

André **Bronkhorst**

W A L K I N G
WITH GOD

WALKING WITH GOD

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ISBN: 978-0-620-78321-7

Cover design and interior by

Lonely Viking

<http://www.lonelyviking.com>

Edited by Ryan Peter

ryanpeterwrites.com

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Foreword

For me it has been a life-long mandate and commitment to the Lord to raise up the Prophetic with a healthy Bible balance alongside commitment to, and participation in, the Local Church. So, with a focus on helping and coaching prophets, in the process of growing and training and becoming effective, it was an absolute delight and high point in life when I encountered André Bronkhorst.

André's life and example of fruitful Christianity was refreshing and inspiring and then, to add to that, his remarkable prophetic gift, which not only is accurate, but responsibly handled with the objective of strengthening God's people. In the years that I've known him, helped him, and walked with him in his ministry, his testimony and intimacy with the Lord has been phenomenal. This book, which is an account of his journey in closeness and relationship with the Lord, should inspire every Christian, as it has done for me. On the few occasions I've heard him actually speak on this topic, in different

parts of the world, it has always brought me to tears and caused me to pursue the Lord with a greater desire and earnestness. I have never heard or seen anyone with such a testimony of intimacy with our Lord Jesus.

As a prophet and a child of God, he brings life everywhere he goes. I strongly recommend this book. To those who are reading it, I pray that the blessing of God will be as rich in your life as it has been to me through André's life.

As you read this book, please remember that your relationship with the Lord is far greater and outweighs all ministry gifting and even the things we do, because above all else we ought to guard our hearts and maintain a relationship with Him. Jesus said, "Remain in Me..." and this book will certainly inspire, help and guide you in that very theme. God bless you as you read it!

- Ed Traut

CHAPTER ONE

Just Four Words

“I believe in you.”

Those four simple words changed my life. I hope they change yours too. They were the first words that moved me from a faulty and broken understanding of who God is to a clear and freeing revelation of who He really is and what our purpose as human beings actually is.

What is our purpose? What is *your* purpose? Why are you here? Why did God create you? These are questions we all ask all the time. They are good questions. When we ignore these questions because they seem too difficult to answer, we find ourselves living restless, aimless lives. But the answer to these questions is simple.

You were not made to drift aimlessly through life, from one thing to the next, trying to make money and survive and get to the top of a ladder. You were not called to a rat race.

You were made to have a deep, intimate, affectionate, loving, real relationship with God. A relationship that grows and gets better and better.

You have been called to a deeper relationship.

Not just the person next door. Not just the preacher or the prophet. Not just the person who lives a moral life.

You. And I. And all of us.

This is precisely what I discovered when these four words were spoken to me. At the time I heard these words, you see, I didn't really believe in myself - and never thought anyone else would either. Least of all the person who said them to me! Before these words, you might say, I believed too strongly in myself. I thought it was up to me to get to God - to know Him and have Him close to me. Perhaps you are in the same place and you're burnt out and tired. Your story is similar to mine, and is in fact more common than you think. But I hope to give you hope.

Because, in fact, those four words not only changed my life, but *saved* it. They were said to me at a time when I made a real mess of things. I was sixteen years old and quite a wreck. It wasn't anyone's fault, really, except my own, and I never blamed anyone for all my wrong choices. These wrong choices got me kicked out of school. These wrong choices could have set my life on a downward spiral of depression and hopelessness, and perhaps even prison.

Up to that point, I had tried my best to be a good person and a good Christian, but I just couldn't do it. The harder I tried, the worse it got. I felt like a complete failure.

But how did I get there? The answer is simple. It was religion. I struggled to be a good Christian, a good person, and I eventually started giving up. I loved the Lord and had such a deep respect for Him, but I felt like I couldn't live up to what I thought He wanted from me - that I couldn't live up to the things He wanted me to do. Or, at least, what I thought He wanted me to do!

All my understanding about God was about to be challenged. Everything I thought I knew

would turn out to be wrong. But before that, I found myself sitting on the edge of my bed, thinking of how I could take my life.

Interestingly, it all starts when my parents gave their life to God. I was fourteen years old at the time. When they did this they had not served God for the first fourteen years of my life, and so I think they tried to make up for all of them! They gave their life and mine and pretty much everything. I am grateful for it, but at the time I had no understanding of what it really meant. Suddenly life was about church and what we were going to do at church and when next we would be at church. Everything changed! Before this, pretty much everything reasonable was allowed. I don't think they were ever bad people, really. We lived our lives like most others we knew and I never thought we were strange or anything like that. My dad used to drink and I never thought much of it. Drinking is what grown-ups did. You drink water or juice because you are a child, and grown-ups drink beer and brandy because they are grown-ups. Birds drink water and cats drink milk. It's just the way of things. One day when I'm a grown up I'll also drink grown-up drinks, because

grown-ups drink those drinks. That was what I thought as a young person growing up.

