater purpose for bringing Elkanah and his family to Shiloh year after year. Why did Hannah have to dedicate the boy to the temple where Eli and his sons were acting wickedly? Light is needed where there is darkness! That light was "Samuel" among the wicked sons of Eli. After my resignation and plunging into full-time ministry, we sold our own apartment and moved into a rental house. On the first day, we reached the place at 12 pm midnight and we were shocked to see the place without a back door and a half-finished kitchen. The landlord had vanished just entrusting the work to a laborer, besides, the entire surrounding area was notorious for thefts and other wicked ways. Imagine! When I prostrated one day at the feet of the Lord to know His plans in bringing me to this place, He said, "this is your missionary area!" Sometimes, we may feel that we are surrounded by enemies and wicked people, but God has a purpose in keeping us in their midst. Because He wants our light to shine in the darkness and bring them also over this side. Got that? I am excited about writing this book after trudging the journey myself. Though thrilling, uncertain and eerie, as I look back now, every bit of the journey was spectacular, revealing His unfailing love.

At Shiloh, it is heart-breaking to read the treacherous, atrocious activities of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas. They were worthless men and they did not know the LORD. Hophni and Phinehas refused to obey God, they didn't hold to the custom of the priest; they stole the offering of the people that was a sacrifice to the Lord. They threatened the people and the worst thing they did is mentioned in verse 22, it sent a chill down my spine, "they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting." Can you imagine lusting after women at the Holy Sanctuary? God heard the cries of the people of Shiloh and thus Samuel was the answer to their pleas and cry. Isn't it fantastic? God works in the life of Elkanah and Hannah, drags them to Shiloh, breaks the heart of Hannah, makes her vow and surrender her beloved child to the Lord at Shiloh. His divine purpose is now accomplished!

Friend, Samuel was birthed when Hannah shut herself with God. Her life was miserable and horrible, until she arose from the place of comfort to survey the love of God. Some of us are comfortable walking around the mountain, but never get to climb the mountain to review the beauty of the mountain top. Are you listening? A person who had been to the Himalayas said, "the beauty of the mountain is so enthralling that even if you have a minute -to-minute detail sheet of where to go and what to do, the air of the mountains can make you feel so relaxed with a sense of letting go and surrendering completely to a transcendental will of where to go and when to eat or sleep." Such is the beauty of the Himalayas!

If only we make an effort to walk out of comfort and climb the mountain of prayer, our experience would be much more bewildering and captivating than the beauty of the Himalayas! Once at His feet, there would be no turning back!

CHAPTER 3 **Just God and you!**

1 Kings 17:4 “And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.”

God’s provision is amazing! He knows when to feed you and when to make you fast. Now watch this, God says, “and I have commanded the ravens to feed you ‘there!’ A place called ‘there’? It is the place where God wants you to be! When you are in the centre of God’s will, He would then command even ravens to take care of you. It may not be a place of our choosing, but it is God’s chosen place for us. A place of Isolation, Harshness, Aloneness and Obscurity! It is here that God’s training begins and brings obedience, preparation, humbleness, closeness to God, revelation, cleansing and revival.

It was here that Elijah was prepared for revival at Mount Carmel. Many times we miss Mount Carmel experiences, because we refuse to go to the ‘place’ that God prepares for us. God has a reason to take us ‘there’! God wants to do some more work in our soul and spirit. During these tough isolation camps, God teaches us to trust Him one day at a time. God didn’t tell Elijah what the next step would be, until he had taken the first one. God will not show you your future, until you come away with Him. Rick Warren puts it beautifully, “God doesn’t owe you an explanation or reason for everything He asks you to do. Understanding can wait, but obedience can’t. Instant obedience will teach you more about God than a lifetime of Bible discussions. Obedience unlocks understanding.” (The Purpose Driven Life, page 72)

Isolation and separation are too tough for people to handle who live active lives. We are people who love to be busy with our computer, cell phones, friends and IPODS, but God has to tear us apart from these in order to mould us. If you want to see a life filled with greater power, anointing, and the supernatural, it will only happen at the Brook Cherith. Elijah needed all the training God had for him in the secret place, if he was ever to speak on behalf of God in the public place. Before God will ever take you to Mount Carmel and use you in a mighty way, He has to take you through the desolation and obscurity of Cherith.

Evangelist A.A.Allen in his book, “The Price for God’s Miracle-working Power” writes about being locked up inside a room to hear the voice of God. The very first chapter grips our attention and he vividly explains his weakness of wanting to come out of the closed door by the smell of food and how finally he waits, until God speaks to him. It is scintillating! He says, “I began to realize that the light filling my prayer closet was God’s glory! It wasn’t that my prayer closet door that had opened, but the door of heaven! The presence of God was so real and powerful that I felt that I would die right there on my knees. It seemed that if God came any closer, I could not stand it! Yet, I wanted it and was determined to have it.” What did Elijah do in the brook? He was alone with God and nothing but God and him. Elijah was locked up alone with God! Ah, how wonderful! No cell phones, no projects and no travel! JUST GOD AND HIM! Now watch what happens after the training at Cherith! God commands Elijah to “go to Zarephath”. He is sent by God to Zarephath, a city of Sidon, out of the borders of the land of Israel, to meet a poor widow there. But why to a city of Sidon? Why to be fed by a widow? I am sure Elijah expected a better assignment this time! Elijah did one commendable thing, though, and that is to obey the voice of God!

A young, vibrant 21 years old man, mightily used by God, who calls me his favorite sister, emailed me one day about the crusades and conferences that he was doing, he had casually also enquired about my ministry. It was a time, when I was going through barrenness in my ministry, that this email dropped into my inbox. What do I write? Self-pity entered my heart! Though glad for him, a cynical thought dropped into my mind, 'what am I doing?' Late in the night, when I knelt to pray before going to bed, God started dealing with me, He said, "Elijah went to Zarephath, a city of Sidon, which is a gentile city, not for a crusade or conference, but to minister to a poor widow." I instantly knew what God was trying to tell me and I remembered the thought that came in my mind earlier during the day. I was flabbergasted! It was bewildering to think that He waited the whole day for this moment, to speak to me and clear my doubts, fears and anxiety. I wept at His feet!

God had a great purpose for Elijah when he sent him to Zarephath, it was a preparation for the great work that He had planned for Elijah at Mount Carmel. Some of us want conferences and crusades without the cross! I want to quote the words of Corrie Ten Boom from her book, 'The Hiding Place'. "In my prison cell I gulped entire Gospels at a reading. I would look around at the bare little cell and wonder what conceivable victory could come from a place like this." I have talked a lot of Corrie in this book, but I want to now give you a short note of the work she did for God. She continued her worldwide evangelistic activities until her eighties. For years, she traveled alone, preaching the Gospel of Christ in Cuba, America, Germany, South Africa, Japan, Bermuda, New Zealand, Australia, Spain, England, Denmark, Taiwan, Israel, India, Korea, Argentina, Eastern Europe, Russia. When she was not in Holland, her travels took her to strange places. Who could believe that this old lady was in the midst of Civil Wars in Africa? Who could believe that she was so close to the fighting in Vietnam, where she heard bullets whizzing through the foliage? But there she was in Vietnam crawling creakily out of jeep to deliver the Gospel to a bewildered soldier. Corrie lived until her ninety-first birthday, her old age years were much more productive than her earlier years. God is amazing!

1 Kings 17:10 says, "So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called her and said, 'Please bring me a little water in a cup that I might drink.'"

The words "he arose" sent a chill down my spine! From where did he Elijah arise? From God's Presence! We read in Mathew 26:46, Jesus told His disciples, "Rise, let us go....." Jesus gets up from a place where he had spent painful hours in prayer. He was now equipped with power and anointing to handle the severe trials ahead of Him. Elijah also now "arose" from a place of "fellowship with God" and he was now ready to "go". You are never ready to go unless God tells you to 'go'. Next, God takes him to a place of "nothingness". Where is that? Elijah walks into a place where the widow was preparing to die. (1 King 17:12) You are trained in the brook, in order to bring life to dead people and impart life to others. Elijah is not shaken by the word "death", he dares the widow to go and bring the meal to him first. An anointed person walks with confidence and dares to do what others fear to do! Give Him a shout of praise! You would go to places where others have never gone before. The miracle happens when the widow obeys 'according to the word of Elijah'. The Bible says in verse 16, "the bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry." There was abundance! Wow!

Not until we are abandoned and deserted, are we able to relish and nourish the sweet fellowship of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the year 1999, while I was five months pregnant

with my second child, I was diagnosed with multiple fibroids which were found on the inner and outer walls of the uterus. The fibroids were rapidly growing along with the baby and the doctors gave a final verdict to terminate the pregnancy and abort the baby because the fibroids were choking my baby. My world came crumbling down and I was shattered. After two days of diagnosis, what the doctors feared happened, some of the fibroids ruptured and I was bleeding profusely. I was rushed to the hospital and as I lay there in the hospital bed alone, I could hear the shrill cries of the new born babies being delivered by other women. I wondered what would happen to my baby! Will I ever see the baby? I went through excruciating pain. I was kept under observation, close to the delivery ward so that I could be rushed, if there may be an emergency. During this time, something happened which touched my heart tremendously. The doctors brought the scanning machine close to my bed and showed me the 'movements' of my baby inside the womb. Oh, I saw my baby!

But strictly the doctors declared that the baby had to be aborted, because of the multiple fibroids that were choking my baby. The pain was unbearable and the doctors pressurized me to go in for abortion immediately. With no strength left physically and emotionally, I whispered to the Lord, "Please, Lord, don't let them kill the baby, I want my child." On the third day after I was admitted in the hospital, my husband and I tried everything possible in our strength. When everything failed, as I lay crying miserably curled up in the hospital bed writhing in pain, my husband along with another Christian aunty prayed to Jesus at 10 pm in the night. I don't know exactly what happened that night, but I do know that Jesus answered our prayers and at that time of total helplessness and hopelessness, I felt surrounded by a His glorious peace and I slept peacefully after many days. When my husband came early the next morning, he was surprised to see me fresh, because I had been suffering from severe pain for the last few days. I had slept peacefully the whole night without pain! That was the first victory to our prayers! We were encouraged and our steadfast faith in the Lord started from there. My husband and I firmly refused to abort the child and my husband brought me home in an ambulance and I was carried to the second floor of our apartment in a stretcher. Due to various other pregnancy related complications as well, I was bedridden. The most humiliating experience was not being able to walk to the wash room, but depend on bed pan. How miserable!

For the first time in my life, I decided to read the Bible from the beginning, meticulously and not just read a portion of it here and there. As I passionately read the Bible every day, God increased my faith and I took my next giant step of refusing to take medicines and injections. My husband found my faith mysterious and incomprehensible, but as I kept confessing my love and faith in Jesus, he allowed me to have my way. One particular morning, filled with faith, I wondered why should I lie in the bed and disturb others when the Word says that "by His stripes I am healed!" I boldly got up from the bed and walked. God did a miracle at that time, He replaced my placenta to the original position and I was able to now walk. Praise the Lord! I did not receive complete healing, though; if it was just physical healing that I needed, the Healer would have surely granted me that immediately, but God wanted to bless me with something more than that! Oh, how I love the text: "...but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:4,5) How could one glory in tribulations? Yes, Apostle Paul teaches us to smile and be happy in the midst of our pain, because He would never fail us. He was preparing me for the big picture which only He knew.

After many more months of praying and waiting on Him, God performed the miracle in my life and I delivered my miracle baby boy Joshua. Why should God come seeking for a woman working in a bank and reveal His magnificent power to her? What did I do to deserve the Messiah's attention? I am dumbstruck by His unconditional love for me! Philip Yancey says, "The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, with no strings attached seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of karma... the Muslim code of law--each of these offers us a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional"

God took me through a series of 'breaking stages' before I was healed. God broke my self-will and pride. God kept people away from me in order to deal with me. During this trial period in my life, my husband along with me got saved and we accepted Jesus into our life. After the delivery of my child, I walked out of the hospital as a changed person. As a mother of a new-born infant, with nappy changing duties, I started my part-time ministry; I mean, my passion for God was so hot and bubbling that I just couldn't wait. When I think of my sudden launch into part-time ministry, it still seems so surreal! When I returned to work at the bank, my job was the same, but now I saw my colleagues differently. I saw each one of them as souls lost in the wicked world of sin, who needed to be picked up. God had taken away my judgmental spirit and replaced it with compassion and love for the lost. God had a purpose of taking me to a particular floor in the bank. I was appalled at the sins that prevailed around me, I determined my heart to share Jesus with my colleagues. That became my mission as I served God by helping others. God started mightily using me in and out of the office. God uses our pain to minister in the life of other people who are suffering. Now, when difficulties close in on me or in the life of others, I remind myself of my nights of anguish, pain and trepidation in the hospital room, and I pray for God to take care of the situation. I have discovered that by relinquishing my desire to be strong and by becoming weak, I am liberated to receive God's strength and His perfect peace. I want to quote the words of Rick Warren here: "Your weaknesses are not an accident. God deliberately allowed them in your life for the purpose of demonstrating his power through you."

Within a month after my delivery and while I was still a toddler in my walk with the Lord, I was called to pray for a fourth degree cancer patient. I had not even seen a cancer patient before, under such a serious condition, leave alone minister to them. I left my few days old infant baby behind at home and rushed to the hospital. The scene I saw there was just miserable and tragic. She was a young woman curled up in the bed, tattered, skin shriveled due to chemotherapy and other strong medications. Her bed was surrounded with her sisters and one of them was holding her hands and all eyes were on me. I was unable to look into the red puffed-up eyes of her husband and her eleven year old son. All I wanted to do at that time, was to run away to a corner and cry. The misery in that hospital room was just unbearable!

I had no escape, I had to do something! I mustered up my strength, picked up the Bible read a scripture from the Bible and started to share a message of faith, required during times of despair and utter hopelessness. I do not know from where I got the right words from, but it kept flowing like a river. I could see the crowd now listening to me intently. I went ahead and shared my own painful trial in the hospital and my subsequent healing. I was able to feel her fear, the humiliation attached to the hospital-gown, the bed-pan and the inability to move and do things on your own. I know how it feels to lie on your back, unable to move with eyes fixed on the ceiling. I finally summoned the entire family to pray with me and the entire room was charged with the electrifying presence of the Holy

Spirit. For the next few days, I was in constant touch with her husband and son and also met her a couple of times more and ministered to her. One day, midnight I received a call from her husband who said that his wife passed away and that the wish of his son was that “I should be the first one to be informed about her death because I brought light into his mother’s life.” Later the husband told me, that for the first time after the gruesome disease struck her life, she was smiling and talking a lot about Jesus. I would never forget his words, ”bala, without you, we would not have been able to take this tragedy. You brought Jesus into our life at the right moment.” Her last words to her son were, “I need to go home, Jesus has engraved me in the palm of His Hands. I have no fear of death now.” I would never have been able to do this, if not for my own fiery trial in the hospital bed! I like to quote what Corrie Ten Boon said: “God has no problems but only plans.” How very true!

While I was still working, God opened a full-fledged out-reach ministry, prayer-cell ministry in the office and I was even invited to preach among doctors in hospitals, IT professionals and various other places. We had started our all-night-prayer services as well once in a month. Beginning of 2004, I received a call from the Lord for full-time commitment, when I fasted and prayed, God gave me a clear indication to resign the job. It was a major decision in my life, while my elder daughter was 12 years old and my son was just four years old. I determined my heart to obey the Lord and follow Him. When I resigned and walked out of the bank, I had to walk out on many other things as well. I had to walk out on our beautifully air-conditioned apartment, give up luxury and give up on many other things as well.

I was floating in the air with the thought that God was going to immediately increase the borders of my present ministry. After my resignation, when I had to stay at home and wait for further instructions from the Lord, the first thing I did was to get into my prayer closet. *I never knew that I would be locked up there!*

God slowly closed every door of our ministry. Hey, what’s happening? I did not know! People who used to call me for outreach ministry stopped calling me. Not knowing what to do, I started spending time only in fasting and prayer. Have you ever prayed until your mouth pained and your back ached? I did! It was a hard place to endure, “inactivity” was killing me but God kept me there and trained me for the ministry that He had kept in store for me. It is this “experience” that has stirred me to write the book, “Locked up with God.” I was lonely and the only roots I had was writing. God has a way of accomplishing His purpose in our life, there is simply no way out, but to say, ”Here I am.” God had to break my self-will and teach me to obey His will. God did not want to use an aggressive and ambitious person, but He was keen on making me humble and simple, content to be curled in His Hands.

I started my internet ministry and sent ‘daily devotions’ through which God gave me an international platform to reach the ends of the globe with His Word. I later launched out the “My Delight” devotional books. This was a wonderful outlet to reach out to the readers at their very doorstep. I had become almost a member of every household who were reading my books, because they felt I had an uncanny knowledge of their need for the day and I was addressing them specifically through the Word of God. Though it started in a small way, but later we understood it was a Herculean task to handle the book project, because we were releasing them in two languages, English and Tamil, my husband was taking care of the tamil translations. I would just finish writing and releasing

the devotion for one quarter and then the need for the next would arrive. Before I realized, 'writing' had occupied a sizeable amount of my time!

I had been confined to solitude which is non-negotiable for an author. There are moments when loneliness thankfully becomes solitude and solitude deliciously transforms into creativity. This was the divine purpose of God for my solitude! I desired to go around places and preach about Him, but He desired to keep me with Him and write for Him and thereby take His message around the world. Which was easy? Me going around or He having his way in taking the Word around? The Bible says in Isaiah 55:8 "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways." Powerful ! I have learnt to gather pain, defeat, discouragement, illness, criticism along the way and dump it away because I know and I know, that He would take me to the right destination, for He has promised in Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." I KNOW THAT HE IS JUST THE BEST!

Charles Swindoll says, "When God is in your circumstances and you come to a dangerous place, He magnificently delivers. He delivers wisdom, right when you need it. He delivers protection, but if you run away you nullify faith. You panic and cut God short. You short-circuit His opportunity to do what man cannot do. Stand firm! Believe Him!"

To an untrained eye, the forest is a vast expanse of green and brown. But ask the guide, he would patiently open up the treasure trove of herbs, medicine, balms and even fuels. Sometimes when going through struggles, it looks like a journey in the forest. But hang on, God would reveal the benefits that would come out of the forest experience! You would learn to be more patient, more kind, compassionate, loving, forgiving, long suffering, faithful and honest. Such Christ-like qualities do not grow on trees, we get them through Jesus Christ, as we gladly accept the fiery trials that come our way. GOD'S PROVISION IS SUFFICIENT WHILE WE ARE INEFFICIENT!

Walter B. Knight tells of an American tourist who had just seen the Passion Play. Approaching Mr. Lang who played the part of Christ, he asked, "May I be photographed with you while I lift your cross?" The tourist stooped to lift the cross but he couldn't. He exerted more energy, but still could not lift it. Looking at Mr. Lang, he said, "Your cross is certainly heavy!" Mr. Lang said, "Sir, I cannot represent Christ with a light cross!"

CHAPTER 4 **To be with Him!**

Mark 3: 13-15 "And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons."

We have to be with God, if we have to walk before the world and stand up to the devil. Did you notice here in the scripture, more than anything, God wanted his disciples to "be with Him?"

We need to remember to remain focused spiritually. Our lives are so busy; our personal agendas so filled with business, household chores, errands, recreation, coming and going, that we often overlook our basic spiritual needs; most important of which is

solitude with God - the stilling of all worldly activity for the purpose of worshipping and listening to God. Do you hear me today? We need to chill out with God in order to spill out the tensions of this world!

I like the way God speaks to Moses in Deuteronomy 5: 30,31 “ Go and say to them, “Return to your tents.” *But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you*” I I’m excited as I write this! God wanted to be alone with Moses! I love this! What a privilege! The Great Big God wanted Moses to stay back and be with Him! As much as you crave for God, He is even more crazy about you being WITH HIM. Think of that! God does not want to speak to people who have no time for Him. God is not interested in busy-bees, who are always with tight schedules, with God nowhere in their agenda. God told Moses, “let them return to their tents, BUT AS FOR YOU, STAND HERE BY ME, I WILL SPEAK WITH YOU.” I was touched by these Words of the Maker of heaven and universe. Absolutely astounding indeed! How would you feel, if your boss singled you out and told you that he wants to speak with you? I am sure, you would *break into* an impromptu *jig*...

While I worked for a multinational bank as an Executive Secretary, I had no time for God, but God had to intervene, step into my life and halt me to be with Him. While I lay in the hospital bed, diagnosed with multiple fibroids in my uterus, little did I know then that it was God’s wonderful plan to get me closer to Him. Trials and pain draws us closer to Him! It is in this path of pain, fear, loneliness and depression that we turn to God. From the time of my conversion, I realized my need of investing time with God, if I was to effectively fulfill the call of God upon my life, besides the diligent study of the Word of God, I realized the importance of fasting and praying. There was a burning passion in my heart to get deeper with God, to know more of Him and get dearly close to Him. From the very beginning I knew in my heart that I would not be working in the bank for long and that God would surely call me into full-time ministry. I was absolutely definite about this!

I remember reading the Word of God endlessly through midnight and staying awake until the wee hours of the next day and then walking into office the next day with red, puffed up eyes. I would refuse to sleep until I heard Him speak to me. As God whispers into my ears and instructs me, I would sob filled with love for Him and sit motionless like a child in the lap of her mom. Though my body would be weak the next day, but I would be bubbling in my spirit and people could surely see the glory of God in my life.

Before my conversion, I knew very little about God and His Word, that I was not able to even quote John 3:16 from memory or name the four Gospels in order. I did not know about the baptism of the Holy Spirit that the disciples received on the Day of Pentecost. But God wonderfully introduced me to strong believers who helped me to draw closer to God. I started reading the Bible ravenously and God began to reveal to me the truth of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the signs following, the gifts of the Spirit and also the supernatural things of God. The Word of God ignited a fire in my heart. God led me into a Pentecostal Church and shortly I was gloriously filled with the Holy Spirit and I also spoke in tongues. This was a wonderful experience! But there was an insatiable urge and hunger in me to know more of God! I was not content with where I was, I knew that there is much more than what I was experiencing! God never intended for His people to stop after being filled with the Spirit. It is just the beginning! I was all set to launch out into deeper waters with God!

I like to quote the words of Zacharias Tanee Fomum, “The more a person waits on the Lord, the more the Lord will reveal Himself to that one; and the more revelations the person has from the Lord of His character, His will, His plans, His purposes, etc., the more the person will know the Lord.” In Colossians 1:10-12, Paul wrote, “Live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power and joyfully giving thanks to the Father. “ Well, here Paul talks clearly of what makes God really happy. It is not your money that He wants but *He wants you to please Him in all that you do. Got it?* One of the things that my daughter asks me when I am relaxed and cool is, “Tell me something funny that happened to you when you were small.” She is curious to know more about me and wants to get ‘inside’ of me and know who I am. When it is embarrassing to answer all her questions, then she catches hold of my mom to tell her more details about me. I love those moments and the keenness and eagerness my child shows to know more about me. I remember one particular youngster who visited my mom and wanted to know more about my childhood days. More than me, my mom was touched by his enthusiasm.

Do you have that kind of longing for God? Not longing after Bible notes, or theology but A LONGING AFTER GOD?? It is a tragedy to have head knowledge of God, yet never to have met Him. What a dreadful thing for us to become like a tadpole for God, with a big swollen head full of facts BUT with a little tiny tail. Do you know Him personally?? Have you ever felt the difference of a sermon preached by a person bubbling with love for God and a person giving you an eloquent speech with points and notes? The former one will make you cry, repent and change while the latter one makes you just listen.

Friend, don’t wait to get to heaven to touch and feel Him, you can do it right here on earth. Are you listening? There were nights that I refused to sleep and I would sit in the quietness and stillness of the night and weep into the dark and crave for Him. Those tears were tears of love and passion for the love that He extended to me when I was lost. Each time I get up, after a session of love-exchange with my Lord, I would see something spectacular happening in my ministry. Youngsters who come to my meetings, have all turned out to be God-lovers and God’s feet-washers. **REVIVAL STARTS AT THE FEET OF THE LORD!** Luke 10:39 “And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to His teaching.” Make it a goal to sit at His feet. Paul says in Ephesians 5:10 “Learn as you go along what pleases the Lord.”

CHAPTER 5 **Flash from Heaven!**

Acts 9:9 “And he was three days without sight and neither ate nor drank.”

Paul had a wonderful and dramatic experience while he was on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians out there. Though the purpose of his journey was against God; yet, being abundant in mercy, Christ reaches out to this man named Paul. Well, Paul’s encounter with Jesus is just thrilling and gripping. The Bible says in verse 3, “...suddenly a light shone around him from heaven, Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?”

This is just too wonderful for me to write! Paul saw “a light right from heaven”! Just imagine! The bright rays must have just come from the skies above! It would have been

a gorgeous, sparkling and startling moment for Paul! Look what happens, he fell on the ground and then he heard the 'very voice of God"! Saul not only saw a light from heaven, but heard a voice from heaven. It's just too wonderful!

God had to show up in a mighty way to Paul in order to use him in a mighty way! Now understand, God does not allow a man to experience Him for nothing, God had a purpose in the life of Paul. God gives us a divine vision to send us for His mission! Paul's encounter with Jesus on this "great day" is going to form a foundation for the great work that God is going to do in the life of Paul. When Paul heard the voice of heaven, he said, "Who are you Lord? And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads"? Paul asks, "What do you want me to do"? Jesus replies and tells him, "Arise and go into the city and you will be told what you must do". Paul who is now on the ground, tries to get up but something terrible happens, when he arose from the ground, " he could see no one!" God struck him blind. Now some people led him into the city of Damascus according to the Word of God. It is from here, that I want to talk you about the life changing experience of Paul.

A sudden flash light from heaven, knocked Paul to the ground, and kept him there while he heard the voice of God. When he arose from the ground, he was NOT THE SAME MAN. In one flash second, God crushed his plans and replaced it with His plans. God knocked him, humbled him and made him obey His voice instantly. This is what the anointing of God would do a person! God had to strike him blind and make him follow Him. After meeting Jesus, Paul left his plans behind and decided to wait for God's further plans for his life. That's exactly we need to do also. God has a way of getting our attention. God calls us out of our comfort zone, to make major adjustments and join Him in His work. Now watch this, verse 9 says," And he was three days without sight and neither ate nor drank." Why did Paul refuse to eat or drink? What happened in the place, where he was blind and locked up for three days without food or water? God speaks to a man Ananias in verse 11 and says, "...Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying." Yes my friend, Paul lay without sight, without food and water for three days and he was praying to God. He had started his fasting and it is HERE that he received the power to start his ministry with a bang.

Paul's training begins here in the room, where he was LOCKED UP WITH GOD, blind, without food and water. I guess God struck him blind so that he does not get distracted but keeps his focus only on HIM. God has to strike us blind, in order to get our attention! Do you know how it feels to be left alone with God for three days? Have you ever tried sitting with God for this many hours? Particularly without food or water? Specifically when you are aimless and lost in the direction of your life?

After I resigned my job and joined the mission field to work full-time for the Lord, I did not have a ready-made Ministry on hand to walk into. I just had nothing, I had no plans and no agenda but I had the promises of God with me. Along with my husband, I decided to go on three days fasting without food and water to know God's plan for our ministry and future. I had to decide on so many things, we had to shift our house, my little four year old son's education and my daughter's education had to be taken care of. My relatives and my family wondered, how are we going to maintain the family and children, having walked out from a well paid bank job! I decided to lock myself up in my prayer room for three days without food and water. Having always been a busy person and having worked in many top companies, this was a new experience of having to wait on the Lord.

I would like to share here my first experience of Esther fasting which is three days without food and water. I prayed for three hours at a stretch and then I started feeling exhausted. For those who have not done hard praying, would not understand what I was going through. People who do not have any dire need would never exert themselves to pray hard. Some do not trust God and hence they do not strain either, as for me, I trusted only in Him, I believed my future was in the Hands of God and I did not want to make any wrong move in my life, hence I humbled myself to fast and pray. As I sat there in the presence of God, my head started aching badly. I tried to ignore it, but it was getting intense and severe. I tried applying relief balm, but the pain was just increasing. For the next few hours I kept speaking in tongues. I was not able to read the Bible because of the pain but I kept singing songs, praising Him and speaking in tongues. I went to bed that day with severe headache. The next morning I got up with pain. I felt physically weak, but I did not show it to my children, I cooked for them, sent them to school and again entered my prayer room. On the second day also I was able to only speak in tongues because of the physical fatigue and pain. On the second day, I developed stomach pain too, yet through it all I entered the third day of fasting. In the afternoon I became very weak and so I cuddled in the mattress in my prayer room itself. I was not able to pray powerfully, read the Bible or be strong. I refused to come out of the prayer room and at 4 pm I came out and prayed for one hour along with my husband and broke the fast at 5 pm by drinking water and juice. It was a splendid and wonderful experience and the joy of having beaten satan's devices to discourage and exhaust me was simply fantastic. Just with one glass of juice I was jumping, crying and singing, not because I can eat now, but because I had defeated satan. He tried all means to attack me physically and emotionally, but God taught me valuable and rich lessons of endurance, patience and strengthened me spiritually. Dear friend, we need the steel and zeal to confront the massive pressure that satan and the world would bring on us and we get that ONLY THROUGH FASTING. Is anybody listening?

When I go around the cities preaching, I was appalled to see many who did not know about fasting and I was even more horrified to see even church leaders not bothered to get deeper in fasting. Many did not have the experience of fasting for three days without food and water. No wonder they lacked the spiritual strength to resist temptation, pray long and operate under the anointing of the Holy Spirit!

Andrew Murray: "So much love and work are comparatively vain, because there is so little intercession."(The Ministry of Intercession)

Now I want to tell you what happened after I fasted for three days without food and water. Though I did not hear any trumpet sound from heaven during my fasting days, nor did I have any supernatural experience during those days, except pain and suffering, yet God had been there very close to me and ministered to me. I was not even able to read the Bible those days, yet my very determination to fast, endure pain and stay steadfast until the end, surely touched the Master. The rewards and the joy I experienced after three days, is just unexplainable and divine. I felt charged like a powerful engine, that for the next several hours I kept praying, singing and reading the Bible. I felt drawn very, very close to Jesus! Through midnight and early the next day, I sat writing devotions and penning new songs. The devotions that I wrote after my fasting had depth and were rich and saturated with anointing. Hard-hearted people repented and God was stirring the heart of people. My preaching also was never the same after such fasting days. God took me to the next higher level, after my first experience of being "locked up with God for three days without food and water", I started doing it every month along with my

husband. My mother and my children were very upset that I was physically straining myself and they thought I was overdoing my part, but I kept moving forward. It has been several years now and I have been continuously doing the fasting and defeating satan. God has delivered me completely from the stomach pain, but I still do get the severe head ache but not once have I prematurely aborted a fasting. Once on the first day of my fasting without food or water, my mother-in-law became serious and she was admitted in the hospital and along with my husband I had to be by her side and take care of her. It was summer time in Chennai, and the heat was at its peak. As usual, I developed the demonic pain in my forehead. I rebuked it, prayed, spoke in tongues but never aborted the fasting, not even our own family members knew that we were fasting. God gave us the energy and stamina to complete the fasting. Having tasted God's goodness after fasting, no pressure or pain could distract my attention. The book of Esther had fascinated me and stirred my passion to fast more. When Esther gets word that Mordecai is fasting, clothes torn in grief and wearing sackcloth, she sends garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept *them*. I like the way Mordecai refuses good clothes! (Esther 4:4) The situation was serious and Mordecai was determined to fight the evil forces that were planning to wipe out the Jews. The book of Esther ends with victory because Mordecai and Esther decided to fast and pray. The enemies were squashed because of the power of fasting. Hallelujah! The strength I received through fasting, helped me wrestle with the problems that surrounded and choked me. I wonder how people in ministry ignore fasting! I have seen leaders who do not fast, are not able to teach about fasting. There is fear, ignorance and confusion surrounding this subject of fasting which stirred me to write on fasting.

We can fast for a certain number of days without food but only with water, I repeat only water and no tea, coffee or juice. A very convenient fasting which adults and children can do is the partial fasting or what you call as Daniel fasting, where you can fast for one meal, or take only one meal in 24 hours, or give up on delicious food and take only soup, rice water or rice porridge. You can go on long fasts like this. I have fasted for 60 days like this. However, whatever kind of fasting, we need to pray and then start with proper preparation.

Discipline is the mark of Christianity and hence children of Christ should learn the art of fasting from very small age. Parents should set an example of fasting and train their children to fast. Remember we live in a wicked world and it is only through these spiritual weapons that our children can combat the temptations of this world like Daniel. We love to read the twelve chapters of victory in the book of Daniel, but very few fast like Daniel. We should set aside two days in a week to fast with just one meal a day. Once in fifteen days we should train our body to go on an 'fast' without food and water for one full day and break in the night after sufficient prayers.

While Paul was in the room fasting and praying for three days, Ananias came to him, and his first words were, "Brother Saul." He placed his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord – Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here – has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength." Paul always mentions about fasting in his writings.

Paul begins his ministry with a bang, the Bible says in Acts 9:20 "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21 But all that heard *him*

were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? 22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ". His preaching, teaching and ministry were so powerful that the Jews plotted to kill him. Now watch this, within a very short time he became a terror to the Jews! Let me tell you that it was no ordinary people who opposed Paul but they were royal dignitaries, just read 2 Corinthians 11:32, "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: 33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands". Paul was noticed by the governor under Aretas the king! Remember, it was just his initial ministry days after conversion, yet he was in the hit list of the palace. The amount of persecution is directly proportionate to the amount of anointing on you!

If today you are being persecuted for your faith in Christ, remember you are blessed. You would be neck deep in problems if you are neck deep in love with Jesus. Did you get that? Paul was not doing any shallow preaching but he was categorically announcing that Jesus is God. They had enough of him. It was time for them to get rid of Paul, but he comes to know of it. Interestingly, he already has gathered followers and true believers who were listening to his teaching, and these folks are instrumental in getting him out of Damascus. They risked their lives in the night and secretly lowered him out of the city in a basket. Where did Paul receive the power to have a smashing start for his ministry? He received it while he was "locked up with God" for three days without food and water! Whatever is birthed from the Presence of God would prosper and flourish! Hallelujah!

A young mother of two children, who was deserted by her husband, called me after completing three days of Esther fasting without food and water. I was marveled at her determination, strength and undeterred faith in God. She said, "I am sure God would bring my husband back to me." Though her husband had callously and heartlessly cheated on her, but this woman chose to forgive him and also wait for him. She has redeemed and redefined herself from the greasy juncture, which clearly indicated her mental fiber . She has smacked a newfound vibrancy. There was clarity in her mind and cadence in her walk. Could see the determination! She gained them all, not from the gym club or yoga seminar, but from the presence of God. Praise God!

We are able to bear spiritual fruits only when we abide in Him! Though her Esther fasting did not change her circumstances immediately, but it did give her oxen strength to wait on the Lord. Anybody listening? Prayer alters your life! I am not talking about a half-a-minute sleepy prayer, I am talking about 'prayer that should alter your mouth, tongue, eyes, ears, hands, legs and even your wallet.' Got that? A man who sincerely prays will never gossip, lie or use obscene language, he would never view dirty things or use his hands to give or take bribe and squander money. Prayer transforms our life!

Paul talks about fasting in the following scripture as well, he says in 2 Corinthians 6:4,5"....but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way; through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, fastings...." Fasting was one of the key weapon which Paul used in his ministry. He also mentions about fasting in 2 Corinthians 11:27 , he says, "in frequent fastings..." Many people love to read the thrilling and challenging life of Paul but I challenge each one of you to learn more of fasting and train your body to fast. Come on, start right away!

Chapter 6 **Hunger for God.....**

Nehemiah 9:3 “And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for one-fourth of the day, and for another fourth they confessed and worshipped the Lord their God.”

In the days of Nehemiah, the people of God stood and worshipped the Lord; bowed down before Him in prayer and supplication, and when those 3 hours were over, they didn't get into their cars and ride to McDonalds and Pizza Hut for a big breakfast; they were hungry for more of the Word of God, so they stayed for 3 more hours. In many Christian homes, Sundays are reserved to eat more and feel hungry more.

Have you ever allowed your pet dog to lick all over your face, jump over you and wag his tail looking at you as though you are the only person that mattered to him? I remember as a kid I would look forward to come home to be welcomed by my pet dog, who would hang out on the terrace and look out for me. Oh, how I longed to see him! After many years, now being a mother of two children, I feel the same way when my two children hug and cuddle me. Sometimes my daughter who is taller than me would squeeze me and clasp me so tight that I would scream but she would not leave me. My son would jump on me, when he watches his sister having a great time with me. After being crushed between both of them, though I would tell them ‘I am tired’, yet I would enjoy every bit of the game with my children.

While I was worshipping in the church one day, filled with gratitude towards God, suddenly I felt myself just hugging Him, holding Him and just telling Him, “thank you Jesus” and I want more of You. Tears were flowing down my cheek and I was crying my heart out to God. . I now recall the powerful, enigmatic words of the world renowned preacher, Charles Spurgeon, “My first discovery of Christ's injured love was overpowering, and its very hopefulness increased my anguish, for then I saw that I had slain the Lord who had come to save me. I saw that mine was the hand that had made the hammer fall, the hand that had driven the nails which fastened the Redeemer's hands and feet to the cruel tree. This is the sight that breeds repentance. When the Lord visits us, He humbles us, removes all hardness from our hearts and leads us to the Savior's feet.”

I was shaking all over, oblivious to the massive crowd around me. It was an intimate moment of God and me, nobody knew of my joyful personal encounter with God. I did what my children did to me, I was not going to leave Him! I embraced Him with my arms and I placed my head on His shoulders! Can you be this intimate with God? Yes, you can! I left the church “more hungrier” for God! Well I guess this was divine discontentment! I already determined my heart to go on three days fast and sit with God and wait to hear His heart beat. Some of us feel satisfied while we leave church, but I want each one of you to be immensely filled with God's love, that you would leave the

place “still hungry for God”. There were days that my daughter would just dash off into her room without giving me a second glance, those days I would feel miserable and I would immediately know that she is avoiding me either because of some disobedience in her life or some distraction that has come between us. There are times even some new

friend in her life would bring a rift between us. I certainly wanted her to jump all over me. As I sat in the church, I heard Pastor tell the congregation that sins in our life would hinder our close walk with God. Satan closes your ears to God’s Word and shuts your mouth from praising Him. I wondered how much God would suffer to see His children drift away from Him! Sometimes we get satisfied with just tiny showers but for our nation and home to live for God and walk in His ways, we need ‘true hunger for God’ and the river of God to sweep over us.

David sings “ O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.” (Psalm 63:1)

How many of us today would pursue God this way? Are you ready to forsake everything and anything for God? I am truly floored by David’s passion as he says, “My flesh longs for you”! It’s like saying, “I can’t live without You.” Have any of us ever been this serious about our pursuit of God? Has going hard after God become as important to us as water is to someone dying of thirst? Let me ask you today, what do you think would happen to you if you start pursuing God?

You would:

- pray more • fast more • read Bible more • love others more • forgive others more • give more to God • have more burden for the lost • serve more

To put it in a nutshell, when the ‘real thing’ hits you, that is REVIVAL! Your life would never be the same after this.

The superscription at the beginning of Psalm 63 tells us the setting in which David wrote this psalm - "When he was in the Desert of Judah." David knew all too well where he was—in a desert place, a wilderness. In verse one, he describes it as "a dry and weary land (a parched and thirsty land) where there is no water." Yet, from here, his heart desires for God! No wonder God loved his heart! Above all, God wants his children to desire, crave and long for Him! Do you have this hot passion for God today?

I remember years back, while my children were still very young and I was working those days as an Executive Secretary, I would wait for my children to sleep and in the quietness of the night, I would sit and read my Bible. Merlin Carothers author of “Prison to Praise” says about his first experience of reading the Bible as “it was even better than jumping off an aero plane with a parachute.” I felt the same as I read the Bible. I wanted ‘more’ of Him! As a mother of two children, I had just rocked my little baby son to sleep, my daughter safely sleeping now, all through the day, I had been longing for this moment to be alone with the Lord. I could feel the wonderful Presence of the Lord almost engulfing me and I would sit like that, praying for endless hours!

Dear friend, our passion and obsession for Him is what drives us to our knees and keeps us there for many, many hours. Many of us make prayer as some ritual and hence it becomes a difficult task. Some struggle and try to climb the ladder of reaching God through prayer, while the heart does not yearn for His love and Presence. It does not work this way. We need to have an insatiable urge in our heart to be with Him and then our prayer life would dramatically change.

While on my way to work on the scooter with my helmet, I would keep singing, praising, praying and sometimes loudly speaking with Him. Ever since I met my Lord Jesus Christ, I had never been alone in my life. My room would be filled with Christian music, spiritual books and many versions of the Bible. My room has the mark of someone who lives and breathes Jesus! What we are surrounded with tells what we believe, what we worship, and what we aspire to be! We cannot hide it. Jesus filled the air of my room! Jesus became the very breath of my life. I would spend two hours of prayer in the morning before starting off to work, and hence the glory of the Lord enveloped me and I felt chirpy and glorious, no matter what happened inside the office or out of the office. This thirst and hunger pangs did continue at my work spot too. I felt like one in love! He filled my heart, soul, mind and thoughts. What are you waiting for, ask God to fill your whole being with His wonderful presence! I challenge you that your life would never be the same again.

H.G.Wells says, "Is it any wonder that this Galilean is too much for our small hearts?" And yet the heart of man, though small, is big enough for Christ to live in, if man will only make room for Him."

I want to ask you a question...when was the last time that you really pursued God? When was the last time that you pursued God, as if your life depended on Him? You know why Jarius laid aside his position in life and pursued Christ and fell at His feet? Because his daughter's life depended on it. You know why the lady with the issue of blood did not allow a crowd to crowd her out in her pursuit of Christ...because her healing depended on it. You know why when told to shut his mouth, blind Bartemeius cried even louder, "Jesus thou Son of David have mercy on me"...because his sight depended on it. As you begin to move towards Him, He will begin to move towards you. I truly feel thrilled as I write this, how about you? As you read this book, I would like to entice each one of you, to get really, nearly and dearly close to God. Will you?

Chapter 7 **He touched me!**

John 21:12-13 "Jesus said to them, "Come and eat breakfast." Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?" --- knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. "

Back while I was working for a multinational bank, on a particular day, I was reading the book of John during lunch break, the incident where Jesus cooks fish for His disciples on the shores of Tiberias touched me tremendously. The Bible says in John 21:12 "Jesus said to them, "Come and eat break fast". Yet none of them dared ask Him, "Who are You?"- knowing that it was the Lord. This thought of Jesus Himself setting the table for His disciples set a fire in my heart and yearned for His love. The disciples ate from the Hands of Jesus! The lovely Hands of Jesus! My, this is mind-boggling! I wanted to be fed by the Hands of Jesus too! I just wanted it! I kept weeping all the way back home from work that day. While I reached home, I narrated the incident to my husband and suddenly as I was speaking to Him, the mighty anointing of God struck me right in the middle of the living room and I was thrown backwards. It was a heavenly moment! I kept crying throughout the evening filled with the anointing of God. I am sure, many of you as you read this book, would be filled with the same power and anointing that struck me

years back and the same power would hit you too right now in the Name of Jesus! During the family prayer in the night on the same day, I explained to my children of the particular scripture that touched me, and while I was narrating the incident to them, I was again struck by the power of God and I was thrown backwards for a quite distance now. I lay there, curled on the floor right in the middle of our living room, sobbing and crying under the anointing of God. For people, who have not experienced the touch of God would find it hard to understand what I was going through. Ever since, God started mightily moving in my life, my life was never the same again. More of God's touch in my life, made me give more of me to Him. It works that way! I stopped sleeping and I started praying more in the night. I stopped eating much and started fasting more. I stopped reading secular books and started delving deeper into the Bible.

Revelations 3:20 says “.....If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him...” Opening the doors of our heart to let Jesus come in is a big step indeed! He walks in and sweeps over the place with His Presence. There is no place for “I” any more. I am talking about total surrender here! When Martin Luther was asked how he overcame the devil, he replied, “Well, when he comes knocking at the door of my heart, and asks ‘Who lives here?’ the dear Lord Jesus goes to the door and says, “Martin Luther used to live here, but he has moved out. Now I live here.” *When Christ fills our lives Satan has no entrance.* Praise God! Let us be able to roar like the Apostle Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”(Galatians 2:20)

A person interested in ministry, must first develop intimacy with God. Intimacy with God is vital for ministry. Being born into a traditional Protestant family, I never knew about the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues or anointing. When the pastor came to pray for me, instead of asking him to pray for my healing, I asked him for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I started watching God TV channel sitting in my living room and my thirst for God grew more and more. After the miraculous healing which I had explained in chapter One, I started moving closer to God. There were times that I would be slain under the power of God as I kneel and pray in my bed room. I would look up at God and just sob. It was incredible! He captured my heart with His love and held me close to Him. Did you know, God-lovers would eventually become Servers? How could you not serve Him, if you are filled with love for Him? Love for people would follow after you start loving God.

Rev. Billy Graham says, “When you come to Christ, He transforms you. You receive a power to love men, beyond your natural ability to love”. I started prayer cell during lunch break at our office and people began experiencing God in a new way. I emphasized about fasting, prayer and Bible reading and taught them to do it in a systematic way. I came down heavily on people who were lazy and lethargic in this area. On the very first year after being saved, we started our ‘all-night-prayer’ service at our home, which started at 10 pm and continued until the next day 5 am. I’m sure many of you would say, ‘Ah!’ We are ready to do ‘night duty’ but never do we want to do ‘night prayer!’ I am speaking to someone out there! I wanted Christians to move from their comfort zone and get deeper with God. I would preach for about four hours in the night and many who attended those meetings are now serving God with the same zeal. When something combustible touches fire, it starts to burn as well. After five years, when He called me for full-time service, it was never, never hard, because by then I was totally sold out for God. Nothing on earth could woo me away from Him!