When my dad got saved, however, he never touched alcohol again. Not a drop. God really changed his life and it was powerful. He got such a passion for the Lord and wanted people to truly experience life with God. He loved the lost and broken-hearted. He still does. And most of all, he really loves the Lord.

So suddenly after my parents gave their life to the Lord, every Sunday morning and every Sunday evening was spent in church. My Sundays before that were usually long boring days, winter or summer. We lived in a small town called Trichardt in the province of Mpumalanga in South Africa. Mpumalanga is a rural province in my country that literally means “the place where the sun rises” in several local languages. (We have eleven official languages in South Africa.) In one day you can experience four seasons. Winters are cold and dry, summers are warm and dry. Our farm near the small town of Trichardt wasn’t much to brag about, to be honest - unless you find winding, dusty roads and short, dry grass interesting.

And not to mention the smell. Trichardt is right next to the town of Secunda and both towns are basically built amidst coal fields. Close by, the oil company Sasol has a plant, so you must understand that even the air is not, well, the best. To be quite honest, it stinks. In winters, when the wind has died down and there is no rain to wash and blow the smell away, you live your days in a constant unpleasant odour.

But it was my home. My Sundays were mostly about exploring the farm and being a normal boy, doing boyish things; or playing in my room and just doing whatever I wanted. My older brother was different to me. He is four years older, and he enjoyed being more hands-on, working on a tractor, riding the big trucks on the farm, tending to the cattle, and milking cows. He would often come home full of dirt and grease and oil. I wasn't all that much into the farm life, but I managed to always find something to do and, for the most part, enjoyed life as much as a young boy does.

But now Sundays generally always involved the same routine, and it went like this. In the morning my mom would get me ready in my

suit. Always the same suit. They had bought it for me six years before, and because we were so poor, that was going to be my suit for practically forever! By this time, now at fourteen, I was practically exploding out of it!

“Why do I wear this suit to church, mom?” I would often ask. “Why do you and dad also wear nice clothes to church?”

“We are going to church. It is where God lives,” she would say, preoccupied with my tie or dusting off my shirt. “You must always look your best for God.” At that, she would often lovingly straighten my hair. “And you look nice.”

Now I don't know how things work with you when (or if) you go to church, but with us it worked like this. We would get ready, often skip breakfast because everyone was running late, make sure our hair was right, go outside, get in the car, and then my parents would start fighting about why we were late and who made who late. Often it might start because my dad wanted to leave for church and we were waiting for my mom in the car and she was still busy with something. “We're going to

be late!” he would yell. Whatever it was that got my parents’ temper flaring for that day, Sunday would always involve a lot of stress and fighting and, in my experience, putting up the right image. So they would fight on the way and I would listen to their fighting, but began to notice that the closer we got to church the more things would quieten down. Now, as you drove onto our church property, there was a gate with two pillars, and as soon as we drove through them, every time, my parents would go completely quiet. There would be silence and peace as my dad parked the car. When they got out the car it was all smiles and jokes and hugs and we were the most loving family in the whole of the Mpumalanga province.

I would often think about this. “This is a good place for my parents. They don’t fight here.” That was my conclusion of this matter. But after the service when we got back into the car and we drove again through those pillars, they would just pick it up again - exactly where they left off! And sometimes even from the exact word one of them used before we arrived at church!

Our church was a small charismatic/pentecostal gathering near our town. If you want to ask if we had the Holy Spirit in that church, the answer would be: oh yes! The pastor's wife was filled with the Spirit every Sunday. Grace was preached at that church in abundance. Our worship times were joyous and full of singing and dancing and freedom. It was a wonderful church. It's true that what you get saved into is as important as what you get saved out of. My parents were genuinely saved by God, and we were genuinely saved into a wonderful church. But unfortunately we somehow got saved into religion as well. How exactly that happened I can't say, but I can tell you that it happens – more often than we probably realise. It's strange how this works. It doesn't seem to be anyone's fault, really. I never carry a bitterness about it. Right from the beginning it was all about grace. Grace was always preached. So you must wonder: how is it that religion could be found there?

See, religion doesn't work how you think it works. It's not easy to spot. Even in those places where grace is preached, religion can not only survive but thrive. Today you find that many people who are in what is commonly called the

“grace movement” can be intensely religious as well. This is because of the heart of man. Sometimes we have such powerful, enjoyable experiences with God that we try and find ways to manufacture them. We think that the reason why we had such an experience was because we did something right - we prayed the right prayer, or we sang the right song, we stood in the right church, we believed the right theology, and we try to repeat that. Many in the grace movement can be as big about theology and what you do to get close to God as the biggest legalist you ever find. In some strange way, we begin thinking that since it's all about grace then I must find a way to get grace - I'm the one who must access it and bring it to myself. And despite all we say about grace, we actually aren't really living under it!