I would like to mention here an incident that happened at Dohnavur, the place where Mother Amy Carmichael served the Lord. One day Jesus visited Dohnavur! When the presence of Jesus was always among them, why should I say, 'one day Jesus visited Dohnavur?' Yes, there is a reason, read on.....

On that particular Sunday, while Mother Amy Carmichael was speaking, suddenly she felt the presence of God in a mighty way, that she was unable to speak or pray. She was dumbstruck! Senior boys studying in high school, tried to pray but they ended up sobbing. The other children, likewise, were unable to pray, but were weeping unto the Lord. Little children and women were also struck by the power of God and they all prostrated and wept at His feet. The cries of the people were like the noise of the raging sea. Some elderly women, who felt this 'strange,' hinted mother to stop 'this' noise; but the Lord, commanded Mother; 'do not stop them.' After few hours the situation got normal, but not the lives of the people who had an encounter with Jesus! Their lives were spectacularly changed after this divine experience. There was transformation in the Dohnavur family, people repented, workers started working with sincerity and there was love and unity among them. Jesus did visit Dohnavur that Sunday!

How my heart aches that the world should experience Him such a way! We need the Holy Ghost fire to engulf this world! Come, Holy Spirit we need Thee!

We have been lukewarm long enough, come on, let us burn for God. We are in the last days and nothing but only "fire" can bring the sinners to God. *Rev. Billy Graham said, "The root of sin in each of our hearts is extremely deep, and this is the basic cause of the world's problems; only the fire of the Lord can burn it out. This is precisely what Christ came to do. He didn't come to treat symptoms. He came to get at the very heart of man's disease".*

People want something new, a fresh touch from God, some fresh manna from heaven and fresh move of the Holy Spirit. The church has been stuck long enough with old traditional ways, it is time to cry to God and ask Him to pour down the fire in our services. I am sick of watching people walk in late to church, leave early, walk around the compound during the church service. We need people to fear God and love the "House of God". Let us say like David in Psalm 84:1,2 "How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; My heart and my flesh cry out for the loving God".

Chapter 8 **Lord, teach us to pray.....**

Luke 11:1 "And it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray...."

I love this! I guess the disciples watched the Master pray earnestly, sincerely, powerfully and mightily that, when He ceased, one of His disciples rushed to Him and said that they wanted 'that power'. Do you want that power too? Youngsters would run to me after the meeting and ask me to teach the ways to pray long, to be in His presence long and to tarry in prayer. If you had not mastered the art of prayer then you may not be able to teach. The preacher needs to learn it first!

I remember hearing a preacher say during his sermon, "spend at least little time every day in prayer". I wanted to scream and say, "not little but God wants more of us

everyday". How could we say, "Jesus I love you" and not spend much time with Him? How could we so daringly deny prayer and call ourselves as Christians? May be you do not understand the secrets of prayer but we could at least come to Jesus like his disciples and say, "Lord, teach us to pray"!

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He says in Luke 11:2 "...When you pray, say Our Father in heaven..." Obviously the Lord's Prayer was not given to be just recited as a ritual. Our Lord had given us a formula on 'how to pray'. It is sad to watch Christians recite the Lord's prayer blindly without understanding the rich meaning behind His words. *Prayer is a private talk with God!* Jesus says in Matthew 6:6 "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

We need to shut ourselves with God in prayer. *Leonard Ravenhill said ("While Revival Tarries", Chapter 2, Prayer Grasps Eternity)* "No man is greater than his prayer life. The pastor who is not praying is playing; the people who are not praying are straying. The pulpit can be a shop-window to display one's talents; the prayer closet allows no showing off." It is so heart rending to watch people neglect the most vital need in their life and that is prayer. Ultimately the reason for the lack of prayer is spiritual lethargy and laziness. Why is it that many struggle in the area of prayer? Why do they find it so hard? Why do they read 1000 books on "how to pray" but spend not a single minute in prayer? Because they don't know God much, they don't love Him much as to leave behind everything else and come to Him to talk to Him.

I would like to share here my experience of meeting an aged mom and her son during a train journey, who were hindu believers and I was literally shaken by their passionate love for their gods. He had the head-phone plugged to his ears and was listening to music, most part of the journey. After a tremendous struggle of silently wrestling in prayer for him, I got to speak to him for some time. He said that he utters praises to his gods more than thousands times during the day. He does not watch movies nor listen to movie songs, he is engaged 24/7 praising his gods. Besides doing this, everyday he sweeps and cleans the temple near his home. He said, 'serving his god and praising him all the time is the passion in his life.' While I see complacent Christians all around 33

me, who do not care to spend a minute in prayer or separate time to read His Word, such words from a hindu man just blew me up. Since Christians are sleeping and snoring without praising the real God, the devil has stolen the worship. Jesus said in Mathew 15:9 "And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." I used to be invited often to a church, whenever I visited that particular city; I was surprised by the frequent change in their worship timings, each time I visit, it would be different. One day during the service, the Senior Pastor of the church enquired the church if the recent change in timings were convenient to them; half the church came late, though. Wicked people will never change, even if the church makes a thousand changes for their benefit! My heart is gripped with a bit of urgency for today's churches, they are like mushrooms growing rapidly; BUT is God really moving in their midst????

Today the churches pamper people to draw them to church: breakfast is offered, flowers are given to new comers, honey-sweet sermons are carefully preached so that the members are not upset- all that is missing are feeding bottles! What else can you offer to a Christian who refuses to grow? Friend, you cannot wait to get into His Presence on Sunday morning, if you have true passion and love for God, nobody need to woo and cajole you! You would come anyways!

Back when I was a working, young mother with a teenage daughter and an infant to take care of, I would do all my homework of pressing the clothes and getting the next day breakfast items ready, on Saturday evening itself, to attend church the next day at 7.30 am. I would pray to God that I should be in the seat at 7.25 am sharp; we did make it most of the times. God watched our passion and commitment and gave us a church of our own several years later. On May 16, 2010, we started SHILOH REVIVAL CHURCH in Hyderabad. Within eleven months of moving into the new city Hyderabad, where we did not know the language or culture, God trusted us to do His work and gave us the big responsibility of taking care of His church. Friend, if you are faithful, you would be blessed!

Today, church is given the least priority. Church is shoved back, if there is a call to attend work, after all God is not going to shoot you with his double-barrel gun. Such is the callous attitude of the Christians towards the House of God, they walk in late and walk out early. Several years back, while I attended a traditional church, I saw elegantly dressed people sitting in their cars, drunk on a Christmas day, indifferently listening to the sermon from the loudspeakers. My eyes were opened to see that I was not in the right church and we started seeking God to take us to the right place. He did!

A church is a place from where you get the spiritual manna which will carry you through the rest of the week. Parrot like reciting from a familiar book, week after week, and an insipid message would take you no where. You would remain wicked, critical and in the dark. Wake up people! We live in a world that is flooded with busyness, racket, and commotion and many are unconcerned about spiritual issues. It is easy to be sidetracked. People who navigate the city roads and streets to find a good restaurant, do not care much, as to where they go to worship the Lord. They just jump into the nearest possible tent and be done with it. Worst still there are Christians who do not even move out of their living room and argue that 'God TV' was sufficient. How will these people stand before the judgment seat of Christ and answer His command: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). 34

Believe me, when you pray, He listens to you! He hears you! He would never miss out even one word! However, God answers prayers, not in your schedule but in His time, though. This is where we doubt Him and miss out on getting down on our knees to pray. Trust Him and pour out your heart. Get connected with God from the moment you open your eyes to the time you close your eyes in the night. Keep speaking to Him about everything in your life. Remember, He is crazy about you and wants to get connected with you. God wants to walk hand in hand with you, every second of the day!

I had never felt lonely in life after I developed a habit to pray all the time. I remember while returning in the train after a meeting, I was alone and I started reading a book of Amy Carmichael who came to serve in India when she was twenty eight years old. I read the part where God tells her not to run to people for help or share her grief with others but only to Him. He whispered a question which baffled her, God asked, "Don't you believe that I listen to you and I will solve your problem?" This dramatically changed the life of Amy. Never again did she run to people while in trouble, but she determined herself to pour out her heart only to God. After reading this, I sat for a long time with eyes brimming with tears! I made a commitment to God at that very moment in the train, to run only to Him while in need. Did you know prayer alters your life? The Bible says in Luke 9:29 "As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered..."

Dear friends, if you do not hear the voice of God in your prayer room, then you would hear the voice of the devil outside the prayer room. Be careful! A young married Christian girl called me on my mobile and said that for the past 15 days she was like a 'stone' because her ex-lover had called her after many years on the phone and cried to her saying: 'you have betrayed me by marrying someone else.' Shattered by the words and filled with guilty feelings, this girl came to me for counseling. I advised her that this torture was from the devil and asked her to read the Word more and divert her attention and also tell the person never to call her again. When we fail to hear the voice of God, we would hear the voices of such devils that would threaten us. Not many have the time to sit and wait to hear the voice of God, though. We rush in and dash out! There are many who say a fleeting one second prayer in the bus, train and car. There are others who place a tight kiss on the 'Sacred Heart picture of Jesus' and leave home. There are still others who shoot a flying kiss to Jesus and go their way. How can we expect our lives to be altered? Are you listening?

In the above scripture we are told that 'as He prayed, the appearance of His face altered.' The word 'altered' captured my attention! It is sad that many, I repeat many Christians do not know the treasure that we reap after prayers. All the four books of the gospel, that is, Mathew, Mark, Luke and John records the prayer life of Jesus. Mark 1:35 says "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." We have the privilege to commune on a minute to minute basis with the Almighty. Think of that! How we hang around the cabin for a one minute conversation with the boss! But as we kneel to pray, we get to talk to the Creator at any part of the day! Oh, isn't this mind-boggling?

While I was working, I taught my friends to pray; not erratically and randomly, but meticulously and regularly. I would check on them regularly and encourage them to do it with determination. If you fast when you feel like and pray when you feel like, then diligence and discipline is lacking in your life. You cannot be lackadaisical in your attitude towards God. The ones that obediently followed my instructions are shining even today. Prayer is not a magic wand to get your wish immediately. Yes, God does answer our prayers sometimes immediately and sometimes in His time; however, prayer equips a person to handle the delays, handle the pressures of life, handle the trials and temptations of this world and also changes you altogether. Our relationship with God totally changes our approach in life, our attitudes, our priorities, our outlook, our agenda and revolutionizes our life so spectacularly that people would surely notice. He changes us inside out. Jesus says in Mathew 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." Powerful!

God poured the burden for souls into my heart. I would weep, mourn and cry for hours together and pray for people, countries, missions and for churches. This is God-given and not effort-driven! We could never pray and intercede for others without burden for souls. Only when we make an effort to sit and pray, would God reward us with such anointing. If only people rightly understand the benefits and rewards of prayer, then there would not be such thing as prayerlessness among us.

When people are called for 'revival meetings' some would come, but if people are invited for just 'prayer', very few would come. Satan has largely succeeded in keeping prayer away from the life of Christians. All work and no prayer, certainly makes a Christian dull and hopeless. Prayer is the weapon given by God to fight against satan. We need to use it wisely and effectively! I would like to talk about the prayer of Nehemiah here; though

the book of Nehemiah starts with weeping, yet it ends with Nehemiah rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 1:4 "So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven."

Let us learn to sit before God before we run for God! The book of Nehemiah opens with Nehemiah weeping at the feet of the Lord and ends with him rebuilding the broken walls!
A BROKEN HEART BEGINS WITH OPEN EYES!

Nehemiah did not rush through things but first he sat at His feet, wept, fasted, prayed and mourned for many days! Power starts here! Where? At His Feet! Everything that happens after this prayer of Nehemiah seems to be successful and we watch the favor of God surround him like a mighty shield, because he had done the initial homework of praying much. His prayers were like mighty wheels that took him everywhere and gave him success too. How many of us care to do this?

Before you decide to marry, start a business, plan for a shift in your job and before you plan any serious change in your life.....learn to fast and pray. Don't be guided by your convictions or emotions, you would be led astray; allow God to guide you!

I know there are many young men and women who would love to be ambitious and daring like Nehemiah, but nothing works without prayer. Are you listening? Nehemiah prayed for his boss before approaching him: "let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer."(Nehemiah 1:11) Next we find the king ask him, 'what do you want?'(2:4) Nehemiah received favor in the eyes of his supervisors because of his prayers.

When Nehemiah requests for a break from work, the king was not only pleased to let him go but he also gave him a permission letter for hassle-free transport and also gave him timber from his own forest to build the gates of Jerusalem. Not only that, the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with him. Do you call this to be lucky or the grace of God? Absolute grace of the Hand of God on Nehemiah! Friend, let us learn to pray! I am talking about a personal communication with your God!

In the subsequent chapters, we find many people trying to oppose Nehemiah, but he stands firm in his commitment. Friends, don't expect a trouble-free walk when you are taking up a daunting task for God. The devil would come, even if he cannot beat you, he would at least try to scare you, but prayers and fasting would give you the confidence to go ahead.

When I prepare for a convention meeting, where I have to share the Word consecutively for three days at a stretch, the devil would try to attack me from all quarters. Right from the time of traveling to the time of preaching, it would be fire-fighting all the while; however, since I would have prayed, fasted and spent much time at His Feet, I would be able to resist his evil devices. In a particular village, where there was tremendous opposition for the Gospel, I was preaching in an open air meeting, while I was preaching, a group of drunkards sat close to the venue and started abusing, mocking and distracting the meeting, they even went to the extent of man-handling the pastor who had arranged the meeting. That particular day, I was standing on a bullock-cart and preaching the message, however; I continued to preach and never gave in to fear. That was surely a thrilling experience! However, my husband and me had fasted and prayed

before the meeting, hence God's protection was with us not only through the meeting but also after that. Praise God!

Being a mother of two children and a wife, besides serving as a servant of God, I had many challenges to face; I had to be a 'Firebrand multi-tasker!' Only because of His grace, I was and am able to walk the tightrope between the roles as mother, wife and His servant, with an oeuvre that showcases a mix of wisdom and strength. During a two days spiritual retreat camp which was arranged in a grand manner, besides supervising the administration side of the camp, I was preaching on both days. My son was ten years old at that time and he went berserk playing wildly with other kids because the campsite was a lovely mango grove. He created such a racket, that on the third day, because of exertion, strain and heat, he fell sick. I had to take care of him the whole night, so I was awake. The next day I was too weak and tired; but I had to preach in the morning. I wondered how! My voice was totally damaged! I managed to preach in the next day Sunday morning service in a church in that particular city and when I heard people tell me, 'this was the best message of all', what do you think I can say, except, 'thank you Jesus!' What was the secret key behind the success! My husband and me had fasted 40 days for this camp! The devil could not wag his tail! All his plans were squashed! Praise the Lord!

I can quote many examples in our ministry and my life, where prayer and fasting had sustained me during difficult times. Today, if you are dealing with an unsaved husband/wife, rebellious children, financial stress, whatever, fight the enemy on your knees like Nehemiah. I challenge you today to let God be your strength! Let Him take over the load in your life. Trust Him with your life.

The book on "Revival in Brownsville Assembly of God Church, Pensacola" made me ravenously hunger for God's power. Unbelievable revival breaks out in this church on Father's Day in the year 1995 and people from every denomination and walk of life arrive in loaded buses, vans and cars from every state in the nation. Each day, 15 to 20 countries would be represented. An average of 2000 first time visitors thronged the church everyday. Incredible! What was happening? People were touched, convicted and changed by the mighty anointing of the Holy Spirit move in the church. Thousands rushed to the altar every day and the revival continued day and night for many months. How did this happen? This is an important question? Some of us are so content with slight showers that very soon it wanes way and we are back to square one, struggling with our spiritual growth.

Pastor Kilpatrick of the church explains that many years before the beginning of the revival, he prepared his church to pray meticulously. In his book, "Feast of Fire", Pastor Kilpatrick wrote: "I started to see that if I took a pie gauge of everything that was being done in our church and broke that pie up, prayer was usually the thinnest slice. The biggest slice of the pie were the preaching, the worship, the offering, and a little bit of altar time when we prayed with people. The Holy Spirit showed me that though His House was supposed to be a house of prayer, ours was really everything but prayer. Something had to change." Pastor Kilpatrick obeyed God's direction and started Sunday night prayers and though he feared that people would not come for the prayer meeting, yet surprisingly the attendance grew. They continued the Sunday night prayer meetings for three years and then he also started Tuesday night prayer meetings. Every Tuesday about 1000 prayer warriors gathered to pray for the revival of the church. This prayer preparation has been the cause for the mighty revival of the church. I believe as people

walked into the church, they went down on their knees crying and repenting. People were falling under the power of God. The music, worship, sermons and everything about the crusade was just spectacular and oozing with the Presence of God that people refuse to leave the auditorium.

Don't you want this kind of revival to hit our nation and other nations as well? Are we ready to pray like this for our country? When I visit many cities, I am so heart broken to see empty churches and scanty attendance. I guess, we have not prayed enough and longed enough for God's power, have we? My heart is aching and craving for more of God in our country! How about you? Are you happy where you are? You never know the depths God can take you when you surrender into His Hands!

Chapter 9 **Shut the door!**

2 King 4:3 "Then he said, ***"Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, empty vessels and not too few.4 Then go in and shut the door behind yourself and your sons and pour into all these vessels. And when one is full, set it aside."***

When you shut the door behind yourself for an intimate meeting with God, I assure you "the windows of heaven will open for you and God would pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."(Malachi 3:10)Isn't that exciting?

Jesus clearly points out the benefits we receive when we shut the door for prayer: Mathew 6:6 "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Have you ever been in a situation which looked absolutely hopeless? Situations in your life look so grim that you feel that there is no way out. Are you there? I want to tell you today that God would make a way for you! Amen. The above passage tells of Elisha's instructions to the widow of a prophet who comes crying to him, because her late husband had left behind huge debts and the creditors were claiming for her two children in exchange for the money. Elisha looked at her and said, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" The widow replied that she has nothing except a jar of oil. Elisha gave her a set of instructions for the grieving lady and nothing else.

Elisha told her: a) go outside b) borrow vessels from all the neighbors (not just a few) c)empty vessels and d) then shut the door along with her two sons e) pour the oil into the vessels. Well, the most outstanding instruction was "shut the door behind yourself and the two sons!" They had suffered much and had been humiliated much, now it was God's time to bless them much. Most of us want miracles to happen in our life but we never want to shut ourselves with God.

When Pastor Paul Yonggi Cho was a young minister with several thousand members in his church, he felt greatly blessed and actually drifted into complacency in his ministry. Then God allowed the perplexity of physical weakness in his body. He developed a case of nervous exhaustion and some problems with his heart. He had difficulty to simply carry out even his daily tasks. During that period, God drew him close to Him and showed many changes that needed to take place in his life. (From Pastor Paul Yonggi

Cho's book "Solving Life's Problems") Sometimes through sickness God shuts the door to be close with Him.

Elisha did not say, let me see how much money I have in my bank account, instead he gives her instructions to use 'her own resources'. This was no spectacular modus operandi for a super flow miracle. It was the most weird plan. The widow takes a remarkable step which was the reason for the whole miracle! Verse 5 says, "So she went from him and shut the door behind herself and her sons. And as she poured they brought the vessels to her." That's fantastic faith! The important key to blessings is obedience! She did not linger behind to question the authenticity of the instructions, 'she just obeyed.' When she shut the door with a giant faith with her two sons to pour the oil into the empty cans, God stepped in to fill the cans. Hallelujah! In fact, both her sons were involved in carrying the jars. The empty jars filled up, but the jar she was pouring from did not run dry. She kept pouring and pouring! Amazing! Many times we pray for the situation to change. We desperately want God to deliver us from the situation but we are not willing to do as God says. Through the Word, we receive certain instructions - some things we need to do or change, but we are unwilling to obey and therefore fail to experience the miracle that God has planned for us. Are you listening?

The boys had the tough task of visiting all the neighbors and asking them for empty vessels. They did not ridicule Elisha for this absurd instruction because they believed the word of the prophet. From where did the oil come? From heaven! Can we give a shout of praise! If you really want God's miracles then you must get alone with God. Shut the door! The boys must have been awed when they saw the oil flowing into the empty vessels. God did not say go borrow money, rice or dhal but he said, 'just go get the empty cans', the woman stepped out in faith and experienced an amazing provision in her life. Elisha tells her, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on the rest." He is surely a God of abundance! It all started with her faith in shutting the door which enabled God to open His Hands! When we are at the end of our road, we should turn to Him, listen to Him and take the step of faith and walk on. Don't try to reason out God's ways and plans, just obey! Let us remember what the Lord says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD." (Isaiah 55:8)

The prophet Elisha had God's purpose in his mind, when he instructed the widow to 'Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors', the boys might have initially felt humiliated to visit all the neighbors and collect empty vessels, however, God not only gave them abundance through His provision, but also changed their humiliation to joy. Since they had visited the entire neighborhood for empty vessels, after the miracle, the entire town came to know of it. God's name was thereby glorified! God changed their shame to fame! When I was brought home in a stretcher from the hospital, the people in the entire street came to see me; I felt ashamed, hopeless and helpless, to be carried by strangers, however, God later healed me, gave me a beautiful baby boy, I rejoined work and went in my scooter to office; God lifted my head in the same place where I felt miserable. Psalm 3:3 'But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head.'

During the quarterly printing of our "My Delight" magazine, we were running short of funds. We had to send out the magazines to the subscribers and the time frame was short. We wiped out all the money in our kitty and we paid an advance but the printing could be started only if we paid the balance amount which was quite huge. My husband and I shut our prayer room and were praying to God for a miracle. I knew in my heart, it

may be a big amount in my sight but not for my Lord. Nothing happened for a week but on the eighth day, I got a call on my mobile informing me that a brother from Dubai had sent an offering which was exactly the amount that we needed. Amazing provision! I like prophet Elisha's bold confidence when he says in advance, "when one is full, set it aside" My, that's faith! He knew God would pour down His blessing behind the closed door! That's fantastic! This is what it means by saying, 'walk the talk!' Are you listening? I would also like to mention of another woman of faith who shut the door with her dead son. This is absolutely a scintillating miracle! The Bible says 2 King 4:21 "And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God and shut the door behind him and went out." The Shunammite woman was given a son in her old age. Much like the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah, a gift from God. But when her 'miracle child' dies in her lap, she did not lay the body of her son in his bed she did not take him and put him in her bed, she did not call for help, but she placed him in the bed of Elisha, the man of God! Amazing! *She did not prepare for his burial but instead she was getting ready for his resurrection!* I am just thrilled and excited as I write this! We need to put our faith in Him. God will never bring you to it without making a way for you to get through it! Hallelujah! I like the way she kept confessing 'It is well,' while her son lay dead in the bed. That's faith in action! Proverbs 18:21 "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." When they hit the first boulder itself, people begin to complain and grumble, rather than jump up in faith and cross the hurdle. Let's not allow problems to crush our faith, instead, let us learn to tell, 'all is well!' Champions do not buckle down with pressure but are made of sterner stuff. They have the ability to use defeat as a stepping stone to success. Let's turn our heart-break to joy-break! May be things are wobbling in your life right now, don't bother, keep going steady for the Lord. Watch your end! People are not going to like you for your stand for God, though. But we need to stand strong like the Shunammite woman. She didn't slow down. She kept on going.

When prophet Elisha comes to know of the death of the boy, he gets behind shut doors too. Look what happens! 2 King 4:32 "When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed.³³ So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the LORD." I want to talk her about the hard, fervent prayer of Elisha: "And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm." When the flesh of the child became warm, he did not become content and stop praying, but now he intensifies the prayer. I'm excited as I write this! We have volumes to learn from this great man of God. How soon we get satisfied and content! But God is looking for strong, severe intercessors! Hallelujah! By placing his eyes on the eyes of child, by putting his mouth on his mouth, by laying his hands on his hands and by stretching himself on the child; the prophet reveals his steadfast faith in God and His power. He depended on the anointing of the Holy Ghost Fire to deliver the child. We need to pray until we see the enemy's fort come down, until we see the Jericho wall come down, until we see the devil under our feet, until we see the salvation of our loved and near ones, until we see light shine upon the dark! Elisha returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.' Awesome! Elisha triumphed over the enemy through prayer! Elisha defeated the most dreadful spirit of death. The triumph is even bigger because of the size of the opponent! Friend, do not worry and get palpitations when you look at the magnitude of the problem; the bigger the problem, the stronger and deeper should the prayer be. Half-hearted, shallow prayers would do no good. Got that?

Wesley L. Duewel in his book "Touch the World through prayer" says, "God expects His children to face mountains of difficulties and to move them. He does not intend for us to be stopped by them, but to accept them as a challenge, either to turn them into highways for God's greater glory or else to cast them into the sea, completely removed from the sight, as if they had never existed. Jesus assures us that this is fully possible 41

when His children confront the mountains with faith, but reminds us that such mountain-moving may require prolonged prayer and fasting. The Holy Spirit will do the miracle. It will not be done by our might or power (Zech. 4:6)"

Hard nuts were cracked on one single day, when 3000 souls accepted Jesus Christ through the sermon of Peter! Acts 2:41 "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."

The three thousand who heard the message from Peter were no ordinary people but they were the same hard hearted people who crucified Jesus. How could such people turn their heart to Jesus in just one day's time and with just one sermon? Now watch this, such things are not humanly possible or through human strength, it is the power of the Holy Spirit that harvested the souls for Jesus. When Apostle Paul refers to this power, he said in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 "And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. "

Friend, we need to have enough ammunition to combat the demonic forces. Now, what is that? P-r-a-y-e-r! Where do you think Peter, who ducked away during times of emergency, emerged with such boldness to address an aggressive, hard-hearted crowd who crucified Jesus? He received the nerves of steel, power and guts from the upper room where they had tarried and prayed. Wonderful! Dakes said, "Private prayer brings public power!"

After three days of fasting and prayer, my husband and I went to preach in a Youth meeting, the venue wore a festive look and various programs were being conducted. The time was ticking away with group dance, skits and quiz programs, I wondered would I get a slot to preach? Finally when it was time for me to preach and after the mike was handed over to me, some church elders started distributing tea to the members. I was appalled! I strictly refused to preach and instructed the tea distribution to be stopped, after much persuasion they took back the tea trays. I pleaded for discipline, silence and requested them to prepare themselves to hear the voice of God. What followed was breath-taking! The Spirit of the Lord took control of the meeting and at the end of the meeting, the boys and girls who earlier danced and sang, were wailing loudly to the Lord. Touched by the presence of God and cut to the souls, with hands lifted up, tears rolling down their cheek, the young people were crying unto the Lord! It was an enthralling sight! The pastor and the elders were shaken up by the response of the youngsters. What brought this revival? The time that my husband and I spent in the throne room of heaven brought down the power from heaven on that church. The testimony of one young girl moved me immensely, with her mom standing next to her, with tears and amidst sobs, she said that the youth leader of that church had continuously compelled her to attend this particular meeting, though hesitant she had come to the meeting and God had touched her heart. Right in front of me, she apologized to her mom for her rebellious attitude. She seemed to be oblivious about the crowd around her, all that mattered to her, at that moment was God! Friend, after the

meeting, engulfed by the love of Jesus, the youth surrounded us and never wanted to leave us. My husband and I stood captivated by their love and affection! Such is the power of prayer! Stop running wildly during times of crisis, learn to trust God and sit in His presence.

I was called to pray for a 9 year old boy who was suffering from severe convulsions and vomiting, he was a 'special' child since birth with multiple complications in his body. The parents were worried about the convulsions and the doctors had advised immediate brain surgery; the desperate parents were hectically running for second opinions from various other doctors. I could see fear and pain in the eyes of the parents. With both of them working, they had taken leave on that particular day and were making phone calls to various hospitals. My husband and I walked into their home on that particular day. I listened to them patiently as they narrated their part of anguish and pain, then I just asked them one question, "have you both prayed for your son?" I was astonished to hear the father say that they did not find time to sit together and pray. Isn't that painful? I requested them to just postpone everything else and immediately set aside time to fast and pray. Before leaving their home, the father said, "I feel peace now and encouraged. At a time, when everything around us looked dark and frightening, the subject of prayer and Jesus has brought light into our life." Eventually prayer brought victory and brain surgery was not necessary for the kid. Hallelujah!

God meets you personally and His ears are inclined to your pleas when you shut the doors for prayers!

Chapter 10 **Abide in Him.....**

John 15:5 says, "I am the vine, you are the branches, he who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing."

Do you know what it means to abide in Him? The English dictionary defines 'abide' as 'hold to and stick to.' Spiritually it means to 'stick on to Jesus, hang on to Him and stay in Him'. Did you get this? There is a tranquility about it! I remember the words of Prophet Ezekiel Francis, Founder of Berachah Prophetic Ministries, whose testimony inspired me to jump into ministry; he said, 'your ministry should be birthed from the Presence of God'. I would like to quote Mark 3:14 here, "Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him....." Being with Him is most important before going into the world to preach the gospel. He is the source of energy, power and anointing to preach the gospel! Many churches are dry and many sermons are dry, lacking the fresh touch of God and devoid of anointing because they have not been birthed from the Presence of God. Anything fresh from heaven, after abiding with Him, would have the fresh flavor of heaven! People are fed up of stale sermons, grinding over and over again of the same subjects, but our new generation want a 'fresh touch'. They are ravenously hungry for God! Many young people turned to God when I ministered to them, some of them have also committed their lives to full time ministry and there are others who are doing part-time ministry; serving God from their respective places. This is what happens when you 'abide with God'! You start affecting the life of others! Is it not exciting? Come on, we need to let the world know that it is fun being in the presence of God!

As I was reading the book of John and the first, second and third book of John, I found that the word 'abide' has been used several times. John certainly knew what he was talking about! He was the one who was clinging on to the bosom of Jesus. We read in John 13:23, " Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved." He is none other than John himself! John went deeper and further in his relationship with God. He was never satisfied just to be a disciple. He wanted to lean on Jesus' bosom! I guess John enjoyed the 'soft-spongy-cushion-like-comfort' offered by Jesus! He snuggled closer and closer to Him! Listen! In order to have this divine-comfort, you need to leave the comforts and the pleasures that the world offers you! Are you hearing me? The Bible says: Luke 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

I'm so glad God saved me from dead religion, rules and regulations, and put me in a relationship with him. "*Being a Christian is not just believing about Christ but it is a vital , dynamic, living relationship with the living Christ*" said Rev. Billy Graham. Dear friend, I am not satisfied sitting far away from Him, I want to be on His lap and spread all over his bosom. I am excited! Now watch this! While others sat far from him, John is the only disciple that ever heard the Lord's heart beat! There are times when we cannot stand, but I am glad for a place to lean! This is His last night, but John is the only one who sat close by. While the others were arguing over who would be first in the kingdom, John was leaning on Jesus' bosom, all they could see was themselves and one another, but all John could see was Him. While Peter was making lofty and brash promises, that he could not keep, to be faithful to Christ until death; John was leaning on Jesus' bosom. While Judas was counting his money; John was leaning on Jesus' bosom. While some were finding fault, John was leaning on His bosom. While the others listened to themselves and one another, John was feeling the Lord's breath, listening to His heartbeat, feeling the warmth of His love. Dear reader, let these words pour fuels of 'passion' into your heart so that your love for Him burns vigorously. I am keen on setting some souls on fire for God! Are you listening? It is enough that we have been watchers of revival and hearers of past revivals, now let us get closer to Him, lean on His bosom, hear His heart beat and bring the world closer to Jesus. Are you ready? Only as we get closer and closer to Him, can we get the world closer to Him. Where are you sitting today? Are you at His feet like Mary or far away like Martha? Mary made the right choice that Jesus said, "Mary has chosen that good part. (Luke 10:42)

The words "Abide in Me" (John 15:4) stirred and touched my heart that I was not able to proceed further. There are certain scriptures in the Bible which creates such an impression in our heart that even after many, many years, we remember them vividly for the mighty changes that it had brought about in our lives. I am sure you would agree with me! This scripture is one of them, for me! It motivated and triggered me to get deeper with God! The launching of a rocket always thrilled me, I remember as a kid watching the rocket crackers as they zoomed into the sky and sprayed fire in the sky. Aha! That was superb! Real rockets are based on the principle of propulsion. Fuel is burned inside their boosters, which produces the gas. The gas builds up the pressure inside the booster and escapes through the nozzle. The gas escaping produces an opposite reaction force, which sends the rocket upwards and into space. A force is required to launch the rocket, likewise, I can say that this scripture is like that 'force' for me, to surge rocket-high for God. (Later, we called the Revival-fire-camps that we started in Chennai in the year 2010 as "Abide-in-Christ-Revival-Fire-Camps and also we named our Free school for the abandoned kids in Hyderabad as 'Abide Public School' in 2011.)

Ever since I had an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, I have been thirsting to know Him more closer and more nearer. I have never ever been satisfied!

I would like to quote the words of author Tommy Tenney from his book "The God Chasers". This book touched my heart and challenged me to get to know Him MORE! More than theological facts, we need to know HIM more! Hosea 6:6 says, "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." The author says, "God is calling you to a new level of intimacy. If you dare to answer His call, the Lord will reveal a fresh part of His character. He will pull you so close that you will be breathing the very rarefied air of Heaven. The only way to the place David called "the secret place" is through the door of focused worship, when you lay aside every distraction and focus your body, soul and spirit upon God. When His presence becomes so strong that you are oblivious to everyone and everything else around you, then you will never 'recover' from this."

Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches, he who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) Here, Jesus says that He is the vine and we are the branches which means, we need to cling on to Jesus the way the branches cling on to the vine. We had gone as a family to a picnic spot, a pathway hewn between a cluster of trees led us to this place, which is known as the 'birds sanctuary.' Cradled by a canopy of trees, this place is a sheer delight to watch; birds from all over the country come there to 'abide' in that place. I just wondered what is so fantastic about this place, that the birds flew many miles to come there! The trees, water and the climate had attracted the birds! Bird watchers would just love that place. We stayed there for a while, but I kind of wanted to hang on there! The serenity, peace and greenery around that place made me want to stay there for some more time. I sat captivated by the bewitching beauty of that place! As I thought about it, I realized abiding in Christ also brings us peace, joy and divine happiness! We do not want to get away from that enthralling experience! We need to yearn to stay in His presence or in other words abide in Him.

How often do we feel that it is a drag to go and pray? We are too busy for that. Spending time with Jesus – abiding with Jesus - can be very rewarding. You just enjoy His Presence that you just don't want to leave, if we take time to abide with Christ, we will have time to listen to His still small voice. God has often given me the sermons to be preached in meetings, as I sat in His Presence desperate to hear His voice. I refuse to leave until I hear Him! As I carry His Word, as revealed by Him to the pulpit, I can see fresh anointing flow in the meeting. Abiding in Him is very important. Do you hear me?

When I became a 'born again' Christian, my prayer life changed and I received fresh revelations while reading the Bible, the words of the Bible took on new significance, the scriptures seem to jump out off the page, touch me and revive me. If you hang around someone long enough, then the character of that person rubs off on you, and the same is true with Jesus – His character will be formed in us as we abide in Him. Praise God! I remember an elderly man tell me, "sister, when I am next to you and when I see your passion for Jesus, that sure rubs off on me. I get charged too and I am bubbling with joy." That is the kind of influence you need to have on people! 1 John 2:6 says, He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

A person who abides in Jesus Christ all the time, will certainly shine like Jesus. Christian Minister Richard Wurmbrand while in prison, shared a cell with a young Communist lad,

who wanted to have nothing to do with Christianity. Rations were very low in the prison, and yet Wurmbrand used to share his bread with that young atheist. One day Wurmbrand was telling the young man about a Christian of whom it was said that he was like Jesus. The young man turned around to Wurmbrand "If Jesus is like you, I would like to know Him" What a witness for Christ! (from the book "In God's Underground" by Richard Wurmbrand.)

While I was working for a multinational bank, I would go around the desks during tea breaks and share the love of Jesus with them. One lady Vice President just held on to my hands and refused to leave them, as I spoke about Jesus to her. She said: "I can feel peace as I hold on to your hands." As you abide in Jesus, He touches every area of your life and makes you a source of peace for the lost souls in the world. The more and more you keep touching Him, you can touch the world too! Are you listening? 1 John 5:12 says, "He who has the Son has life...."

1 John 3:6 says, "Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him or known Him." The only way to stay away from sin and from the ways of the wicked world is to be saturate oneself in the presence of God and also fill the mind with scriptures. Do you hear me? After I got saved, I prepared a time table for prayer and fasting and also had an agenda for Bible reading. I never deviated from it but stuck to it vigorously. I had to go through periods of discouragements, failure, pain, criticisms and persecution but I was able to sail through it all because I did not give up on one thing, and that is to ABIDE IN HIM.

1 John 4:12,13 says, "No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." This is powerful! You can never be the same after you 'abide in Him'. It affects your nature, your character and every aspect of your life. Deep lasting spiritual change is a process. It rarely happens overnight. Bible reading, meditating His Word, worship, prayer, fasting, accountability, obedience are disciplines that reap huge spiritual blessings.

When you are saturated with His presence, the devil can find no way to enter and create confusion. Galatians 5:22 says, "But the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love..." We need to be people of love. This is possible only when we 'abide in Him'!. Jesus very strongly says, "*for without Me you can do nothing.*" Very true! Abiding in Him means abiding in His Word, having a close relationship with Him through fasting and prayer.

Dear friend, walking with God is no easy job: you would be hurt, you would be misunderstood, you would be rejected and you would be dejected. In the midst of it all, you need to be able to love others as Jesus loved the people who beat and cursed Him. We would never have rifts and divisions in the churches if we are filled with this 'divine love'. We would never have fights at homes, if we are filled with this love. Youth groups would never have tug of war over who will lead, if only we have more of this love. In this self-centered world we need to be filled with this 'divine love' to be real witnesses for Christ. We need unflagging energy, passion, persistence, patience, punctilious, assiduous and nerves of steel to succeed. Friend, no fun in just making statements, once aboard with God we need to learn the skills of growing in the Lord. Let our lives speak louder!

1 John 2:28 “.....abide in Him that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”

Chapter 11 **God of Daniel!**

Daniel 6:26 "I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall endure to the end."

How wonderful to have your name referred as “God of Daniel!” It surely has a personal touch! When Daniel was thrown into the Lion’s den, we find a troubled King Darius mention more than once to Daniel as “your God”. He says in verse 16, “..But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, “*Your God*, whom you serve continually , He will deliver you.” Again in verse 20, he says, “..has *your God* whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?” Daniel does echo back, “Yea, He is *my God*, whom I own, and who owns me, for *My God has sent His angel and shut the lions mouths.*” Oh, how exciting!

I love the way David praises God in Psalms 18:1-2 “I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. 2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower”. David’s love and gratitude for God oozes out and overflows by the way he lovingly calls Him as “my God”. In the midst of danger and death, David clearly understood that “God was his strength”. David is writing this after he escaped death from Saul’s hand. He is rejoicing that his enemy had not taken his life. David has the understanding of who and what God is! He knows that God is his Rock and his Light.

The God of the Universe has to become “your God”. Your relationship and rapport with God has to be so close, so near and so intimate that people should see it. The key to the unlimited and boundless success in the life of Daniel is revealed in the scripture which says, “when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. An in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before *his God*, AS WAS HIS CUSTOM SINCE EARLY DAYS.” A child of God who knows ‘*his God*’ would never fear. Fear is opposite to faith! Deuteronomy 3:22 says, ‘ You must not fear them, for the LORD your God Himself fights for you.’

During one my train journey, a passenger kept looking into the papers inside a big packet, he kept reading the reports and then kept blankly looking outside, as the train passed lush, fresh green fields, towns and villages. Since it was a good 13 hours journey, everybody kept themselves occupied. I was seated next to him and as usual I was meditating on the Word I had to preach the next day and simultaneously I was looking for a conducive time to preach to someone in the compartment. Surprisingly this man started a conversation with me on a general subject, slowly I diverted the topic to Jesus and narrated the miraculous healing I received from Jesus. He gave me undivided attention and listened to me intently; throughout our conversation, I could feel and see fear in his eyes. After hearing my miraculous and wonderful testimony, he was encouraged to share about his life. He had just the previous day received the doctor’s

report stating that his sugar level was very high and it was dangerous for his health. He immediately pulled out all the papers from the big packet that he held close to him and showed it to me. I now understood the reason behind his fear and comforted him to trust Jesus and not to keep peering over the doctor's report. I gave him a copy of my devotional book and also encouraged him to read my devotions from the website. When I told him that I would pray for him, instantly his face brightened. The Word of God has power to drive away fear, depression and oppression! I was glad to be in that compartment and breathe life into a person who was filled with the fear of death. I am not talking about faith in yoga, faith in self, but today I am talking about faith in Jesus. Mark 11:22 says, So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God." That's it! Apostle Paul said, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5:7) Don't keep looking at your deteriorating health, dipping finances, your rebellious children, gloomy atmosphere or your sinking marriage; but shift your focus today and look up at the Mighty God who is able to set right your life. Amen. I am speaking life to someone out there! He is your deliverer, He is your Redeemer, He is your Savior, He is your Healer and He is your Comforter and Counselor. Come on, cheer up! There is immense hope in Jesus! He will never forsake you! The peace that the world offers is bubble peace and would burst any time! This kind of happiness is like a swing and it has the equal propensity to swing the opposite way. Beware! If your peace and joy is based on your job, salary, friends, your modern gadgets, your swanky car or anything outside Jesus, then be warned today, they are all perishable, breakable and undependable. Get nearer to Jesus, if you wish to live without fear!

Daniel walked with poise and dignity, "he went home into his prayer room and gave thanks to God as was his custom". This is awesome! Just because he was neck deep in trouble, he did not run away from God, but instead he daringly ran towards His Master's lap. What do we do when in trouble? Do we run to God like Daniel? God watched every bit of his action, attitude and faith and rewarded him according to his faith.

Daniel "knew that the writing was signed," yet he did not say a word or do anything other than walk into his prayer room. Remarkable attitude! His silence, patience and reticence revealed his faith in '*his God*.' Nothing could shake him. David says in Psalm 16:8 "I have set the Lord always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." The true mark of spiritual maturity is to learn to 'stay quiet'. The Bible says in Proverbs 10:19 "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise." We live in a world where the "toughest survive", the "loudest are lauded" and the 'aggressive ones are appreciated". Having worked for many years in public sectors and multinational companies, I have seen how the boisterous ones excel. But listen, God's blessings are eternal and would surely come on you when you patiently endure the heat like Daniel and wait for God to show up in your life.

The heathen king Darius spotted 'an excellent spirit' in Daniel and the Bible says that the king "thought of setting him over the whole realm." Why was Daniel promoted and blessed beyond measure? Because of an 'excellent spirit' in him. Because of God in him. A person who walks with God has such a spirit. They have a spiritual nature that causes them to be different. In John 15:5 Jesus described it this way, "Abide in Me and I in you, and you will bear much fruit." If you are meeting alone with God regularly, then He is able to work on your mind and heart in such a way, that it will change you and make you different. Abiding in Jesus by developing a personal relationship with him alone in private WILL change you. Any real inner strength you have, is developed in your quiet time alone with God, where He teaches you and enables you to grow. It is

clear that Daniel is such a man. The strength he received to face the lions came from his prayer closet. Are you listening? The Bible says in Daniel 6:23 “ ..So Daniel was taken out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in *his God.*”

Where did Daniel learn about *his great God* and His Power? Where did Daniel gain the strength to confront heathen monarch like Nebuchadnezzar? Where did Daniel get the wisdom from? Daniel received all this while ‘*he was locked up with God!*’ Dear friend, that’s where the power is! Let us know the source of the power and tap into it. Let us not study the twelve chapters of the awesome book of Daniel and never be affected by it. This book should stir a ravenous hunger in us to get close to God like Daniel, to live holy like Daniel and also to live victoriously like Daniel.

When we sit before God, we will be able to stand before kings. The Bible says in Daniel 2:49 “Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, *while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.*” Powerful! It is just mind-boggling and amazing to think of the things that God can do for a person who obeys His Word, fellow-ships with Him and listens to Him. Daniel was a man 100 percent sold-out to God! 1 Samuel 2:8 says, “He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory....” Hannah truly has understood *her God* as she prophetically thus praises God!

Dear friend, when we are really close with God, then we would like Daniel always want to please Him and not anybody else. Did you get that? It does not matter whom we displease, but it is absolutely important that we please God and make Him happy. Daniel 1:8 says, “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies...”

Daniel and his friends were taken as hostages from Jerusalem to Babylon, but Daniel determined his heart to live for God, in the midst of a godless society. Daniel is a good example of what you can do, to live your life in control in an out of control world. Daniel resolved not to compromise his beliefs. The Babylonians did all they could to turn Daniel and his friends away from their Hebrew faith. They even changed their names: Daniel means “God is .my Judge”, Belteshazzar means Bel’s Prince. All during his life Daniel refused to accept the Babylonian identity. He never forgot that he was Daniel!

When you make a decision to stay ‘undefiled’, all hell will be stirred against you. When you decide to stand up for God in your family or at your work place, be sure to be attacked and mocked. During such times, do not say, “I cannot stay here anymore”; it is ‘here’ that God is going to polish your character, refine you in the midst of affliction and pain and make you a Daniel. Do you hear me? Allow God to operate on you. I remember when I was facing problems at my work spot, there were times that I wanted to run away. I was hurt, I was rejected, I was ignored and I was lonely. But my close relationship with God strengthened me to endure the pain. I did not discuss the issue with anyone in the office or at home, I silently cried to God who knew all that I was going through. There were times that I cried in the wash room at my office, but I still stayed in the same place for nearly five years, before I quit the job to work full-time for *my Lord*. God had to work in my heart and prepare me for the work that was ahead of me. As Paul says in Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind (attitude or spirit) be in you, which was also in

Christ Jesus,” I would never have been able to write this book, if I had not been abandoned and forsaken, which actually drove me to the Presence of *my God*. Can you today lovingly call Him ‘my God’?