Religion sneaks in when we drift away from relationship. So I grew up in religion. It became mixed in with my own love for the Lord and my parents' love for the Lord, and it's a very dangerous place. Jesus never came to earth to introduce us to a religion but into a Kingdom. The way religion operates and the way God's Kingdom operates are very different. Religion

has many kings but God's Kingdom has one source and one king - Jesus Christ. Even in the most charismatic churches, with the best preaching, and the Holy Spirit moving, and grace being preached - even there our hearts can move toward religion. We can get stuck up in techniques and ideas that apparently bring us close to the Lord, but they become empty because they don't have the source. There is only one way to break it and that's to go to the source, and that means to have a relationship with the Lord.

Part of me as a young boy liked church because that's where everyone was nice and where God lived and it's where my parents were constantly nice. But I also found church very difficult. It really would go on for hours upon hours, morning and evening. At least that's how it felt for me as a young boy in those early teen years. It was full of aunties and uncles who were so close to the Lord. (In the Afrikaans tradition, you call anyone older than you an 'auntie' or 'uncle'.) God moved amongst us. We would sing and dance and lift our hands and laugh and clap loudly and sing some more. The messages were always fiery and loud and full of passion,

even if I didn't always understand them, and we just loved to worship the Lord.

I remember one day being at church on Sunday (as we would be every Sunday, believe me!) and I turned and said to my dad, "Dad, what are we going to do forever in heaven?"

My dad didn't need to think about that much, and he said to me with a smile and a twinkle in his eye, "We will worship God for eternity."

"Like we do at church? When we sing?" I asked.

"Yes. Like that."

"Oh no," I whispered. I realised that I am in so much trouble! I can't keep my hands up for a few minutes in worship, and yet we are going to lift up our hands and sing *forever*? How am I going to be able to stand for so long? Would there at least be chairs you can sit on if you get tired? What will I do?

My dad was so radically saved, and he loved the Lord, and so I could understand why worshipping God forever in heaven made sense. But

yet, at the time, I really worried about this. I wondered if not only here on earth, but for all eternity, people would find out that I couldn't lift my hands up for very long. Sure people knew me as a bit of a naughty child – not naughty in a bad way, but more in a playful way – so maybe they wouldn't be surprised! But I was really worried about how I just couldn't seem to live up to a standard. It's interesting how lifting hands in worship and singing for a long time became a 'standard', rather than a free expression of gratitude. That's what religion does.

While this all strikes me as humorous as a grown-up, and it is, the truth is that religion made me think all sorts of things that aren't actually true about God and Christianity and the Bible and worship. Sure, I had a good sense of humour about a lot of it, but at the same time certain things bugged me. At church I would often feel as if I need to keep up the right image for my parents, and I really did try my best. I loved them and wanted them to be proud of me. I also learned you must read your Bible and pray. You must also fast. You must sing to God. You do these things to get closer to God. More than this, you must wear a suit and you

must look your best. I also learned that you did all this on Sundays as that's the important day when things happen. For the rest of the week, though, you didn't actually have to be half these things. You just needed to do it on Sundays or whenever you were at church.

And like I've said above, we were at church a lot. Not just on Sundays. We were at Monday prayer meetings, Wednesday leadership meetings, and I was sent off to Tuesday youth meetings. There were also meetings on Fridays, and I can't remember exactly what those were. Maybe there were meetings on Thursdays too (I seem to remember some Thursdays being there). There would also be the special meetings - events or special prayer and fasting times. It was church, church, church, church. My parents loved the church. I could never understand exactly why as it was difficult for me. Of course, it's different these days! But then it was hard. As a church we loved to spend time in the Spirit and so every service and meeting would always take hours upon hours. We were as charismatic as you get. But I lost my relationship with my father because of church. Suddenly, my parents were attending church so much that they were just never at home!

We were often the last to leave on Sundays as my dad became good friends with the property's caretaker, who stayed in a small house on the property. He was always there first to open up and last to leave. As you went into the church there was a giant board above the door that read, "The House of the Lord." One day I suddenly realised what it meant. This is what it was: I have a house where I stay and my friends call that house "André's house". So as a child I saw the sign and realised, well, this then must be where God stays. Mom was right. It's where God lives. He lives in a house with blue chairs and a blue carpet and a loud band on a stage. When we come here, the caretaker opens up God's house. When we leave, he locks the door and puts a big chain on it. That's obviously to keep the Lord in His house, I thought. We have to make sure he stays there until the next time we come! I wondered about the caretaker's work. They paid him and gave him a house on the property just to make sure God stays in His house. Seems like a nice job!