Men of ‘Daniel caliber’ don’t come easily. The twelve chapters of the book of Daniel ends with success, glory and with Daniel climbing up the ladder of victory. Marvelous! Where are the Daniels today? Where are the Daniels who would be able to approach a king and ‘ask for time’? Where are the Daniels who would be able to interpret the dream of a king when ‘none’ could do it? Why are Christians wallowing in defeat and failure today? Why are Christian homes like battlefields? The reasons for many Christians to be in the bottom rungs of the ladder is not too difficult to fathom. Lack of commitment! Daniel has not only carved out a niche for himself but most importantly, shown the way for future young people to follow. Overcoming temptations, criticism and loneliness in a foreign land; Daniel has put his step on the pedal and has shown no signs of taking it off, till he came out as a victor. Glory to Jesus! That’s grit and determination!

Daniel did not have to say much or do much to attract the attention of kings, his ‘attitude did all the talking’. He did a lot of talking with God though, because the Bible says that he set aside three times a day to get to a corner and pray. Consequently, the rest of the benefits followed and Daniel is perched right on top for all to see and learn. Since he talked a lot with God, God in turn spent a lot of time with him and revealed the secrets of the future yet to come, which we find from the eighth chapter onwards. Talent, commitment, looks, poise, integrity all rolled into one has enabled Daniel work wonders. Daniel wore many hats with aplomb! There are young men out there with looks, talents and so called desire to excel spiritually too, but not many people reach the heights that Daniel was able to reach? The reason being lack of commitment and determination! Anybody listening? We don’t have to make a lot of noise in the office, your ‘output’ would show the quality of your work. Did you get that?

I write this with tears welled up in my eyes. In fact, my fingers are wobbly as I type this; young men and women who have tasted God, still have secret sins in their life, young men go to church but come back to peep into dirty sites on the internet. Young women flirt around and let their eyes rove around and mind you all this happening among the lot who know their God. Alas! There are youngsters who had danced and jumped in my meetings and who have later eloped with girls of other faith. Young girls who had pledged their life to God had fallen into grievous sins. Don’t squirm friend, having been in the youth ministry for years, I know how susceptible young people are to sins. I mean, they just fall in love with unknown people at the drop of a hat, get entangled in affairs and do not wink their eyes to fall prey to satan’s devices. Sadly, satan does not have to work hard with youngsters, they are just ‘easy catch’. Why and why? Lack of commitment!

We want some ‘*daring Daniels*’ who would defy the lions! We want some committed Daniels who would say ‘no’ to the king’s delicacies. We want some faithful Daniels who stole the heart of kings. The world is clamoring for more Daniels. We have run enough behind people, pleading them to pray for us, I want some Daniels who would bend their knees and pray for Servants of God, for the church, for this dying world and for the lost souls. Anybody listening? You can either ignore these “tear drenched’ words or wake up to make a difference! Choice is yours!

Chapter 12 ***I will pour out My Spirit!***

Joel 2:28, 29 “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.”

We need a Holy pouring of God’s Spirit on us to live out our Christian life. I tell you, you can never be the kind of person God wants you to be, if you do not get drenched in this Holy revival rain which God promised through His prophet Joel. Dear friend, you may be Christian, non-Christian, please hear me out today, people who come jumping, skipping slowly go away limping and drooping. Why? Because they do not have the stamina to linger with God!

Dear friend, if you do not have the urge and passion to know more of God, then just skip it, don’t waste time reading this book. This book is for those who are thirsty, hungry and lovers of God. I am sick of hearing people say even after many years of salvation that they have not grown much, fasted much, read the Bible much and so on. This truly grieves me much! What is the remedy? We need the down pouring of the Holy Ghost Fire on us! Lord POUR OUT YOUR SPIRIT ON US!

On the day of Pentecost when the apostles were gathered in one accord in an upper room, waiting diligently for the promise of God to be fulfilled, the Holy Spirit swept the place as mentioned in the second chapter of the book of Acts. Pentecost was one of the three Jewish festivals in which individuals were to journey to Jerusalem and appear before the Lord at the temple with their gifts and offerings. What we read about in Acts chapter two occurs when the city is filled with people, who will witness the outpouring of the Spirit. God’s timing is always perfect. Surely some of the 120 wondered why it was necessary to wait in Jerusalem! Jesus didn’t explain to them all the reasons. Acts 2:2 says “suddenly there came a sound from heaven..” Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.” Understand it was not an actual wind. It was a supernatural sound. God’s promise was fulfilled that day. The Bible says that there was confusion grabbing everybody’s attention. Well, God had to do something unusual and turn the eyes of the people towards Him. Listening?

After this, the life of the apostles were never the same! Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship in the breaking of bread and in prayers.” They gathered together in the temple every day, shared everything they had, read the Bible and there was pure joy. Marvelous! When God pours out His Holy Spirit on you, you don’t have to be dragged to church, you would run on your own. You don’t have to read 1000 messages on how to pray, you would get down on your knees and pray. You don’t need preachers to thump the pulpit and warn you to fast and read the Bible, these things become inseparable in your life. I remember after salvation, while working in a multinational bank, I would be stirred in my soul to read the Bible every fifteen minutes. I would smuggle the Bible wrapped up in a small cover and I would take it into the wash room and read it there. There were times that I would sob and weep just filled with an insatiable hunger for God. During lunch breaks, besides holding prayer 52

cells in the office, I would go out on highways and office complexes, to distribute gospel tracts and share the love of Jesus in whatever way I can. I was filled with love and passion for Jesus and it was oozing out of me!

Acts 7:55 "...being full of the Holy Spirit.." When God pours out His Spirit on you, we would go places that we never would have gone to, we would do things that we never would have done before. I had to stand on a bullock cart as a platform and preach to the villagers. Though I felt embarrassed initially, yet it was the love of God which galvanized me that day to serve God in the midst of adversities and inconveniences. Peter who was just a fisherman and not a clergyman stood bold on the day of Pentecost and preached to the same Jews who had crucified Jesus. How? Because He had just taken a holy bath of the Holy Ghost Fire. Dear friend, you cannot be on fire and stay calm. Lovers of God would surely become servers!

God woke up Evan Roberts at 1 am in the morning everyday and he would pray until 5 am in the morning and he was doing this for many years and true revival broke out called the "Welsh Revival". Dear friend, I am not talking about the tiny drops we experience some times, when you cry a bit, jump a bit and dance a bit. No! I am talking about praying all night, fasting for 40 days like Moses and being in the Presence of God, crying like Ezra, plucking his beard for the sins of his people, prophesying like Jeremiah to stubborn hearted people who refused to hear him. I am talking about being in love with God! It is close to midnight as I type these words on my laptop. *My eyes refuse to sleep because I am filled with passion for God and I would never rest until I pass it on.* Dear friend, it is not all about you, it is all about God and how He feels! How to satisfy Him and make Him happy! It is all about pleasing Him and loving Him! Jesus, we love you!

Dear friend, you would risk your life for Jesus, if you truly love Him. 'You would not be a knee-shaker believer but a world-changer believer when God pours out His Spirit on you.' You can never be in the closet when you are burning for Christ, the smoke would be seen. Did you get that? When a person is burning thus, people close would surely catch fire too. The girl who sat next to me at my work spot started attending my afternoon prayer-cell in the bank. The dramatic change in her affected other members of her family too. In a short time, she along with two other family members accepted Jesus and took full immersion water baptism. Fire spreads! The cleaner who cleaned my desk got touched by the power of Jesus. The young computer Engineer who attended my computer got touched. There was Holy Ghost fire on my floor! Are you on fire for God or are you like cold water? Just shove away everything else and concentrate on God hence forth.

Look at Stephen who was filled with the Holy Spirit! He speaks words of wisdom and daringly calls the Jews 'stiff necked people'. He willingly sacrificed his life for the sake of Jesus. Dear friend, Holy Spirit empowers you to speak boldly and powerfully. Nobody can stand against a man or woman filled with the Holy Spirit. Today instead of wishy-washy, spineless preaching, we need some brazen preachers who would directly and prophetically warn people to get right with God. How dare people have relationships outside marriage and still visit the church! Dear friend, just because you are single, it does not give you the license to live an immoral, loose life. Watch out, you would be punished! Come out of every sin in your life. I know people who sneak into the internet in the midnight and shamelessly watch porno stuff. Now listen, cut that off before God cuts you off!

Lord, we need you to POUR OUT YOUR SPIRIT ON THE EARTH AND PURIFY YOUR PEOPLE FROM EVERY FILTH AND UNCLEANLINESS!

John 3:7,8 “ Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it...”

Dennis Marquardt says, “The modern Church cannot afford to be anything less than a Pentecostal Church, Jesus would not let His disciples go out into the world until they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, so how could we even think to do His work today without being full of the Holy Spirit too? It has never been programs that have dramatically transformed people's lives, it takes God's Spirit to do that”. Amen.

Today churches are filled with programs, festivals and carnivals rather than REAL PENTECOSTAL REVIVAL. The world is seeking peace, people are hurt and confused, but we hide it, try to quench our thirst through material things, drink wine and go to bed, pretend to be okay, while there is a GAPING VOID IN OUR LIFE. Listen please!

God has just not promised us a drizzle but He has said that “HE WOULD POUR OUT..” Oh yes, we need barrels of Holy Spirit to be poured on us to transform and empower us! We need our churches to be filled with God’s Presence and filled with the thick anointing of the Holy Spirit so that our youngsters roll into the church instead of hanging around pubs and malls. It is in the church that life has to get mended, marriages restored and children delivered when God pours down His Spirit.

We read of an awesome visitation of the Glory of God that the Israelites experienced which we read in the book of LEVITICUS 9.: 23 Next Moses and Aaron went into the Tabernacle, and when they came back out, they blessed the people again, and the glorious presence of the LORD appeared to the whole community. 24 Fire blazed forth from the LORD’s presence and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When the people saw all this, they shouted with joy and fell face down on the ground.” “The people fell face down on the ground”, we would do the same when we have a real encounter with God. How did this happen? Now watch the scripture closely, because Aaron and Moses went into the Tabernacle and came out to bless the people filled with God’s Presence and thereby the congregation received the anointing. The secret lies in entering the Tabernacle of God and coming out! When we read the eighth and ninth chapter, we find Aaron and his sons remaining in the presence of God and consecrating themselves for the work of God. God shows up because they were seeking! Heavenly visitations await those who will seek Him!

Today my prayer is, “Lord, rain on us!” We need the rain of the Holy Ghost in our lives like never before.

Chapter 13 Joshua!

....he shall cause Israel to inherit it !

Deuteronomy 1:38” Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. “

I sat in my prayer room and wept bitterly one day; it was like I could not take a step further; this was after many years of walking out of the multinational bank to serve the Lord. I could see many people moving ahead for God, but here, I was struggling every month for expenses and for the release of my devotional book, with no real break through in my ministry. The bundles of unsold devotional books, stacked in the corner of our office room, broke my heart to million pieces.

Though I had read the above scripture many, many times during my walk with God, yet that particular day, when I sat there in my prayer closet with tears rolling down my cheek and looked up at heaven, the above words "*he shall cause Israel to inherit it*" captivated me and brought hope in my heart. Do you know, "God sees us in ways that nobody else sees us?" He does not see us as we are, but as what we shall be in future. I'm bouncing with excitement as I write this? Are you?

I pray that as people read this book, God takes these words into the lives of many people and make them live a powerful life for God. In the above scripture God says "Joshua shall cause Israel to inherit it." I just want to be able to put all that is bubbling in my heart into words. God help me! God hand-picks one man Joshua and said that he will 'cause' Israel to inherit the promised land. That's something! Moses brought the Israelites out from Egyptian bondage but Joshua took them to the promised land and gave them the inheritance. He finished the job with perfection! We need Joshuas' today, who would help people inherit their blessings! Friend, it is not by power nor by might but by the power of the Holy Spirit! Someone shout Hallelujah!

Friend, there comes a glorious period in one's life, when he just walks and the flower blooms and he just touches some thing and that prospers. The book of Joshua opens with God's command to Joshua, "Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan..!" Now, this was no easy task. But I tell you, God gives the impossible task to those who have the grit and determination to do it. Any new venture gets you first numbed with terror but later after you have triumphed, it becomes an adventure. Do you have any idea of how it feels to walk on a 'rope bridge' dangling 30 metres above the sea? The fragile rope bridge has become an adventure opportunity for the tourists in Ireland and the rope seems to dangerously swing with the breeze. One look at the swirling sea waves below the rope gives you the creep, yet, there is a long queue awaiting to accomplish the challenging journey. Holding on to the ropes on either side, one has to cautiously cross the rope bridge to reach the other side. Ambling down the bridge takes sheer courage and a challenging attitude but it becomes a 'championship moment' for those who make it. Friend, you can go to Ireland, yet if you fear, you will miss the adventurous, enthralling 'ropeway' journey. Likewise, if you are terrorized by looking at the things that confront you in your life, then there are no 'victory moments'. Standing on the banks of 55

Jordan, with lakhs of people on hand, Joshua could have said, "I couldn't do this!" but Joshua accepted the challenge because he knew God was with him. Let's give a shout of praise for the Lord!

The anointing was on Joshua and now he could take the people across Jordon. Back while I was working, I walked into the meeting of prophet V. Ezekiah Francis who was delivering a powerful message. That day he gave his testimony, I was instantly touched. The entire arena was saturated with the thick tangible presence of the Lord, there were many people who with tears surrendered their life to serve the Lord and I was one. There was no turning back in my life. We need to impact lives of people that way! How is

it possible? The anointing rested on the shoulders of the prophet because of the dedicated, sacrificial and holy life that he lived for God. He said, "I had to say 'no' to many things in my life in order to say 'yes' to God. No wonder he is rocking the world for God! However, it was no small price that Bro Ezekiah paid in order to have this anointing rest on his life. God looked at Joshua and said "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you" (Joshua 1:3) Joshua just had to walk and that place belonged to God! Why? Because of his commitment to God! That's smashing!

Instead of teaching people to read the Word, meditate and study it, there are too many frivolous things occupying the lives of young people. Listen, just sitting two hours in the church will not make you a Christian. I tell you, nothing but a serious study of the Word can take you to blissful heights. It is heartbreaking to see many Christian young men and women daringly not touch the Bible and claim to love the Lord. How can you? Friend, the movie star whom you admire for his six-pack muscle body and the perfect figure of the model who walks on the ramp, did not come out of the blue, but they got their perfect body through REAL workouts and REAL nutrition strategies. The key to the success in the life of Joshua is in this scripture: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." Got that? When Rev. Billy Graham gives an altar call, the place is flooded with people running up to the altar. You don't have to coax the people or plead them, they would come. That's because of God's Hand on Rev. Billy Graham!

We see a steady growth in the life of Rev. Billy Graham because of his steady, sturdy, and firm focus on God, he allowed no distractions or corruptions to mar his life and stump his spiritual growth.

- In 1934, at age 16, **Rev Billy Graham** made a personal commitment to Christ .
- Shared his testimony for the first time in 1936 at age 18
- Joined Bible College at age 18.
- First sermon preached while still in Bible college at age 18.
- Did street preaching while in college, average 8 messages on a single Sunday .
- Appointed as Associate Pastor at age 20.
- Preached in a big crusade in 1944 for 21 weeks at age 26.
- First week 2800 soldiers attended.
- Last week 20,000 people attended.
- Crusades in other nations in 1947 with a team at age 29.

- In 1949, an extended 8-week crusade in Los Angeles gained international recognition for Graham at age 30.
- The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has reached nearly 215 million people in more than 185 countries
- Rev. Billy Graham is listed among the 'Ten Most Admired Men in the World.'
- Has met all the Presidents of America
- He is known as the 'Pastor to Presidents'.

Mr. Graham had carved a niche for himself in this world because of his faithful walk with God. At a very young age, God was able to use him in a mighty way because of his sincerity, hard work and aggressive determination.

When an anointed man or woman leads the worship, you don't have to beseech the congregation to raise their hands for God, the anointing released from the leader would make your feet tap and swing around for God. Every dignity and self control would be stripped at that divine moment. The entire place would be turned to heaven with people rejoicing in the Lord. How? It is not the music, it is not the instrument, it is not anyone's husky, baritone voice, it is the anointing that oozes out from the chosen leader of God. I feel anointed as I write this! The more time the leader spends at the feet of the Lord, the more blessed is the congregation. That's the secret! When you soak, drench and saturate yourself in His presence, God would suddenly, supernaturally touch and change your voice, would pour down the gifts of the Holy Spirit on you that when you open your mouth, people would be astonished at the wisdom that flows like a river from you. People would marvel, when they look at you and know that "this thing is from the Lord!" Glory to Jesus!

Joshua's obedience, faithfulness, endurance and humility has lifted him to the status of becoming the next leader of Israel. Listen! God's timing is perfect, He was preparing Joshua for this great moment. "Fulfillment of promise comes with fulfillment of character." Now, Joshua had to just entirely trust and take the people across, because he knew God's immeasurable power and majesty. He was not nervous as he sized up the magnitude of the responsibility that he was entrusted with, he knew that it's going to be God with him, who would help him trample the enemies. After Joshua heard the encouraging promises from God, I like the way Joshua immediately talked back to the people: "Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess."(Joshua 1:10, 11) Boy, this is powerful! His undeterred and unshakeable trust in the Words of God, immediate response, obedience and cheering the people to get ready for the great task is what makes Joshua a remarkable leader! This leader did not come out of the blue. Joshua was the 'finished product' of God. A master piece of the Creator!

Joshua had to be in the prayer closet and hidden until God's call in his life. As I read, Exodus 33:11" So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle", the words, "*Joshua did not depart from the tabernacle*" enthralled me and ignited a fire in my heart. I kept reading those words over

and over again! Each time I read I could feel the anointing of God fill me. I felt a fresh love to be in His Presence and cling on to Him surge inside me. Everybody left but Joshua clung to God! Everybody returned to their tents but Joshua cleaved to God! Powerful! Are you ready to explode for God? The world is 'clinging' to many things out there, but I challenge you to embrace and hold on to God! 1 King 11:2 says, ".....Solomon clung to these in love." Solomon left his first love for God and turned his attention to many foreign women and lost his love for God.

Mathew Henry says, "Those that cleave to the Lord fix, but those that leave Him ever wander."

After I return from my ministry trips, my eight year old son Joshua would cling on to me all the time, he would just stick to me and refuse to move, afraid that I would leave him behind again. Likewise, we also ought to embrace God, as though we cannot bear to be without Him or move away from His presence. Do we feel that way? If we did, then our lives will never be the same again!

Deuteronomy 30:20 says, "...you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them." This scripture is simply wonderful!

Joshua was trained under Moses. Exodus 24:13 says "And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God." Moses took Joshua up with him to the mount, during the six days that Moses tarried in the mount, before God called him. Just imagine two mighty men of God waiting together to hear from God! Waiting on God! Not many have this patience, though. I want to share a lovely incident shared by Bro. Mohan C Lazarus, Founder of Jesus Redeems Ministries, Tamil Nadu, India. During the initial days of his ministry, he had the privilege of attending the Friends Missionary Band's leaders meeting. After the meeting, being stirred in his heart to pray, he walked to the prayer hall to pray through the night. It was around midnight and he was surprised to see the leaders of F M B Ministries kneel down together and pray. This sight touched him immensely, he also knelt some distance away from them and started praying along with them. My, what a passion to pray! Though Bro. Mohan C Lazarus started in a very small way, today (I write this portion in the year 2010) around 40,000 people attend his meeting, after 30 years of committed life to Christ. Praise the Lord!

Joshua was to be the successor of Moses, and therefore thus he was honored before the people, above the rest of the elders, that they might afterwards the more readily take him for their governor; and thus he was prepared for service, by being trained up in communion with God. Joshua was privileged to be trained under Moses. He had watched Moses stay in the presence of God and I am sure his heart burnt and ached to be like Moses. Joshua heard God say, "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people to the land which I am giving to them, the children of Israel." (Joshua 1:11) Joshua who has been all these days executing the command of Moses faithfully, now he emerges as the next leader and hears God directly speaking to him. This is beautiful! When you are faithful in obeying God, He would certainly speak to you and give instructions regarding the next step that you ought to take. You would never grope in the dark!

Joshua thus wonderfully fights every battle by closely remaining with God and hearing His voice. Joshua is the one that leads the Israelites into the Promised Land. The whole

theme of the book of Joshua is obedience to God. Joshua knew God so well and was able to therefore lead the people in knowing God as well. The only way that we can know God deeper is to seek His presence and to sink deeper and deeper into it!

God's presence and a relationship with Him are better than anything else that we can have on the face of this planet! Joshua gets the perfect plan to cross the Jordan river! It was indeed absolutely flawless! Being in the presence of God, hearing His voice and obeying Him, makes you confident, efficient and proficient.

Great servants of God were people who were early risers, diligent people who read the Word, fasted and prayed in a disciplined manner. God cannot use lazy people. If today you have a thirst and hunger to serve God, first learn to be humble and obedient like Joshua. Equip yourself with a close walk with God through regular and daily Bible reading and a disciplined prayer life. You need to monitor your prayer life and see that there is growth in it. Some people when I ask them about their prayer life, they carelessly tell me that they pray when they get time, this is wrong. I suggest that we set a target and stick to it. I have the habit of keeping my watch close to me as I pray. I also make a note of it every day in my diary. I do not read a portion of the Bible here and there, I systematically read the Old and New Testaments simultaneously, this way, I am able to be in touch with the whole Bible everyday. When the people of the world are systematic in their work, why do we neglect God and treat spiritual things lightly? We need to be keen on growing spiritually, and not treat spiritual growth flippantly.

The transition of job assignment from Moses to Joshua was not easy, though. God did not hide the complexity of the situation but He clearly spells out the difficulties to both of them. Deuteronomy 31:14 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation." And then God goes on to speak to Moses in verse 16, "Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go *to be* among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them." Now, this was a great conference that Moses and Joshua were privileged to have with God. He tells Moses that, after his death, the covenant which he had taken so much pains to make between Israel and their God would certainly be broken and that Israel would *forsake Him*. We can see the raw pain of God as He revealed the very intent of the heart of the people. He knew they would go after other gods at the slightest of temptation. God has a clear and infallible foresight of all their wickedness.

Now, Joshua heard everything from God! I am sure, anybody in Joshua's place would wonder, "how am I to handle these wicked people, who will be forsaking God anyway?" It is now that God commands him, "Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you." (Deuteronomy 31:23) "I will be with thee!" This promise of God triggered faith inside Joshua! Undauntedly, Joshua obeyed God and stepped forward to take up the leadership offered by God Himself. When God calls you, He would equip you for the job as well, but if you do things on your own, God cannot help us. I want to draw your attention to Deuteronomy 34:9 "Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses." This is what you call as God calling the shots! Joshua received supernatural wisdom from God, which causes the people to obey

Joshua. When we just obey Him, God would accomplish the job for which He has called us in a remarkable way! Gimmicks, programs or human wisdom would do nothing, God's power would draw the attention of people on you and make them fear you. Awesome!

Joshua 11:23 says, "So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war." This is awesome! Under the leadership of Joshua, there was peace in the land!

Joshua stuck to God's command to ".....observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.(Joshua 1:7)

This great man Joshua at the end of his journey was able to boom and thunder victoriously "....choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."(Joshua 24:14) Where are the Joshuas' ?

Chapter 14 **He is our hiding place!**

2 King 19:14, "Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD.15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said: "O LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth."

Have you ever been in a situation when you have no option left but to hold on desperately to the feet of the Lord? With all dignity stripped, there you are behind closed doors unashamedly weeping at His feet, laying your fears, apprehensions, anxiety and pain at the foot of the cross. A half a minute or a half hour prayer would do no good, if the problem is gigantic then we should also stretch ourselves to pray 'much'.

2 Chronicles 32:1 says, "After these things Sennacherib, king of Assyria invaded." What were these things? Well, the 'things' spoken of here are the 'good things' that king Hezekiah did when he became king, he cleansed the land from idols and opened the temple of the Lord and purified the priests; Hezekiah did what was right in the Lord's sight. Now we might think it is unfair to be persecuted having walked in the path of God. The devil certainly hates you when you walk uprightly before God hence he sends attacks against you. Hezekiah was thus attacked by Sennacherib.

Charles Swindoll says, "You may be going through a trial so overwhelming that its borderline unbearable. You want to see the end of the tunnel. Which is only natural, because once we see that little speck of light, we feel we can make it through to the finish. But God's tunnels are often twisting, too complex and dark to see the light for many days. In such settings He says, "In that dark, twisting, seemingly endless period of time, trust Me. Stop running scared! Stop fearing!"

When I had accepted the Lord and when I started living a consecrated life for God, I was attacked on all sides. At home, workplace, friends, relatives and everywhere I faced criticisms but my faith did not deter, I went ahead and preached the gospel in the office and to all whom I met. Satan would send his agents to hurt, humiliate and criticize me. The secular workplace and the world will never fully accept you, *if you are devoted to Jesus*. It doesn't matter where you work or stay -- at a bank, in a school, college, office, home wherever, you probably will experience much rejection, condescension, frustration and misunderstanding. You receive little or no credit for what you do. You are persecuted, ridiculed, talked about behind your back. Sometimes you really feel very lonely and miserable..... Right now, if you may be wondering, "Lord, why am I ignored at my workplace? Why do others take advantage of me and stab me at the back? Why do I always feel like an outsider? What's wrong with me?" I know how it feels, I have been there, sometimes my own friends would walk past my desk, without even turning to look if I was there.....it hurts very badly.....*it breaks us*. But remember Jesus said, ".....my disciple have to carry the cross." If you are one who will compromise with the world and dance to the tune of the world then there would be no problems, BUT if you want to really be exceptional and shine for God, then your name gets into the hit list of satan, do not worry....GOD IS GOOD!

King Hezekiah bravely makes elaborate preparations to confront the enemy. He took counsel with his princes as to what he should do, he blocked the water flow so that the enemies do not get any water. He set to work resolutely and built up all the wall that was broken down and raised towers upon it, and outside it he built another wall, and he strengthened the Millo in the city of David. He also made weapons and shields in abundance. And he set combat commanders over the people and gathered them together to him in the square at the gate of the city and spoke encouragingly to them. But the enemy keeps advancing towards Hezekiah and Rabshakeh's taunting words, who was Sennacherib's man, at the walls of the city are found in 2 Kings 18:19-35. We have a sketchy note on the words of the enemies aimed to terrify the king and the people, in order to make us understand that Hezekiah was in a real 'fix'. When we just don't understand what's happening around us, that's when we need to trust God!

In his book, *Out of the Whirlwind*, Mark Tabb writes, "God tells us to trust Him enough to believe He knows what He is doing. When His actions don't make sense, trust Him. When the windows of heaven seem to be open extra wide and life can't get any better, trust Him. When the bottom falls out and life turns hard, trust Him. Good times and bad, happy and sad, trust Him. What will God do? I have no idea, but I do know this: God is God. His wisdom knows no end. He isn't making things up on the fly. He knows what He is doing. Now, I must trust him enough to entrust my life to Him even when I would rather not."

God wants us to understand, in no uncertain terms, that Jerusalem doesn't stand a chance against such a powerful foe. More than all of Hezekiah's efficient military back up, I like the way Hezekiah walks into the temple with the letter sent by the enemy, spreads it before God and pleads at His feet. When Hezekiah closes himself with God, God stepped in and the Assyrians were crushed in one night by the power of a single angel. Awesome! 185,000 of their soldiers die, and Sennacherib returns home with his tail between his legs. Power comes down when you shut your doors for prayers!

Hudson Taylor said, "We can make our best plans and try to carry them out in our own strength. Or we can make careful plans and ask God to bless them. Yet another way of

working is to begin with God; to ask His plans, and to offer ourselves to Him to carry out His purposes.”

David said: (Psalm 27:5) “For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.”

David needed a hiding place and his was God!!! A sure refuge, Rock and a Fortress! David said “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.” (Psalm 56: 3) David could not afford to relax, he had to run to God everyday, because the enemies hounded him every day on all sides.

I heard the story of a young girl who was left stranded by her husband and family. Not knowing where to turn, she unfortunately lands up in the hands of a wicked man who takes advantage of her predicament and messed up her life further. Some say, “I had no other go, I was cornered into that decision.” No, never say that, your hiding place should be God! Do not run to any other source. Do not justify your past mistakes, face it straight, accept your negligence to the Word of God, repent and change your life. Though David was a man trained in the art of war, yet he runs to God for protection. 62

How wonderful! Look what he says, Psalm 143:9 “Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.” Having enjoyed the provision and protection offered by God to him in the wilderness for 40 years, Moses boldly claims, “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, “*He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.*”(Psalm 91:1, 2)

What do you do when you are in trouble? Where do you go??? When the whole world was swimming and drowning in the flood, the eight people of the family of Noah were safe inside the Ark. Why? Because Noah obeyed God and stayed inside the ark during the flood. The ark was a hiding place for Noah! Solomon says, “The name of the LORD [is] a strong tower: the righteous run into it, and is safe.” (Proverbs 18:10)

Chapter 15 **Operate on me Lord!**

Genesis 40:14 “But remember me when it is well with you and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house.”

Joseph was locked up in the prison for eleven long years, when he said the above words! He seems to be groping in the dark and probing for a reason for his sufferings as he says, “I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.” When we understand God’s big picture for our life, then we surely will be able to see the Hand of God behind everything. The prison was designed for Joseph to have a personal revival and revelation of His Big God. Amen.

God had some great things prepared for Joseph which he could not even have imagined. We would never be able to fully realize how wonderful He is! Such is the love of God! Joseph had to be operated before he could be promoted from the prison to palace. Stuart Calvert says, “No experience is wasted with God. Your pleasant or unpleasant situation is preparing you for a future event of relationship.” Praise God!

A distressed hindu woman came to me for prayers. Her husband was having a deep affair with a woman for the past several years. She came to me and said, "Jesus has to break my husband's bones and change him." She was visibly upset because of the humiliation and rejection that she was experiencing from her husband. I presented the gospel to this lady. Patiently counseled her and invited her for the meetings. Though she had been worshipping Jesus for the past few years and some good believers were praying for her, but a deeper work had to be done in the heart of the woman. One particular message broke this woman and she confessed to me that she had been speaking rudely to her husband, not treating him well and that was the reason for the unhappiness in her life. It was a conviction she received from the Holy Spirit that day. I immediately told her that the "Living water Jesus" has to flow into her life and cleanse her completely and that only Jesus can restore her husband back to her. A few months after I had met her, she called me one afternoon to tell me that the matter was just getting out of hands because her husband was now openly discussing about the girl with her. I just asked her to stay silent and trust Jesus and snuggle close to Him. Surprisingly she started praying more from that day onwards, reading the Bible more, seeking Him more, and she started even giving her offerings for the Lord's ministry work. Jesus became more real to her than ever before. She stopped now looking at just His Hands, but started enjoying His love, in her wilderness experience. The moment she started doing this, God started working in her heart . The woman became more humble, gentle and forgiving now. She has understood God's greater purpose of molding her character through these sad episodes in her life. Eventually, after a long wait, the girl that came between her and her husband, went away on her own. Praise the Lord! Never despise the problems in your life, embrace them, because they would eventually turn out to be a blessing for you.

Corrie Ten Boom, a courageous woman, was the only member in her family to survive the concentration camp. She and her family were imprisoned along with her loved ones for harboring fugitive Jews. 'We must go every where, 'Corrie's siter Betsie whispered before dying at Ravensbruck. 'We must tell people that no pit is so deep that He is not deeper still. They will believe us because we were here.' Such tear drenched words gets deep into your heart and squeezes you so much that it pains. How can one lead a mediocre life after reading such experiences? Friend, none of the beautiful, life changing, spectacular books of Corrie like "The Hiding Place, The Tramp finds a home, Amazing Love" would have ever been berthed if she had not been in the pit. People listen to you because you have been there! Hallelujah!

In one of her books, Corrie says, "Only after my fifty-fourth year did God ordain me. Before that, I lived for many years in the same house in Holland." Despite her days behind the prison bars, God still had to keep her on hold until she was 54 years old. That's something! I have understood that God is never in a hurry, even if we scream and yell on the top of our voice, "get me out of this place", He is not going to bail us out prematurely. Praise God for that! He is all out to do deeper things in your life and take you to greater heights! Corrie said, "Because I had to go through deep suffering in the prison, I was able to comfort people afterwards, because I could tell them, "Jesus is stronger than the deepest darkness. When you have experienced the darkness of a concentration camp, you know how deep that darkness can be!"

I want to quote here the words of Apostle Paul: *2 Corinthians 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,*

4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.”

God’s way of rejuvenating your spirit is totally different compared to the way the world chills out. People of the world flush out huge money to go for a few days vacation in a resort nestled in the midst of a vast space of land with trees all around. Acres of land and sand create a sense of space and grant a kind of anonymity that can be very soothing. Swimming in the private courtyard, outside the room and then stretching languorously under the sun on the sand is certainly relaxing. Living in a world where your life is jam-packed with activities and agenda, such places are means to come in wrung-out and go chilled-out. However, the bliss and ecstasy of the trip is lost the moment you step into the frantic world only to look for the next vacation. Most of the thrill is lost, the moment the bill comes to your hand. Now let me compare it with God’s ways of energizing you, which stirs you up and triggers you to jump up and face the world. Now this joy is not going to leave you so easily! You have the energy in the midst of problems, in the midst of disease, failure or loss. The joy of the Lord becomes your strength! God in your life can offer you a whole load of joy than what these ‘beach resorts’ offer you, not to mention the hole that they make in your pocket. How can one be confined in a room and still be happy and be filled with peace? You may not have the swimming pool, luxurious rooms or the plush green gardens to take a stroll in the evening; yet you can sing in the dark. Ask Joseph and he would tell us how!

I tell you, it was no small pain when Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into the prison. The pain must have been deeper for Joseph because he was already a victim of being mercilessly separated from his dad, family, home land and now serving as a slave in an Egyptian house. Why should Joseph go through such harassment and persecutions? For a greater purpose! Did he come out of the prison as a wretched man for having been thrown into the prison for no reason and being forgotten for 13 long years? Certainly not, he came out with anointing to give the interpretation of the dream to the pagan monarch Pharaoh! He did not come out as a dejected man but came out with the power of God! Let me assure you that it is possible, even in your own life, if you put your faith and life into God’s Hands. The key is to remember that God is in control of all things and at all times! When you remember this and put your trust in God; you will know that there is a bigger picture, and you will be filled with hope and confidence.

Whenever she senses that her parents need a bit of boosting, my teenage daughter would hug me tight from behind and whisper in my ears: “God is in control!” I tell you that fills me with joy, peace and rest! Well, something spectacular happened in her life recently, which revealed God’s awesome power to her. When her engineering tuition fees had to be paid, it was a huge amount, we were all waiting on God in faith for the provision. Three days before the last date, my daughter got frantically worried because there seemed to be no way for such a large amount of money. I had shared earlier about how I had invested all my money that I received after resigning the bank job, into other ministries and we started our ministry with an empty kitty, trusting only God. When I had reserved a few lakh of rupees for my daughter’s education, God strictly warned me to trust Him and I emptied my pocket of that money too. My husband and me decided to go on three days of fasting; on the third day, after breaking the fast with fruits, I opened the internet to do some ministry work. We had a miracle waiting for us! God had stirred the heart of some dear soul who had deposited the exact amount that we needed. My

daughter was the first one to witness the email. From that day, whenever there is a crisis or an emergency, she never fails to confess, “God is in control!”

Dear friend, we need some breaking before blessing, otherwise we would fail to appreciate or value the blessings. What comes easily is also forgotten easily!

‘Hard times help us get more deeply rooted in God. They work humility in us and cause us to be thankful when the blessing comes.’-Joyce Meyer

Joseph was going through a process of ‘operation’ in his life. God would never prematurely stop what He had started in the life of Joseph. He was creating and making him a vessel of honor so that he could be a blessing for not only his household but for the whole of Egypt. Glory to Jesus! I tell you friend, what looks like pain and suffering would turn to joy and blessing and there is divine healing in the end.

I never fail to marvel at the way Joseph handles loneliness and rejection, having been locked up in the prison for many years! Do you know how it feels to be forgotten and left alone for many years? But listen, Joseph was never alone, though. God was with him all the time! Right there inside the prison, Joseph was being trained to take up the position of the “ruler of Egypt”. The most prestigious position!

When you are laid off from work, when your partner walks out on you, when you are diagnosed with cancer, during bankruptcy and during perilous times, you need to cling on to God rather than run away from Him. When Ruth lost her husband and all the men folks of her family, look what she does: “she clung to her mother-in-law.” (Ruth 1:14) Naomi was her only source of connection with God! She did not turn and go back to her idol worshipping family but instead she clung and stuck closely to her mother-in-law, trusting that Jehovah would surely rebuild her life. Glory to Jesus! Such should be our faith!

After the birth of my son Joshua and my salvation experience, before I could join work, I would meditate the book of Daniel and confess that I would be the head like Daniel and not the tail. In fact, I would not only confess but also write out scriptures and allow it to sink into my heart. I was absolutely positive of being blessed, promoted and lifted high above everybody else, after I join work. There was surprise waiting for me, though. After I joined work, my heart was more for God than in promotions. I started a ‘prayer cell’ in the office and I started vigorously inviting people for the luncheon prayer meeting. I would go around like a hunter calling people to join us on the terrace where I had the meeting. I went everywhere canteen, corridors, coffee vending machine, rest rooms— wherever I had opportunities to share Jesus, I did not hesitate to do it. People started noticing this, the news reached the higher officials. I was summoned and warned. I moved the meeting to an outside premises; but I did not stop the meeting. Meanwhile, I went through a terrible period of loneliness and persecution in the office. On one side my ministry was growing but on the other side my career was plummeting. My supervisor stopped talking to me. Not for one day but it continued for months and then for years. I felt miserable and wretched. I was not able to share this with even my own family and I did not because I felt humiliated. I wanted to either move from the department or resign and join ministry, but God did not allow me to do anything but ‘stay there’, because I was not yet ready for the ministry. I later understood that God had a greater purpose of keeping me ‘there’, because He was molding my character in that place.

Do not despise the closed doors, they can do wonders in your life. Stop pushing the doors on your own. Beware, you might bleed in the process, wait upon God to open it! There are many people trying to do things leaning unto their own understanding, running here and there, however, nothing would work if God does not move. Anybody listening? "Faith and works should travel side by side, step answering to step, like the legs of men walking. First faith, and then works; and then faith again, and then works again -- until they can scarcely distinguish which is the one and which is the other." (William Booth in The Founder's Messages to Soldiers, Christianity Today, October 5, 1992, p. 48)

Believe me, I know that this is not always easy in difficult circumstances. But it is possible and necessary. Regardless of our "feelings" or "perceptions," God is never far. You may not be able to see it, but let me tell you, He is working out things in your life. We need to trust Him even though we may not see it. Christian walk is all about trusting even when you don't see it. Is it not? God is in control, He loves you and He has a plan for your life!

Wesley Duewel explains this beautifully, he says, "Time waiting on God in prayer is never lost. From your perspective there may be much waiting and apparent delay. From God's perspective your waiting in extended prayer is investment." Charles Swindoll says, "When your schedule presses, when your prospect thin, when your hope burns low, when people disappoint you, when events turn against you, when dreams die, when the walls close in, when the prognosis seems grim, when your heart breaks, look at the Lord and keep on looking at Him." I love the powerful words of Apostle Paul, he says "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

God had to crucify me so that 'flesh does not glorify.' When I look back at my life, I can see that much preparation has gone into molding me for what I am now. God took me through a painful process of humiliation, rejection and dejection in my work place, in order to break my pride, arrogance and pig-headedness and make me into a vessel of honor to be used by the Master Himself. Paul says, 1 Corinthians 1:26-27 "...not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.." God cannot accomplish His will through a proud banker hence He had to first bring me to nothing in order to do something out of me. By the grace of God, I have emerged from all the travails unscathed. Halleluiah!

Though my flesh was struggling, yet I yielded to the plan of God. There were times, I would get into the rest room and sob feeling lonely and rejected. I stayed stagnant without any increment or promotion for five long years. I humbled myself in the Hands of God. There were times that I did feel, 'am I worthless', 'am I not competent?', 'where did I go wrong?' I received no answers! No clarifications! But just silence!

Here, I would like to quote the lovely words of Helen Roseveare, "To love the Lord with all my mind may involve an intellectual cost, I must give Him my mind, my intelligence, my reasoning powers, and trust Him to work through them, even when HE may appear to act in contradiction to common sense." After five long years, God started speaking to me through dreams and preparing me for His next move. He clearly gave me indications that His purpose was not to make me a successful banker but a preacher. Sometimes

we need to even suffer loss for God's greater purpose. You may be denied that promotion because God's plan for you is different! You may have to suffer injustice and betrayals for God's greater purpose of building your character. We need to tell Lord, "operate on me Lord!"

I wondered from where did Joseph receive such administration qualities, wisdom, strength, power and ability! For thirteen long years he had been locked up with prisoners. Where did he receive his degree to be appointed as the President of Egypt? Where? Where? Where? In the prison! He was tutored by God inside the prison! Hallelujah! Isn't that powerful?

You have a choice. You can accept the bad things that come your way, and allow them to stretch you, equip you, teach you, and reach you -- or you can live as a bitter and hardened person. If you are hurting today, you may feel like you're at the end of your rope; however, I pray that you will hang on to the Lord!

Poem written by Cassie Bernall two days before she was shot dead on April 20, 1999 by a gunman at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado:

"Now I have given up on everything else
I have found it to be the only way
To really know Christ
And to experience the mighty power
That brought Him back to life again,
And to find out what it means to suffer
And to die with him.
So, whatever it takes I will be one who lives
In the fresh newness of life
Of those who are alive from the dead. "

CHAPTER 16 **Covered by God!**

Exodus 24:15 "Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain."

The idea of Moses walking up Mount Sinai to meet God sends a chill up our spine! Further, Moses goes into the mountain and is now covered by the cloud! Captivating moment! Cloud refers to the manifest presence of God! God said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the 'thick cloud', that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever."(Exodus 19:9) I remember once Bro. Ezekiah Francis, Founder of Berachah Prophetic Ministries say, "many times people have literally seen the 'thick cloud' which represents the Presence of God in my meeting. " When we attend such meetings conducted by great men of God, we have supernatural transformation in our life. I was touched in one of his meetings and I surrendered my life for full-time ministry. That's exactly what the presence of God would do to you! Pull you towards Him! Being a young mother of two kids at that time, I would never have taken that brazen, bold step; if not for the magnificent presence of God in that meeting. I walked into his all-night prayer meeting, five months pregnant with doctors given up hope of saving my baby and healing me. Physically I was very weak but I took my seat in the first row. I wanted God

in my life and nothing was going to stop me. Physical ailment or inconvenience, nothing was going to hinder me that day from experiencing God. Even today, I can remember every facial expression and every movement of Bro. Ezekiah Francis on the stage. He was oozing with the presence of God on him. Bro. Ezekiah would never climb the pulpit without saturating himself with immense prayers and fasting. This was the first pentecostal meeting that I attended in my life; it shook my life and it changed me inside out. Hallelujah!

As I read the above scripture, I thought of my little son Joshua. After school he would run towards me, as though he had not seen me for ages and would hold me with both his hands and clasp me tight. I would in turn stoop down, reach out both my hands and now envelop him with my arms; locked in my arms, he would never let me go. I would have to literally tear him away from me. Just for this one inexplicable joy, I didn't want my son to grow up, I just wanted him to stay small and always hold me this way. Likewise, more than anything, God also wants you stay close to Him! The more we snuggle, nestle close to Him, greater would be the provision and protection. Amen. But it is sad to watch many servants of God run around in the name of ministry and lose out on the most important duty of 'staying in His presence'. Anybody listening? Friend, we need to just remember there is immeasurable harvest that we receive from His presence. What could not be achieved through our strength is now possible with God's anointing all over us. I remember a 63 year old North Indian man tell me, 'whenever I am by your side, your passion and love for God rubs off on me and I in turn get crazy over God.' Dear reader, I want this fire to catch you too today! He gave up his 23 years of addiction to alcohol after reading my devotions. The Word of God that he read everyday written by me was drenched with the presence of God which pulled him away from the snares of the evil one. Did not the Bible say in Psalm 107:20 "He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions?" Glory be to God! There are times when God has to close doors so that He could teach us valuable lessons inside the confined area. After I resigned my job, I expected God to throw open million doors for me for ministry, but shockingly I found God closing every door that He had opened for me earlier, before my commitment to serve the Lord in full-time ministry. Ah, you can say that I got the shock of my life! During the initial days of my ministry, I remember doing a 'self-introduction' about myself to a pastor telling him, "I have a call for youth ministry and I can reach out effectively to them." But nothing happened. The closed doors in fact, tighten more. I was not even called for small prayer cells. What's happening? I had no clue! It was frustrating, humiliating and painful! I understood after many, many years, God's purpose behind the closed doors. God had to stop me from running around, in order to make me sit in His presence and learn from Him. I tell you, it is not easy and simple to cross such lonely paths, believe me, I have wailed loudly at times, unable to bear the inactivity in my life. However, the Master is keen on building us through these breaking periods.