So I put two and two together. This means we can do whatever we want when we're not at the church because we're not at God's house.

He was in His house, locked up until the next time we come, so Monday to Saturday it's okay for us to not worry and just do what we want!

I liked God's house. It was practically mine too since we were there so often! I knew the Lord had expectations and I desperately wanted to live up to them. I figured that somehow if I did all the things I was supposed to, and did them well, I would actually find Him and be close to Him. Perhaps I could even know Him. This is what I kept hearing: the more you do - the more you pray and fast and read the Bible - the closer you can be to God. I don't know if this is necessarily what was being taught at church, but it was what I kept hearing. Religion taught me many things. Religion taught me that it's all about me. It's all about how much effort and work I put in. I thought there must be some good reason why anyone would want to be close to Him, so I would try to do just that.

But I soon found out how useless I was at doing all of what it was that I believed I must do to get close to God.

CHAPTER TWO

Effort, Effort, Effort

As a young teen trying his best to be close to God, I tried everything I thought I was supposed to do. First I tried to read the Bible. I started at Genesis. I can't even remember how far I got, but it wasn't too far at all. Most times I would start the reading but then somehow forgot where I was reading, and had to start all over again from the top. Somehow, before getting to the bottom of the chapter, I would just forget what I was reading about. I would think, "What was he saying again?" or "Who is this guy again?" and feel so bad about my lack of ability to keep anything in my brain. There were other times — too numerous to remember — when I just remembered waking up with the Bible firmly imprinted on my head! You can imagine how bad I felt about that! Was I bored of God's Word? That mere possibility would worry me.

I began to feel disqualified for everything. I tried to pray. I distinctly remember being fourteen

years old and facing my weakness with prayer. We were at our Monday night prayer meeting. Our prayer meetings always felt like long, drawn-out affairs. Many times people would be looking at their watches. I know they lasted for an hour, at least. I could never understand how people could pray for that long. We were surrounded by people in the meeting and I watched as my dad started to pray.

“Oh Lord...” he started, and began to pray about many things, right after each other. How did he find so much to pray about, I wondered. I tried to copy him. I then saw a man next to us, and he was going on and on as well. So was the lady in front. I tried to copy them. Then I tried to come up with my own prayer.

“Oh Lord,” I said. “Please be with my dad, my mom, and our family. Please protect everyone. Please be with the whole world. Amen.”

That was about, well, maybe one minute! My dad was still going on. So was that guy next to us, and the lady in the front. So was the pastor.

“Um.”

I looked at the clock. By now, about five minutes had passed! Within the first five minutes I had prayed for everyone I knew and for everything I thought there was to pray for. I had prayed for the whole world! But there was still fifty-five minutes left! What could I do? What *do* people pray about?

What would you do? Well, I did the only thing I could think of - I started again!

“Oh Lord, please be with my dad, my mom, and our family. Please protect everyone. Please be with the whole world. Amen.”

Now, what's the time? Still fifty-three minutes left! What am I going to pray for in fifty-three minutes?

And so I just repeated again. How did these people keep going on? What's wrong with me?

It's a funny moment, and I laugh about it now. But I convinced myself at the time that I'm just not good enough. “I'm just not good enough to pray,” I told myself. And so I left that meeting feeling very disqualified.

But I continued to pursue after God and I thought that maybe if I was bad at praying and Bible reading, there might be something else I could do. Maybe I just needed to do one other thing the Lord wanted, and then I would be good enough. I figured out what it could be. Once a year our church would fast for a few days. My mother used to fast for a full thirty, sometimes forty days. She's truly a spiritual warrior. She has had angelic visitations, and many supernatural things happen, and truly loves the Lord. So I thought how difficult could it be to just not eat for a little while? If others can do it, and people in the Bible did it, surely it's not that difficult? Surely even a day or two would be fine.

But I couldn't even make it past the third meal! I was more hungry than ever when it came to it. "So this is what it feels like to die!" I thought. All I thought of all day was food, food, food. Never had I been so obsessed with food. So I failed at it.

But "man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4.) Fasting will never get you close to God on its own. It's not designed to. Reading

the Bible does not, either - on its own. We can read the Bible but still not live on His words. What we need is His voice every day, intimately speaking to us. As Jesus said in John 5:39-40, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” We must come to Jesus, personally, and that’s where we will find life.

“I’m the only one who can’t do this,” I said to myself at the time. “I’m the only one who can’t read the Bible. I’m the only one who can’t pray. I’m the only one who can’t fast.”

You must understand that, as a young boy, I had no idea about other people’s struggles. I assumed that everyone was succeeding and I was the only one failing. I knew nothing else but religion. It wasn’t the church’s fault, or our pastors, or my parents. It was because I still did not know the Lord intimately, even though I had great respect for the Lord and loved Him. I had no idea how to think of the Lord except in religious terms, because religion is our default as human beings. It’s our default

until the Lord breaks through and breaks our heart of stone.

EZEKIEL 36:26

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

So still, month after month, year after year, I would do my best to keep up the image of strength, and to jump through the hoops Sunday after Sunday, prayer meeting after prayer meeting, week after week, fast after fast. Any new hoop that came or I would become aware of would become my new goal. I would try so hard to get through it. But I simply never could. And on the side, during the times when I was not at church, I would do wrong things. God doesn't know about them, I thought, because He is locked up at church. I feel guilty on Sundays but I'm trying my best.

I'm an utter failure.

We moved from our farm to the town of Trichardt, and my dad became a soul winner.

Oh, he could win souls! He still does! So he went into full-time ministry. Prior to this, he had a small business, and once he got saved it seemed as if God blessed us financially much more than before. We moved out from being very poor to fairly average, and this blessing - in my mind - validated our ways of thinking about God. It made me think that God is blessing us because we're doing all the right things.

But at the age of sixteen my dad was asked to continue his ministry in Pretoria, and he accepted. I, however, wanted to stay in Trichardt where my friends were. I begged them to let me stay and finish my schooling (it was in the middle of my school year) and they reluctantly agreed. They said I could stay with some of our other family in the town if I wanted, and so I was given the option to do so. They always say these days when I preach or talk about this that I must make sure people know that they gave me the option, that they didn't chase me out or anything like that! I always laugh at this because I never even thought of it that way. I just decided I wanted to stay.

Unfortunately, however, I was not ready to be so independent and far away from my parents. I moved in with my uncle and aunt who were very generous and kind to me, but I was not their son, so they could not discipline me like my parents could. Up to then I was something of a golden boy - a good boy who everyone thought was innocent, although a little naughty and a joker sometimes, but a good boy. Soon, however, this changed! We had an older family member who owned a night club, and so he would invite me to go and make sure I was let in. Homework was thrown out the window, and I got into making some money on the side through several illegal means. What's a 16 year old to do when his parents are away, he has access to things he never had before, his uncle and aunt can't technically discipline him, and he is making some money? Let me tell you: not good things, that's for sure.

Now I had been told regularly at church that what you sow, you will reap. I knew it was in the Bible. It is there, go look at Galatians 6:7.

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”

I thought it must be true as it was in the Bible and made sense. If you do bad things you will get bad things in return. Isn't it interesting how a verse that God meant to bring life and wisdom can bring death when it is understood in the spirit of religion? No matter how charismatic we are, or how much we preach grace, we somehow still come back to religion. Perhaps it sounds strange to you to hear me speak about religion so negatively when I am a Christian and itinerant prophet and preacher. It may be because you don't know that Jesus actually never came to introduce us to religion, but to His Kingdom. And the two operate very differently. I hope the words of this book will help you to see that and will move you into where real life is found: to have a relationship, not a religion, with God.

It doesn't matter what you believe, the principle of sowing and reaping is a universal one. God made it so. It's just the way His creation works. If you sow a seed into the ground, a plant comes up. If you sow negative things, you get a negative result. If you sow positive things, you get a positive result. It is utterly true. But in Christ it is also soaked in God's grace. Unfortunately, religion will not teach you about that. Instead,

religion will tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, and never lift a finger to help them. (Matthew 23:4.)

So I believed in the principle of sowing and reaping, but I just never expected that you reap all at once! I used to reason with myself that if I did bad things slowly, then the reaping would happen slowly, but perhaps I could offset the reaping of bad things by doing some good things while those bad things are coming slowly, and then I can stop the process, and it'll all work out well in the end. I laugh when I think of how I used to think. But this is really what religion tells us to do: try and equal the scales by our works.

But I was wrong, of course, and in one single day all the bad decisions I made in one year came back to me. For some or other reason (probably suspicious of something going on) my aunt went through my room and found all sorts of things there to make her worry. She called up my dad who dropped everything he was doing and made the two hour drive from Pretoria to Trichardt. It was just a normal day at school for me, and I got back thinking everything was, to borrow an American term, "hunky-dory".

I froze a little when I saw my dad's car parked in the driveway, but didn't think much of it and went inside.

In less than a minute, I wish I hadn't! There was my dad, with my uncle and my aunt, sitting in the lounge, surrounded by all the things they found in my room! I was busted, badly! I can't even remember what they said or what I said. I had no excuse - there was no way of blaming anyone else or saying it all belonged to someone else. I just remember being in a daze, completely baffled that all this had come down on me so quickly.

I think my parents were equally as astonished. When they had left town I was serving God. All the time when they were in Pretoria they thought I was still doing so - living according to the good principles they had given me. How was it that so quickly I had strayed?