In Leadership Magazine, Ben Patterson wrote a story about a time when he was in pain. It was the spring of 1980, and he had been diagnosed with two herniated discs in his back. All he could do was lie on the floor. He couldn't get up to preach, or to visit people, or anything. There was absolutely nothing for him to do - except pray. Not that he came to this conclusion in the best of manners. It was actually out of boredom and frustration that he decided to just pick up his church directory and start praying for every member of the church. This led to a commitment to prayer that he had never experienced before in his life, even after his back had healed. Even in our weakest moments, we can find a great deal of strength in the Lord. God keeps us in His Presence for a greater purpose!

Friend, who would want to leave, when you have God covering you tight with His arms? No wonder Moses stayed there on the mountain for 40 days without food and water! When you have the “Bread of life” and the “Living water” right next to you, who would want anything else? He is sufficient! Praise God! Smith Wigglesworth was certainly one who knew about it. In one of the biographies about his life, the story is told that a pastor began to pray with Wigglesworth, and he was determined to stay in the prayer room with him. In the end, he finally had to crawl out of the room on his hands and knees saying, “there was too much of God in there.”

Friend, are you hungry to experience this ‘too much of God’ in your life? You may have to come out of your comfortable zone if you want to get into His Arms! Are you ready? We read of a similar encounter of being in the presence of God in Leviticus 9: 23,24: ”And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.” The Presence of God! Today each of us need a real encounter with God. There is a desperate need of Servants of God like Aaron and Moses who would draw us into the very Presence of God. Amen.

Rochester, New York, was dramatically transformed by Charles Finney's work there in 1830-31 in what has been called the greatest year of spiritual awakening in American history. Shops were closed so people could attend his meetings, and as a result of the changed hearts, the town taverns went out of business. Finney soon won international fame. Such would be the life of a man saturated with God's presence! 71

Here in the text, we read how Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of God and then came out to bless the people. It was at that time, the fire came out from God and consumed the burnt offerings. People literally saw the “fire that came out from the Lord and consume their burnt offering”. It must have been a glorious moment! It is like God walking into your dining room and accepting the food that you had prepared for Him. Do you understand? And in two ways this was a testimony of acceptance, it was proof that signified the turning away of God's wrath from them and it was like they had dinner with God. They ate their part of the sacrifice, and the fire of the Lord ate up His part. I am excited about this, how about you? When the glory of the Lord appeared, people were ecstatic, overjoyed and they literally “shouted” with joy. Next act was a true act of worship, when they just fell on their faces. You don't have to instruct people to stand or raise their hands during worship, “every knee would bend and every head bow” when God shows up in a mighty way! Praise the Lord!

Now let me read some scriptures from the previous chapter of Leviticus to give you an insight as to what was the cause for God's mighty revelation to His people. Leviticus 8:33 says, “And you shall not go outside the door of the tabernacle of meeting for seven days, until the days of your consecration are ended. For seven days he shall consecrate you”. The Bible further goes on to say in verse 36, “So Aaron and his sons did all the things that the Lord had commanded by the hand of Moses”. They had been in the presence of God for seven days and on the eighth day when they came out of the tabernacle, they carried with them the mighty Presence of God. Anointing comes from the Presence of God!

Dear friend, as I read of the Pensecola Revival, Welsh Revival which happened in Yesteryears, how my heart yearns for true revival to break out in our churches! Dear friend, it breaks my heart to see people satisfied with one hour church service and are uncomfortable when the preaching gets to more than an hour. No wonder their lives remain the same, as they come into the church with sin and walk out with sin. Whenever I find time, I love to visit a church in a particular city which has 20,000 members for one service! WOW! The Pastor, an elderly man would boldly say, "the church would finish as the Holy Spirit leads". Sometimes there would be two sermons too! If you have visited Chennai, a city in Tamil Nadu, India, then you would know that the heat would be in its peak from 10 am onwards and the service in this church would continue from morning 7 am to 11 am. Even after the service, there are various other programs like Sunday school, youth ministry etc. Such is their hunger for God! How I wish our preachers have the anointing that was on Jesus who made the crowd sit for three days without food and made them listen to Him!

My heart aches for more of such churches! We need a thirst for the Word of God and a hunger to be in the Presence of God!

Chapter 17

Desert!

Deuteronomy 1:31 "and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place."

Though we know, yet I want to give you a picture of what the desert is all about. The desert can be either extremely hot or extremely cold. Water shortage in the desert is due to low rainfall, humidity, and lack of cloud cover. Without the cloud cover, the surface is exposed to direct sunlight, causing rapid evaporation of water. The rates of evaporation are then in turn too high for any rainfall to be able to replenish. Interestingly, evaporation rates in deserts can be 20 times that of the annual precipitation. This is because most rain evaporates before it ever hits the ground. The desert has many different animals like snakes and many other types of animals. The desert has 3 type of climate, dry, hot, or even in between. There are few trees in the desert, little grass, and no vineyards, vegetables, or fish to eat in the desert. Life in the desert is hard and strenuous. The people of Israel often experienced hunger, thirst, fatigue, tension, distress, danger and discouragement; yet God had to take them through the desert. Why? In the wilderness, God displayed His awesome power to provide for His people!

Most of us actually would resist going into a wilderness; yet that is exactly where God sent His Son. Before Jesus began His public ministry, John baptized Him in the Jordan River. As He came up out of the water, the voice of God spoke audibly from heaven saying, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). Simultaneously, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, empowering Him for ministry. You might assume that Jesus would immediately go into public ministry, but this was not the case. "Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1).

God humbles and tests us through the trials and temptations of life. He strengthens us, makes us far stronger and more able to face difficult times in the future. If you have ever

experienced the death of a loved one, been through a divorce, lost a job, battled an illness, fought an addiction, then you've experienced the 'desert' in your life. After you've gone through it, now looking back at it, you realize that you are stronger now as a result of what you went through. Praise God! I know a young girl who went through divorce in her life. I was intimately involved in the whole process that her pain became my pain. She would hold me and cry on my shoulders, which would break my heart. She really suffered through it, because she didn't want the divorce and she loved her husband. I saw her cry many times, pray and fast to the Lord to deliver her from the painful test she was going through; but she had to go through the desert. They were finally divorced after a couple of years of legal bickering. But let me tell you the aftermath of the desert experience. She got saved and water baptized in the process. Her entire family including her dad and mom also came into the Lord. Her brother was delivered from alcohol addiction and also saved. It was not over, all booze parties were given a kick and their home had become a 'prayer house' with monthly prayer meetings. This girl built a lovely "prayer hall" in her home out 73

of her own pocket money. The blessings reaped out of the desert experience is bountiful and plentiful! It was no small pain though! *GOD WILL OPEN THE WORD TO YOU IN THE WILDERNESS!* The Bible says, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea" (Matthew 3:1) God opened the spiritual eyes and ears of the whole family during the time of crisis and they got saved. Hallelujah!

As you go through the desert, Jesus would be a pleasant shade to screen you from the scorching heat of the sun. You would come out victorious, do not worry!

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Following are the anguish filled words of David: *"Therefore you shall deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you. Nevertheless, if there is iniquity in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?" - 1 Samuel 20:8*

Saul's intention to kill David was now clearly revealed because of Saul's twelve attempts to kill him- three times by throwing the javelin at him, twice by making marriage arrangements with a plan for the Philistines to kill him (1 Sam 18:17), 6 times by sending soldiers after him and once by Saul going after him in Ramah. Having come to know of Saul's demonic schemes to kill him, David cries out to his friend Jonathan, "What have I done? What *is* my iniquity, and what *is* my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?" (1 Samuel 20:1) His words 'kill me yourself' in verse 8, reveals his anguish and pain. God surely knew that David would find it hard to take the bashes all alone, hence, He blesses David with a beloved friend Jonathan. 1 Samuel 20: 17 says " Now Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

Mathew Henry says, "If there be those that hate and despise us, let us not be disturbed at that, for there are those also that love and respect us." God would never forsake us! The sudden turn of events in his life, the deadly chase of Saul, the separation and isolation certainly shattered David. He did not foresee such disasters! After basking in the victory over the enemy Goliath, encounter with king Saul, entry into the palace, the songs of praise, marriage to Michal, being the king's son-in-law; God was now preparing David to go through a period of afflictions and trials necessary to become a 'man after God's own heart.' David did not realize it, though! How many of us perceive God's goodness buried deep beneath the afflictions that we go through? Peeling of onion

cause irritation to the eyes and makes it to shed tears; however, the good portion is buried beneath the outer layers of the onion. The Apostle Paul rightly says, in Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.”

David did not foresee the avalanche of trials and persecutions that he would have to encounter in his life. This was just the beginning of the journey, though, but still we see him devastated. The present heat seems to be unbearable, whereas God was preparing the furnace to be heated seven times hotter. As I read the above scripture, I was amazed how God took this broken man through the rough terrains of life before he finally brought him to his place of destiny. God had to remove David from the comfort of the palace in order to prove to David that “He is his only refuge.” The relationships you consider dear to you and the more you cleave to them, God would strip you off such relationships, in order to reveal that “He is your everything!” 74

It was a day before my husband’s birthday, we had gone to the bank to check out if there were any deposits, but we were disappointed because there wasn’t any, I stood there in front of the bank in despair, because I had nothing to bless my husband with, on his birthday. Just at that time, I received a call on my mobile and it was from the land owner to inform that our cheque had been bounced, never has this happened in our ministry. We were receiving knock after knocks, and I certainly felt drained and depleted. Is this what you call as the ‘fiery furnace that is seven times hotter?’ Surely, I could not take it! I write this portion with tears! When I think of that day, I still shudder. Oblivious to the people around me and unmindful that it was a public place, my eyes brimmed with tears. At that moment, I remembered the childhood days of poverty when we were thrown out of the house because we were not able to pay the rent. Satan cleverly brought the wrong things into my mind to shatter my faith. We asked time from the landlord and prayed for financial deliverance. I would like to state one thing here, despite the miserable condition we were in, we did not resort to using our credit card to draw cash, we did not borrow money, nor did we seek help from relatives or friends, all that we did was to fast and pray. As we went through this rough path, we learnt to fast much and pray much.

Dear friends, never despair when you go through troubles, we can have a glimpse of God only when we go through the fire. Even today, when I pass through that bank, I praise God for taking me through that path, because He taught me valuable lessons of handling money with caution and care. After that incident, I was able to compassionately look at people who are going through financial crisis. Glory to God! God will never deposit money into a pocket with a hole. Only after making a vessel into a good vessel, would He deliver money into that vessel. The vessel should have the capacity to hold blessings with wisdom! The storehouses of the Egyptians were handed over to Joseph, only after Joseph received training for 13 years inside his prison, without which he would have gone bonkers over the abundance that he received on one single day. Similarly gold, silver, money were handed over to Ezra for the service of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. Besides this abundance, he was also given the authority to ask for ‘whatever more’ may be needed for the house of God, which would be paid to Ezra from the king’s treasury. God trusted Ezra with such abundance because the Law of God was in his hand and he was also a man who not only read the law of the Lord, but he determined his heart to do it and also to teach it.

If you are serving the Lord, please listen! We don’t have to run behind riches like the way prophet Elisha’s servant Gehazi ran behind Naaman, the commander of the army of the

king of Syria. If we crazily run behind God, everything else will follow us. Give Him a shout of praise! He is worthy of praise! He is more than sufficient!

I write this particular chapter in the quietness of the night. I am pouring out my heart here! 1 Samuel 20:41 says, "they wept together but David more so!" Breaking is a must for every servant of God without which he can never be a effective vessel for God. God is not interested in intellectuals but He can only use a yielding vessel. When I look back into my life, I wonder how I survived the many storms in my life! When many young people, on whom I had made huge deposits of love, prayer, time and energy teaching the Word, walked out of my life and eventually walked out of God; the pain had broken my heart into million pieces. I still feel the pain! I keep looking out for them even now like a mother who looks out for her lost child! When one particular young man converted from hindu faith, who stayed very close to me, left me and went back to the idols, I cried one whole night.

As I write this, I remember of one particular incident that Rev. Reinhard Bonnke talks about in his book, "Even Greater", which moved me a lot. After preaching in a crusade, while Bonnke was returning, a 17 year old young man, who gets saved in Bonnke's crusade, named 'David' flags him down and stops the car. He walks up to Bonnke and asks him to pray for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. After that particular night, his life changes dramatically. The young boy David rocks the village for God and spreads the gospel of Jesus Christ. David tells Bonnke that it is his love for Jesus that has propelled him to serve the Lord. But unfortunately the young boy gets caught by the snares of the devil and walks away from God. He stops fellowship with the people of God and also leaves the village. Bonnke when he visits the particular village after many years, takes his car and goes around randomly with an ache in his heart, looking for David with tears in his eyes. One lost child is still precious even though you may have the rest safely tucked. I am still looking for my lost children! Where are they? I remember once spotting a boy who had left me many years back in a totally different state with long, disheveled hair and he looked freaky and weird. He did not look one bit the boy that I had cared for and nurtured. The boy I now saw was different! Dumbstruck and choked with emotions, I suppressed the urge to reach out to him and kept looking at him pass me by. I am sure it would have hurt the Heavenly Father more to see His child being sold to the devil!

I remember once being mocked and tormented by all sides and I lay curled up in a corner weeping at the Lord's feet, like a small child expecting my Heavenly Father to rush to my rescue and pamper me. However, for a long time I felt nothing, as I kept wallowing in self-pity, suddenly God brought Jeremiah 12:5 to my mind, " If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And *if* in the land of peace, *In which* you trusted, *they wearied you*, Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan? " I tell you, I was not prepared for the Jordan that would come gushing on me; nevertheless, after many, many years, I now realize that I have become stronger with every breaking experience. Each blow hammers you into making you Christ-like in nature! How glorious! We have a long tread uphill if we have to achieve great things for God!

God could have surely stopped Saul from chasing and hounding David and delivered him from the enemy in the very initial stages. Why did He not do it? If God had bailed out David prematurely, we would not have the book of Psalms which comforts innumerable people every day. Wonderful scriptures like Psalm 63:1 "O God, You *are* my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land

Where there is no water”, cannot be written from the palace. This particular chapter was written by David from the wilderness of Judah. The various struggles in our life, gets us nuzzle and nestle closer to God! The wilderness becomes a haven for David because he’s got his God with him. We love you Lord! We focus on the wilderness and David’s sufferings but David has met his God in that place of drought. God cannot reveal Himself to people who are not ready to get into the furnace. We have great encounters awaiting us inside the fire! I am sure, I could not have written this book “Locked up with God” sitting in the comfort of my air-conditioned office in the bank. I had to be dragged out, stripped of all comfort, mocked and battered in order to know Him in a mighty way. Why would God allow His loved ones to suffer? An ordinary person standing outside the furnace will never be able to understand if I tell, “to mold and build you.”

I want to narrate here an incident as narrated by Charles Swindoll in his book “Perfect Trust.” Many, many years ago, Felix of Nola was escaping enemies, and he, too, took temporary refuge in a cave. He had scarcely entered the opening of the cave before a spider began to weave its web across the small opening. With remarkable speed, the insect completely sealed off the mouth of the cave with an intricate web, giving the appearance that the cave had not been entered for many weeks. As Felix’s pursuers passed by, they saw the web and didn’t even bother to look inside. Later, as the godly fugitive stepped out into the sunlight, he uttered these insightful words: “Where God is, a spider’s web is a wall; where He is not, a wall is a but a spider’s web.”

David writes, Psalm 57:6 “They have prepared a net for my steps; My soul is bowed down; They have dug a pit before me; Into the midst of it they *themselves* have fallen. Selah” No net can harm you when God is inside the net with you! Hallelujah! I am truly excited as I write this! His Presence has been a cocoon for me where I would always like to be hidden. It’s been three hours that I have started writing this chapter, but I have still not exhausted all that I want to say. There are young pastors who write to me their struggle with sin and the roller-coaster life they live with God. I tell you, the secret of a successful ministry does not depend on your influential contacts, recognition, your personality, your language skills, money or charm but it lies in the time you spend in His presence. Just get locked up there! That’s it!

1 Samuel 23:18 says “So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. And David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went to his own house. “

Oh, how I love these words, “David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went to his own house!” Awesome! Though he is left behind in the woods, open to the attack of the enemy, while his beloved friend would be going back to his own house; yet we see David not getting emotional about it. Earlier we see him sob like a kid when Jonathan leaves him, but now we see a different David here; he no more wept when his friend Jonathan bid him good bye. Why? David has found another Friend and that’s GOD!

Dear friend, there will be times when people will have to get back to their own house, but remember you’ve got One who will stay close to you always. However close or intimate may you be with anyone; yet you may have to separate one day, but God says, “I am with you always”(Mathew 28:20) It took a while for David to understand God’s love for Him. Having fled from his home, wife, friend, palace, without even a roof above his head and with an enemy hounding him day and night; now David begins to find security in God. This was the greatest turning point in his life. He found a stronghold where he could hide where no one could reach him, where no enemy dare touch him! The Bible

says, "And David stayed in strongholds in the wilderness, and remained in the mountains in the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand." (1 Samuel 23:14)

Friend, we can never sing like David, "I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold"; if we have not gone through what David went through. David went through difficult paths, yes, but look what the Bible says of his end:

1 Chronicles 29:

26 Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. 77

27 And the period that he reigned over Israel was forty years;

seven years he reigned in Hebron, and thirty-three years he reigned in Jerusalem.

28 So he died in a good old age, full of days and riches and honor; and

Solomon his son reigned in his place.

That was a smashing finish! Glory to Jesus!

The story of a shepherd boy David becoming the king of Israel is the most fascinating history in the Bible which baffles most of us. Through the rough terrains, God took him notch by notch en route to the final, to a staggering finish! God expects us to rest in total dependence in Him. It is enough that He knew "The Plan".

CHAPTER 18 **Walking in the dark!**

Isaiah 50:10,11 " Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness And has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD And rely upon his God. Look, all you who kindle a fire, Who encircle yourselves with sparks: Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled --- This you shall have from My hand: You shall lie down in torment."

God spoke the above scripture to me when I was going through a severe dark period in our ministry and my own personal life. An avalanche of problems and pain gushed on me and threatened to topple me. But I thank God, if not for my severe fasting and hard prayers, I would have gone crazy!

I write this particular portion, after walking almost ten years with Him. Just as I was blissfully dreaming of new openings for my ministry, God was closing almost all the present doors of ministry. The "My Delight" daily devotional magazine which was my passion was slowly dwindling. Freshly printed books, the sheen still on them, were stacked in bundles in the corner of the Printer's office. We did not have funds to take delivery of them. Days were turning to weeks, yet we could see no light. The pain in my heart knew no bounds!

The financial crisis that we were facing was threatening to throttle us like never before. Our current bill, rent bill and maintenance bills were outstanding, it was the most embarrassing time in my ministry. I felt a total wreck. I wondered what would I answer my kids if the power was cut by the electricity board officials! How could I face them! This was truly a dark period in our life. I could truly relate to the miseries of Job when he

says, “....He has set darkness in my paths (Job 19:8) However, on the last date of payment, God enabled us to make the payment. Praise God!

The ordeal was not over, though, there were other payments glaring daggers at us. There were severe riots in the city during that time and on a particular day, we had come to an absolute empty stage. Not a grain in the rice bag, no oil, no petrol, no milk and not a penny in the wallet. Nothing! My little son started crying and wanted some good food because we had been managing for along time with bare minimum. Now, even that was not there. The adults can certainly manage, but what about the kid? I panicked! My husband said that he would draw Rs.100/- from the minimum balance amount of the bank and get some food. He walked to the bank because there was no petrol in the bike, after an hour he called me over the phone to say that all the banks and shops were closed because of the problems. He said that he would try using his debit card and purchase something from the supermarket in our colony which was fortunately opened. When he had taken all the items and about to submit his card, five thugs bombarded into the shop and forced them to close the shutters immediately. My husband called me to say that with all doors of opportunity closed, he was returning home with an empty bag. I kept the receiver down, buried my face in my hands and sobbed bitterly. I had never felt so broken in my life. What would I tell my son, daughter and the maid! I gathered myself after some time and felt the need to do something. I humbled myself to call the opposite house hindu lady and explained about the ATMs being closed and asked if she could give us some money. She was at that time out on the roads hunting for an ATM and she said, “Bala, I actually wanted to ask you for some money because I have no money and now all the banks are closed, sorry.” I just sat in my chair staring at the walls. After half-hour, I received a call. When I picked up the phone, it was the same sweet, pleasant voice of that hindu lady, she said, “Bala, I just managed to spot an ATM, I have withdrawn some money, would Rs.2000/- be enough?” Ah, the voice was like fresh water gushing on a barren, broken land! I said, thousand rupees would do and I thanked her. God did not rush to wipe out all the problems in one go, He came in His own time to solve one problem at a time. I did have a giant faith of trusting God and none. I was flexing my faith muscles to live like George Muller. However, I guess I was getting swollen-headed and proud about my faith. God wanted to nip that out, hence, He allowed me to seek the help of my neighbor. I learnt huge lessons on humility while traversing a pitch dark path of ‘nothingness.’

Well, does it mean God had forsaken me? Never! During those dark moments, Holy Spirit brought scriptures and incidents from the Bible to my memory. One such incidence is Joseph being falsely accused and thrown into the prison. Joseph who feared God, loved God and obeyed Him was mercilessly charged with ‘attempted rape’ and thrown into prison by the very man who showed great favor for Joseph. Genesis 39:20 says, ‘Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison.’ Joseph was humiliated, disgraced and put to shame in front of all who worked at Potiphar’s house. Now, how can we explain this? Well, we have the answer in the next scripture, verse 21 says, “But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”

I am speaking right now to a brother or sister reading this book, we need to go through every path in our life, rough and tough, holding on to the Hand of our Creator, rather than try to skip and do a long jump or high jump. It doesn’t happen that way. The prison was designed by God for Joseph. People going through marital, financial and emotional

problems wish them to vanish immediately. It can happen even to a church or ministry, when the spirit that once united a people has been broken by selfishness or petty concerns or may be there is barrenness in the ministry. But listen, we cannot immediately turn around the situation, we need to wait on God to deliver us from this dark period. There are treasures hidden in the dark! God says, "I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call *you* by your name, *Am* the God of Israel. "(Isaiah 45:3)

I found profound meaning in the scripture, Isaiah 50:10,11, "Who walks in darkness And has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD..." There would come a time in our life when we would be engulfed in utter darkness with no ray of light and in that path, God wants us to trust Him. Because we fear the Lord, love Him and obey Him, does not mean we are exempted from sufferings, but watch this, when there is no light, we are asked to trust in His name. Awesome! Proverbs 18:10 "The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe." Yes, though He did not dispel the darkness from our path at one go, yet He kept us from stumbling and falling. Though the path is eerie, yet we learn great lessons of faith in the dark. Warren Wiersbe has said, "We live by promises, not by explanations."