"I'm phoning your school principal," my dad said. "They need to know."

My dad was friends with the principal and so they came to a deal. They would not expel me

but just ask me to leave. That way it wouldn't go on my record. But right there, right then, my school career was over.

Everything was exposed in my life. The time for reaping had come. And my mom and my parents and my friends and my uncle and my aunt and even my teachers were all utterly disappointed with me. All those who I so desired to please, who I so wanted to make happy, were now angry. It's so hard when you see those who you love and desire to please the most — those who have believed in you — turn away from you and show you their back because you failed.

After my dad left I went into my room, closed my door, and just sat for hours, loathing myself.

“I can never look anyone in the face again,” I thought.

I saw my Bible - that old, ragged Bible which I had tried so hard to read, so hard to grasp and apply to my life and make it work - next to my bed. It reminded me of all the years of failure. I thought about how disappointed God must be with me. The longer I sat there, the smaller my

world became, and the more selfish and insular I became. The longer I stewed in hate toward myself, the more it hurt. Hating yourself is like cutting yourself inside. How was I ever going to get out of this mess I put myself in? It seemed hopeless. No one will help, not even God. It was up to me, once again, to try and fix it - but obviously I could not! I needed a miracle, but God doesn't give miracles to those that don't deserve it! Or so I thought.

“What if I could start over again?” I wondered. I thought of death. How good would it be to die and then try again?

That thought lingered with me into the night until I finally fell asleep. The next day I woke up, disappointed that I was not dead. I started to wonder about just doing it, just ending it. But I had one small problem: I really don't like pain! Just the thought of hurting myself physically made me wince. Even hunger pains were too much to bear, which is why I couldn't fast! So how do you kill yourself if you don't like pain?

I was wondering about this that morning and I realised that everyone had left the house. This is

my chance, I thought, to leave them all and run away! So I packed a few of my things, stepped out my room, stepped out the front door, closed it behind me, and set out on my path. I was going to rebel against them all. They could all get lost!

I walked a bit down the road and realised I hadn't had breakfast. The thought of food wouldn't leave my mind and I got so hungry. So what did I do? Well, I turned around, I went back to the house, I opened the front door, I stepped into the kitchen and opened the fridge! And then got some food!

Well I can't leave the house, I realised, as I'll always need food. I can't kill myself because I don't like pain. Even hunger pains were too much to bear! So what do I do?

I honestly didn't know. For two days I lived like a ghost in that house. That, however, led me to a very wrong conclusion: no one cares that they haven't seen me for two days. No one even thinks about me! I am obviously just a failure.

These two days lingered on and eventually, on the last evening, I was once again in my room.

From somewhere inside my head there was a sickly, destructive whisper. “Your life isn’t worth anything. You aren’t worth anything.” I would repeat this lie to myself like a robot. “Yes,” I would think. “It’s true. I am not worth anything.” “You know, you walked away from the house two days ago, and no one even realised you were gone,” the voice said to me in my head. “If you kill yourself, no one will miss you because no one cares about you.”

I thought these were initially my thoughts. I now know these were the thoughts of the devil. The instinct of a human being is to live, not to die. Any thoughts of suicide are never our thoughts. They always come from our enemy, Satan. There he was, giving me ideas, making me sorry for myself, getting me to push God away and embrace death as the only solution.

Where there is such pain, such self-hatred, such emotional darkness, the devil certainly is as well. But so is the Lord! For “the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18.) People love to judge when someone is weak. It’s interesting how we are like that, isn’t it? It’s like we relish in

someone else's weakness. Perhaps it is because it means that we don't have to face ourselves, or that others won't see our own weakness. But we also like to judge our own weakness, and find ourselves coming short.

But the Lord is not like that. He does not judge us in our weakness. He does not tell us to do better. Instead, He gives us His grace. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness," He says in 2 Corinthians 12:9. Religion will teach you that you cannot have any weakness; that weakness means you are not a Christian. But Jesus tells us there is only ever grace.

I needed someone to actually believe in me - to say, no matter what, that I was worth something and that I was able to live this life well. But everyone turned their back on me, including myself. I thought God had too. I knew I was not good enough to live up to the standards. The trouble is, I thought they were God's standards!

You only need one person to believe in you to know that you can do it. Hundreds might stand at your side mocking you, telling you you're

good for nothing, but it only takes one person to believe in you for you to stand up and believe in yourself.

So now, in my room, I began to think carefully about how I could take my life with as little pain as possible. I've heard people preach about how if you commit suicide you end up in hell. I wonder why they think God likes to kick people when they are down. Maybe it is because we like to make God in our own image rather than realise we are made in His. How must it feel to be a parent whose child took his life and be told they've gone to hell? If these preachers were right — if God is only with those who are strong and able — then I was sitting in the one place where God would not be. Yet here, in this unexpected moment; in the darkness and evil of suicide, with the devil's whisper in my ear, and chaos in my heart; I was to find extravagant love. I was about to discover just how we are called for a deeper, more full, more real and authentic relationship with the Almighty God. And it started when I heard the four words I needed to hear. The four words I never believed I would ever hear from anybody ever again - even myself. And I heard them from the last person

I thought I would actually hear them from.

The room seemed to get smaller and everything around me more quiet. It seemed as if the very universe was focusing on one single point; one moment in my life when everything would change and those four words finally came. A still, small voice, in my heart. But it was so clear.

“I believe in you.”

CHAPTER THREE

Going to the Movies

“**Y**ou?” I said, astonished. “God? How can you believe in me while I’m sitting here and planning how to commit suicide? I’ve just been found out for all the bad decisions I’ve made, and threw my whole future away! There is nothing good about me! I’m a failure!”

“And I’m proud of you, too,” said the voice, practically ignoring all I just said.

I sat there for a few seconds, puzzled. “But how can you say that you are proud of me? A failure like me? I’ve disappointed everyone in my life, including you.”

Surely it’s not true, I thought. But my heart was full of hope. You see, even though I did not agree with God, and I seriously doubted He would say this to me, hearing His voice changed something in me. It felt like I was given a cold glass of water in the scorching heat of a desert.

God's voice is like that. It's nutrition for our life. And I wanted more. I wanted to hear His voice again, I wanted to speak to Him even more. It stirred me in ways that are very difficult to explain. This first time when I actually heard God's voice, I knew instantly that I would never be able to live without His voice again. From that moment I was addicted to His voice, to every word that came from His mouth.

The timing was absolutely perfect. If God had said this to me just a week before, I would have probably thought I deserved it. But here I was, in the lowest point of my life, having done absolutely nothing to deserve His grace. That was so difficult to accept, yet so refreshing - so different to what I ever expected.

"Are you sure you're at the right address?" I said. "Maybe there is someone in the same street with the same name - a boy that's at the top of his class in school? The head boy?"

But God's love just continued to shower over me. Despite my doubts and my protests, God just continued to make me know His love for me. It was so overwhelming. The more I tried to

escape from His love just flowing over me, the more I felt like I was addicted to this love - that I could not ever move from it. This was pure love from a father's heart. God doesn't just have love or display love - He IS love. Love is the evidence of His total existence.

It suddenly became clear to me what had happened - like the sun breaking through storm clouds. My religious ways had stolen years of a relationship I could have had with God. The God that I had created in my mind - the one I thought was real - was actually not real at all. But the God I suddenly got to know this night - this amazing night - was different. He was not at all like my previous assumptions. I always thought of God as a judge, and believed that's essentially who He was. Sure, I had heard He was a Father. I had heard all about grace. But still, I would imagine a long row of people standing every morning with their prayer requests, God saying "yes" to this one and then, "next!" "No," He would say to the next one. "Next!"

Some might say this was a childish view of God. Sure, it was, and I was just a child. But I have met plenty of adults who see God this way - and

have for years. “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.” (1 Corinthians 13:11.) It’s interesting that this quote from Paul was written in the great ‘love’ chapter, 1 Corinthians 13 - which is often quoted at weddings.

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they

will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:1-13.)

To become mature in Christ means to understand and accept His unconditional love. And His love never fails. God desires to have a relationship with you more than you desire Him. He actually wants this more than you do. To hear His voice is to hear hope - and hope is what makes sense of all the bad and horrible things that you experienced. His voice is what brings faith. We can believe Him at last, and we can know that He has an amazing future for us. To hear His voice is to hear love. Real, unforgettable, unconditional love. When I heard His voice

for the first time this night I had faith, hope, and love. It was suddenly there with me - suddenly so real. My heart was instantly changed.

It's taken me years to understand what it really means when we say God is omnipresent, and maybe I'll never fully understand it. He is from the beginning, right through the middle, to the end, at every moment and every place. On the day you were born, right now as you are reading this book, and at your death, God is there. He is there on your wedding day. He is there on the day your children are born. He is there when someone close to you dies. He is there, in a way of speaking, at the same moment that these things are happening. He is always present - right now, in the future, in the past, in the present.

The enemy, however, is not like this - nor can he ever be. He can only be at one place at one time. It's a strange way to put it, but if the enemy attacks you, you are almost lucky. For the enemy to be attacking you, with 7.5 billion people on the planet, the chances are pretty low that you're in his targets for the day. People put the devil and God in the same position, as though they were equal in power and are

fighting with similar weapons. But this is not true. The enemy can not be at many places at once. The enemy is not present, right now, in your past, present and future. God is, however. The enemy cannot be anywhere at the same time at the same place. He is not even close to God's power and ability. He is not omnipresent.