After ten years in the ministry, we found ourselves with an empty bank balance, two grown up kids, a new city with a new environment, language problem and no ministry openings. To top it all, I was jeered and mocked at all sides! I cried on the inside, "GOD, HELP ME!" I loved Him much, I knew He is my only anchor, hence in the midst of the storm, I spent much time with Him. I would spend an average of five hours in prayer and would bury myself deep all day into His Word. I cried out to God like David in anguish "I am afflicted very much; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word." (Psalm 119:107) My husband and I searched our hearts thoroughly and we were on our knees pleading God for mercy. When the above storm was blowing over us, we concealed the entire thing to our children and immediate family members. Just about this time, my husband received his credit card along with the ATM password. We had a couple of lakhs as our 'credit limit', but praise God, we never even looked at it as a source of solving our present financial crisis. What God started, we wanted Him to finish it. We did not even pledge our jewels at this point. We wanted to learn the lessons that God intended to teach us during the interim period. Paying our dues from our own sources would be belittling God's glory. We dug our heels deeper, ground our teeth firm and stood rooted waiting for God's deliverance! James O David says, "Sometimes, God removes all the answers in order to give us Himself. A relationship is more important than a reason."

God brings tough times into our lives not only to bring us back to him, but to bring us back to ourselves. To get us to see the world the way He sees it. To get us to be more considerate and compassionate towards people. So, if the light has been removed from the situations of your life, then God in his wisdom has allowed you to be in the darkness. If God is the One who has allowed darkness to come your way, then do not be foolish to light your own fire. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy will come in the morning" (Ps. 30:5).

As a kid I remember visiting my grandparents during my holidays, who lived in Kodaikanal, a lovely town situated on a hill, where my mother was born and brought up. The town is simply fascinating with mountains all around, thick foliage of trees and the aroma of the Eucalyptus trees captivates a person. The hill folks are hospitable and simple, for those with a yen for trekking, there are umpteen trekking opportunities there.

One has to travel a long distance in order to reach the town to purchase necessary commodities for the household, I remember tagging along with my grandpa to the town. At times, thick fog would cloud the way and we would not be able to see the path clearly, it's quite an eerie journey with steep curves and bends. But my grandpa would walk swiftly and confidently because he was used to the path and he knew the way. As a kid I would hold his hand and walk along with him without fear. I don't have to know the way or see the path, because grandpa knows it and all I have to do is to stay close and walk along with him. Now after several years, sometimes life gets eerie too, there are times that I don't know where to turn and my vision is blurred. I am glad that I have the strong Hand of Jesus like my dear grandpa and I can just stay close with Him and tag along wherever He takes me. I don't have to know the way, it is enough that He knows the way! He is the way!

I would like to quote a few lines from the book "Perfect Trust" authored by Charles Swindoll: "God says to us, "Don't run! Don't escape! Don't give up! Let your faith run its course, that you might know how good I can be."

Chapter 19 **Strengthen me, I pray!**

Judges 16:28 "Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, "O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!"

Oh, what a prayer! Samson pleaded the Lord, 'remember me!' Do you think God had forgotten Samson? Never! Even though Samson's eyes had been plucked off, the Lord's eyes were fixed on him! Well, we are able to make such a powerful prayer only when we are brought to nothing! With his eyes plucked away, head shaven, bound with bronze fetters and when he became a grinder in the prison, that is when his spiritual eyes looked up to the Creator.

How his heart would have bled to hear the Philistines blasphemy the Lord, praise their god and also call him 'the enemy!' The most humiliating moment came when Samson was asked to perform in front of the pagan gods; while the Philistines danced, ate and were having merry. All the while, I guess Samson cried in his heart and repented for his sins. Never despise the dark moments in your life, God does a deeper work in our hearts during such times. Period of adversity, pain and persecution helps us to analyze and set right our lives. It is now that Samson musters all his strength to make the last plea unto the Lord. Samson cried, 'strengthen me, I pray!' The man who did great and wonderful works through the power of the Holy Spirit, was now crying for His strength! While locked in the hands of his enemies, he clearly understood that his strength was not in his hair but was in his connection with God. Do you get me? Mathew Henry said: 'If God go, the glory goes, and all good goes. Woe unto us if He departs!' Our strength comes from the Lord! The Lord tells His people, "I will strengthen you..." (Isaiah 41:10)

Many times, I would have exhausted my natural strength to the maximum, through traveling, fasting and preaching and sometimes I would walk up the stage depleted of all energy. I have sat at times on the platform, wondering if I would ever be able to preach His Word! One look at the congregation and the expectation in their eyes to hear the Word of God, would pump energy into my body. I would get ready to stand against the

evil devices of satan to weaken my body. The scripture in Isaiah 40:31 would flash in my mind, "They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." I don't remember a day when I was totally delivered from all fatigue, but the moment I start preaching, power would descend from above and replenish the strength enough for the day.

Apostle Paul said, 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.' (2 Corinthians 12:10)

You may wonder, 'hey, how does one take pleasure in infirmities, persecutions, distress and in need?' Well, the answer is in the scripture before this: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." What captivated my attention were the words, 'My strength is made perfect in weakness!' It's God who enables us to bear our trials. God must often show us how weak we are in ourselves. Sometimes we have abilities that we rely on to get us by in situations, but when God is at work in our lives for a greater purpose, He wants us to trust Him, not our gifts, not our abilities, not our experiences or our spiritual reserves. Anybody listening? When you and I die to self, then God's resurrection power can go to work. Dying to self does not mean doing nothing and expecting God to do everything; it means getting to know God in a richer relationship and trusting him to complete the work. The God who raises the dead is sufficient for any difficulty of life. He is able but we must be available!

God taught me the above lesson taking me through real practical classes, otherwise we never remember it well. During a convention meeting, after aggressive preaching for two days, my voice dipped drastically; I had to further preach in two services in the church the next day. After investing lot of prayers that night, I trusted God to do a miracle; however, the next day, instead of improvement, it became worse, I was unable to utter even a word. My commitment to the pastor restrained me from canceling the preaching assignment. I boldly stepped forward! Neither the pastor nor the congregation were aware of my weakness, however, when the mike was handed over to me, everybody were due for a shock. I was just stuck! I sipped hot water to soothe my throat and continued to preach. I can never explain in words the pain, humiliation, utter helplessness I felt on the stage that day! Should I walk away? Never! I persisted and got ready to kick the devil that was trying to bog me down. After about half hour, the voice became slightly better and towards the end, God poured down His power on the church. I did not leave the platform, but sat there with tears running down my cheek and prepared myself for the next service. Yes, on the platform with the Bible on my lap, I wept and prayed for strength to preach His Word to His people. When the people of the world strain their voice for many worldly purposes, here, I was pleading God for His mercies to do His work. My sermon in the next service came out with power, my voice was not completely healed, though, the entire church were filled with the Holy Ghost fire! On our way back, my daughter comforted me saying, 'Though you were physically weak, His power was demonstrated in His Word and touched the Church.' That's what exactly God meant, when He said, 'My strength is made perfect in weakness!'

In Leadership Magazine, Ben Patterson wrote a story about a time when he was in pain. It was the spring of 1980, and he had been diagnosed with two herniated discs in his back. All he could do was lie on the floor. He couldn't get up to preach, or to visit people, or anything. There was absolutely nothing for him to do - except pray. Not that he came to this conclusion in the best of manners. It was actually out of boredom and frustration that he decided to just pick up his church directory and start praying for every member of the church. This led to a commitment to prayer that he had never experienced before in

his life, even after his back had healed. Even in our weakest moments, we can find a great deal of strength in the Lord. Sometimes the Lord says no, because He knows that we need to be reminded of this.

My dear friends, if today you feel physically, mentally and emotionally weak, surrender yourself into His Arms and draw strength from Him. The Lord knew the avalanche of attacks that would come on His disciples and that is why He pleaded them to pray, not for five minutes, but for an hour!

Mathew 26:40,41 'Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak."

Friend, note this, the more you pray, the more strong you would get! The disciples failed to obey the Lord and no wonder they had no strength to face the enemies, hence they ran helter-skelter. Even after Daniel heard that a decree was written and signed according to the law of the Medes and Persians, "that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions", he boldly walked up to his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. (Daniel 6:10) I want you to talk notice of the words 'that day!' Do you know which day? It was the day he came to know of the decree; nevertheless, he had no fear but he walked up to his prayer room to pray as usual. Such colossal strength comes from the Lord!

Strength is not all about flexing our muscles; but it is silent endurance of pain and suffering, trusting the Lord wholeheartedly. Charles Swindoll described it this way: "In our rough-and-rugged individualism, we think of gentleness as weakness, being soft, as virtually spineless. Not so! ... Gentleness includes such enviable qualities as having strength under control, being calm and peaceful when surrounded by a heated atmosphere, emitting a soothing effect on those who may be angry or otherwise beside themselves, and possessing tact and gracious courtesy that causes others to retain their self-esteem and dignity.... Instead of losing, the gentle gain. Instead of being ripped off and taken advantage of, they come out ahead!"

When a person is saturated with the presence of God and His wisdom, even their silence exudes profundity! Daniel did not give in to pressure and fear, but stood his ground even when he was thrown into the lion's den. After throwing Daniel into the lion's den, the king was unable to forgive himself for his atrocious deed done against Daniel. Now read verse 18: 'Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him.' He was not able to eat his food, listen to his usual music nor sleep. He spent the whole night tossing to and fro in his bed. The next day he came very early to the den and cried out with a lamenting voice, but Daniel identified the voice of the king and replied back enthusiastically with good wishes: Long live the king! Wow, what a wish from the lion's den!

Friend, two people above spent their nights differently: one chose to fret and fume but the other chose to take his problems to the feet of the Lord and hence victoriously triumphs over the lions. I am talking to someone out there! I know of many people who have come to me in the morning and say, 'I spent the whole night worrying and crying.' May be you called a relative and cried over the phone! Is there any use friend? Problems

cannot be overcome by crying, worrying or complaining, but we need to cross the hurdles through tough praying. R.A.Torrey said: "Nights of prayer to God are followed by days of power with men. In the night hours the world is hushed in slumber. We can easily be alone with God and have undisturbed communion with Him." Praise the Lord! When Christians on an average spend less than ten minutes in prayer everyday, and about eight hours (and more) sleeping, I wonder how do I write this portion of praying the whole night; nevertheless I write for the few who would take the effort. I pray God speaks to the hearts of people today and convicts people of prayerlessness in their lives!

I have personally found the night time to be great time with the Lord! With no disturbance of the telephone ringing tone, the door bell, the vendors screaming on the roads and other noises, it is perfect time of bliss to commune with Him. Please don't sit for prayer with any prior motive of reaping blessings from it, just sit to spend time with Him. That's it! I tell you, He never sends you empty handed! I know of a young man who spent around five nights of prayer just to get powerfully anointed; however he was disappointed when he felt dry. Praying, fasting and reading the Bible should not become a ritual in our life, we need to do them to seek Him. God knows our inner most thoughts, hence He would reward us accordingly.

It is during such night prayers that God had revealed to me the sermons to be preached and there are other nights that I just sit at His feet; however, such efforts strengthen us to combat the evil forces that come against our family, children, finances, business and health. Why not start with half-night prayer and then scale greater heights for God?

Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 6:

10'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.'

We have a clear warning in the above scripture to be spiritually equipped to fight the evil forces that would come like a hurricane against us. When we started our church in Hyderabad and while I was involved in various projects in our ministry, I faced tremendous attacks by the devil on my mind and thoughts. I had never faced such forceful threats on my mind and began counter attacking the devil with intense fasting and prayers. On a particular day when I was fasting, I had a very disturbing dream in the morning; I dreamt about a very close member of my family, who was dead, and I woke up sobbing loudly. Actually I had planned to invest several hours of prayer and Bible reading on that day, but this dream shattered me emotionally. I did go berserk for a while, but then I knew it was the work of the enemy to distraught me emotionally, immediately I rolled up my sleeves and spent several hours in prayer and worshipping the Lord and I came out rejuvenated and refreshed in my spirit.

The first introduction of Hannah in the Bible opens with her weeping over the tormenting words of Penninah and as a woman with no children; however, Hannah takes a decision to walk into the presence of the Lord and weep at His feet. When 'she continued praying before the LORD' (12), she received strength to believe for a miracle. Hallelujah! Tears trigger fear, but faith brings cheer! Prayer builds your faith! After wrestling in prayer for a

long time, 'she went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. ' That's powerful! God does reward her with Samuel and later she prophetically sings with power: 1 Samuel 2:4" The bows of the mighty men *are* broken, And those who stumbled are girded with strength." We must not forget that God has promised us that we would never be tempted above what we are able to bear, but with every temptation, every trial, 85

every test, every trouble, He will make a way for us to escape and win the victory. (1 Corinthians 10:13) People who trust in their strength would fail but those who depend on the Lord would triumph over the enemies. I would like to close this chapter with the awesome prayer of Apostle Paul:Colossians 1:10,11'...that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy..'

CHAPTER 20 ***He came to see me!***

November, 2008, as I sat in the dentist clinic waiting for my turn to be called in, my thoughts raced to my frequent doctor visits in the past few months. It was hardly a month that I had undergone hernia operation and here I was again on another problem, before even the scar of my operation could be completely healed. Exasperated, tired and weak, I wondered why I had to go through such trials and pain! Even before the hernia problem, I had inflammation of the gums, but I had ignored it for two months, checked with two doctors, not finding much improvement, here I was waiting to meet a specialist. I rushed into the doctor's room when my name was called, I was attended by two nurses and the surgeon came to access my report and I could see from his expression that it was no 'small' problem. He asked me if I was ready for a small surgery as they wanted to send 'portion' of my gum for 'biopsy'. They suspected that it might be 'cancerous'. It was shocking! They would be able to give me the results only after one week. One week of waiting! After they had finished with me, I came out of the doctor's room with my lips little twisted because it was swollen. When we returned home my children were shocked to see my distorted face and my husband's sullen face. That night when we gathered together for our family prayer, we explained the situation to my eldest daughter, I could see fear in her eyes. When it was time for prayer, normally she sloppily kneels down for prayer, but that day I saw her standing erect on her knees for prayer. God surely knows how to touch our knees for prayer!

Just about that time, besides my physical illness, I had been going through certain emotional strain as well. I was misunderstood by some people, attendance for our meetings were pathetically poor and doors for meetings and conventions were shut tight. It was certainly a gloom period of our ministry. Besides, the sales of our "My Delight" devotional book which was our first book project was very disappointing, with bundles of fresh books stocked in the corner of our office room, month after month. There were awesome testimonies pouring in regarding the book, yet the sales were very low; but we obediently followed the Lords' instructions and kept releasing the books. Printing, typing and the final releasing would be done every quarter through severe financial stress, coupled with various other problems as well. It was a mammoth project with the book being released both in English and Tamil.

Well, in the midst of it all, sickness was not something I expected at this moment, for nearly 6 months I was on bland food and absolutely no spicy food because my whole mouth would burn even with a slightest touch of anything spicy. I remembered how I would speak continuously for four hours in convention meetings, I knew then that I had operated on the 'oxen strength' given to me by God. Even youngsters would envy my stamina and energy. I would travel five to six hours on road in public buses to reach the meeting venue. On a single day, I would preach in several places. I love working hard for God! I was eager and passionate to show Him that I love Him by my willing service. Now being weak in body and mind, I wondered what was God's plan in my life! How would you react if your prayers were not answered and you had trusted the Lord but you feel abandoned and frustrated? How would you feel if you were falsely accused and continuously jeered at by people?

I was hemmed and jammed between sickness, financial pressure, mental pressure, family pressure and to top it all hurtful words were thrown on me which hit me like a bomb shells. I just walked into my room, shut myself in and leaned against the wall. It was like enough is enough! There are many servants of God who write to me about their financial problems, emotional problems and ask me to pray for them. I know there are many reading this book today, I tell you ministry is not easy, your heart is broken a million times, unexpected physical illness irk you, thousand problems suddenly rush on you like a hurricane, people betray you, people mock at you despite your hard work and most of all, if you are one who wants do extraordinary things for God, the path is lonely. There are many who aspire to do ministry, mostly young people are fascinated about it, not knowing the intricacies involved in it. I write this not to discourage you, but to warn you to be equipped to meet the challenges involved in ministry. How many who are interested in serving God, have actually walked on highways, distributed tracts, met people on roadsides and shared the Gospel, worked along with other missionaries and helped them, helped the church and the pastors? In million other ways your services are desperately needed. I did not even have a name for my ministry for many, many years while I served the Lord. Saving souls is most important and all the rest would follow. Anointing, power, opportunities and recognition would just come your way. As I sat in the dark, I just asked God one thing, "I am desperate, I have none, I feel lost, I want you to speak to me." I just said that, buried my head into my hands and I started to sob. I am not ashamed to say this. Depression attacks all of us. But I did one commendable thing and that is to run to Him. I kept saying over and over again, "Speak to me now".

During this period, I was led to read a book written by Helen Roseveare, a Christian missionary woman who worked in Africa. It was an old, worn-out book published in the year 1979. As I started reading the book I knew the purpose of God in stirring my heart to read the book. I just read the book in one shot. She talks about being taken captive by the guerilla army in Africa and beaten up by them. Flung on the ground, teeth broken, mouth and nose gashed, ribs bruised, insulted and threatened, she felt unutterably alone in that dark night. She wondered, "why did God not come to save me?" But in the darkness and loneliness, Jesus met her! His love enveloped and shielded her and the 'whys' dropped away from her! She remembered of all God's goodness to her all her life. God suddenly whispered into her ears, "These are not your sufferings, they are not beating you. These are my sufferings, all I ask of you is the loan of your body." At that moment she felt it as a privilege to suffer for Christ and to love the rebel soldiers in the height of their wickedness. It was unimaginable, yet true! Peter says in 1 Peter 4:13 "but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."

Dear friend, I could not read the book without tears in my eyes and I could also feel God telling me, “would you also accept anything that comes your way for my sake?”

I got saved after I was healed from death-bed, and now after many years of serving the Lord, I was again afflicted with sickness in my body. But, that particular day after reading that amazing book, I learnt that I should ‘ACCEPT’ whatever God gives me and whenever He would give it to me. Did you get that? I knew then the profound meaning behind Paul’s words when he said, Romans 12:1 “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

May be some of you are right now without proper jobs, single without a life partner, may be sick, may be going through a crisis in your marriage, you are trusting God, but you feel that He has failed; I speak to you right now, to keep trusting Him! Young people, love Him with all your heart, and give up all the worldly passions for His sake!

I want to share a lovely illustration here: “A slave had served his Master faithfully for years, so diligent was he that the Master rewarded him by taking him along on a tour of the Amazon jungles; they camped at night and walked, exploring nature’s pristine beauty, during the day. The loyal slave never failed in his duty to his Master even though the trip was his reward. He would feed his Master, make his bed and keep him warm at night. Impressed further by his service, one day at lunch time, when they both spotted a big, exquisite, colorful fruit, the Master insisted that the slave have the fruit first. When the slave was shy to take up his offer, the Master said, “My dear son, you have served me well, go on eat this rare fruit first, and give me a small portion at the end.” The slave reluctantly agreed and had a go at the juicy fruit, as he ate the first few slices, the Master asked him how it was and the slave replied: “extra-delicious”. A few more slices later, the Master again asked him how it was and the slave gave the same reply. Big fruit that it was, larger than a pumpkin, the Master got the same reply time after time. Soon, more than three fourths of the fruit had been eaten by the slave and the Master began to worry that he would not get to taste it. “Slaves are slaves”, he thought, ‘selfish and greedy’. Losing his patience finally he snatched the last slice from the slave and bit into it, he shrieked in horror throwing the slice away. It was the bitterest fruit he had ever tasted in all his life. He looked at his slave in dismay and asked him” but why did you say it was extra-delicious? How and why, my son?”. The slave replied, ‘Master, all my life you have looked after me, you have given me all that I needed, so when you gave me this fruit to eat, it’s bitter taste did not matter to me at all. I just blindly trusted the hand that gave me the fruit.”

There is huge learning for us from the slave’s attitude to life and his Master. There is joy, great joy in accepting whatever comes from the Hand of God. It is more meaningful when we humbly accept whatever comes our way, while blindly trusting the Hand that has given us this beautiful life and this experience.

I want to quote here the words of Apostle Paul:

Romans 8:38,39 “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

I want to speak to people who succumb very easily to the pressures of this world, can we rise to a spiritual plane, where our love for our God would be so supreme that we would never grumble and murmur during times of crisis, but glide through it with grace and trust. Amen.

Charles Swindoll said, "The secret to responsible trust is acceptance. Acceptance is taking from God's Hand absolutely anything He gives."

It was exactly three days after the doctor's visit and that morning I had been praying from the wee hours of 3 am in the morning and at 7 am I was exhausted, my children were getting ready for school, I was alone in the bedroom and I just laid down for a short nap to rest my aching back. Something amazing, wonderful and breath-taking happened at that time! I was awake in my spirit and suddenly I found a tall man walk into my room and ask, "are you Bala?" I said 'yes' and then he said, "JESUS CHRIST IS COMING TO SEE YOU!" The messenger was an angel!

I was absolutely aware of all that was happening! I was excited, elated and overjoyed to react! Next, I found a bright, dazzling, gorgeous 'Light' - I can never describe or illustrate - enter my room. Within few seconds I saw JESUS clothed in impeccable, pure, sparkling, white garments enter my bedroom. The glittering white garment had also dashes of gold in the tassels of His garments. He came hurriedly into my room and started talking to me, till date I regret for not understanding all that He told me that day. He gestured me to 'GET UP!' Simultaneously, I saw on a big screen a man lying down covered with a sheet and Jesus commanded Him to 'get up' and immediately he threw away the sheet, leaves the bed and walks away. Jesus points out to this scene and tells me to do the same. He explained everything to me with visuals, with a beautiful presentation and left the way He walked in. He dashed in and dashed out! I immediately woke up and looked at the place where He stood! Jesus came to see me! I couldn't believe! I rattled the whole vision to my husband. Later, during the day when I sat for prayer, I asked Him for further revelation of the vision and He led me to 1 King 19:5 "Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise *and* eat."" The Scripture brought fresh life into my bones! I determined not to mop around anymore. I determined to accept by faith the healing from God and get deeper into God's work.

After one week we visited the doctor and we were told that there was nothing serious and we need not worry; yet, my gums had to be treated. I knew Jesus had a purpose of visiting me that morning! NOTHING MATTERED ANYMORE!

Do not allow satan to put you down on the floor, do not be hopeless, there is healing in the Hands of our Lord. Let me quote the words of prophet Jeremiah here: Jeremiah 8:22 'Is there no balm in Gilead, Is there no physician there?' There is a balm in Gilead! We have our Heavenly Healer! Do not worry! We have our Provider and our Protector who will never forsake us! Trust Him whole-heartedly! Do not look for an easy life without pain and suffering, but trust God to empower you to go through the suffering and come out triumphantly, because being crushed, squeezed, refined and purified, will bring the best out of you. You would be an aroma of Christ for people around you! We look for ways out of our tests. We search for means of escape, but what would have happened if the Lord Jesus could have made a way of escape for Himself from the Cross. He told us there were legions of angels ready to come to His aid, but He did not choose escape. He suffered willingly, that you and I might be spared.

Entrust your ministry, children, family, business and health into the Hands of the Mighty Lord. Search your hearts for hidden sins and get straight with the Lord. Is there anything too hard for the Lord? GOD BLESS YOU!