That day, when I was sixteen years old, God is standing there right now and saying, "André, I'm proud of you." Because right at that same moment He is standing in my life and looking at me when I'm in my 30's and seeing me preach His Word all over the world and saying, "André, I'm proud of you." This is His omnipresence. We don't have that ability. Perhaps you're looking to your future, when you are in your seventies, and you think there's no hope and there's no future. But God is there, right now, and He gives hope.

"God!" I said. "Your voice is amazing! What can I do to get closer to you? I'll do anything to hear your voice. Anything!"

Now this was on a Tuesday. That also messed up my religious mind. This is because I thought

God only speaks on Sundays! Here I am at my own house, not at the church, which is 'God's house', and God is speaking to me on a Tuesday! So I thought to myself, "This can't be right." No one told me that God can speak to me directly and personally. I always thought a pastor goes to study for years and years to hear the voice of God. Then, when he has learned how to do it, he tells you what God says and you listen to the pastor and do that. But now, here I am, a normal young person, and I'm hearing God's voice? Something must be wrong.

Despite all this, though, my religious ways weren't fully crushed. Religion gave me this idea that God is always just out of reach and you need to get closer to Him. You're the one who needs to do it - you need to make it happen. So out of my religious ways I said to God, "I want to hear your voice always like I'm hearing it now. I don't want it to go away! So just tell me what to do. Anything. Anything."

"Well - you need to actually get to know me," God replied. "You have to build a *relationship* with me."

I still didn't get it. Was that not what I was trying to do? I had been serving God for two, three years. I went to church every Sunday. Now I'm sixteen years old and God says to me, "You have to get to know me better." What does this mean, I wondered?

I would find that God really had to become a father to me. He is a father, but I had to accept Him as a father. As God, but also as a father. He needed to teach me everything from the beginning again. I would need to unlearn my religion and relearn the truth of who He is. Today, after all this, I still have an earthly father, but I don't ask him for things, I ask God. That's God's position in my life. That's what He did in the years following this moment in my life.

I needed to get to know God. Really to know Him. Many of us think that our entrance into heaven one day depends on how many times we went to church, or how many good deeds we did, or even how much money we gave away or sowed into a ministry or some good cause. But Jesus in scripture asks only one question of us: *do you know me?*

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:22-23 NIV)

In fact, when Jesus describes eternal life, He doesn't talk about heaven or living forever, but He speaks of knowing Him.

"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3.)

If you want eternal life, it's found in knowing Christ.

"So how can I know your voice then?" I asked God. "What can I do to hear your voice better?"

The Lord had to explain it to me like a child. It was just like when Jesus said in Matthew 11:25, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."

“André,” God said to me. “How do you know your best friend’s voice? How do you hear his voice?”

I thought of this for awhile. “I guess...” I said, “I guess I spend time with him. We do things together.”

“Exactly,” said God. “The more time you spend with me, the more you will get to know me, and the more you will learn to hear my voice.”

I recall John 10:27: “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” Have you ever seen how well sheep respond to their shepherd’s voice? There are videos on Youtube that will show you. It’s amazing how they will not respond to anyone, but when the shepherd comes and calls them, they come without hesitation.

Oh Lord, if we could know your voice like this! If you are married, think about this clearly. You never knew your husband or wife’s voice like you do now, on the very first day you met. But as you spend time together you learn it more and more. You can pick out their voice from a crowd. You can instantly recognise them on the phone. You know all the little things about their

voice that no one else actually knows. After a few years, your wife or husband can walk into a crowded room and say your name and you recognise it instantly. You are with them every day, when you wake up and when you go to sleep, and that's how you come to recognise their voice. It's through the time you spend together, doing ordinary things, and exciting things - but just being together.

“Okay,” I said. “What then can we do to spend time together? Today is Tuesday. Do I have to wait for Sunday? There's only one Sunday a week. Does that mean we can only spend time together once a week?”

I still had this idea that God only lives in His house, the church. I thought I would need to dress extra-special nice this Sunday to go see Him. I had to get to know God all over again. But I was worried, because I didn't really like going to church all that much - I'd often rather stay at home - and if getting to know God meant being at church more, then would I ever enjoy this relationship? And if I don't enjoy it, how would it grow? Imagine you didn't enjoy your time with your girlfriend or boyfriend - would

you end up getting married? Of course not. You will break up. In my church, people used to look at their watches a lot. Imagine I invite you to coffee and I keep looking at my watch? How far will that relationship go? So I needed to learn that God meant more than just going to church. I needed to learn our works are not what's important. It wasn't about going to church or how well I prayed. In fact, these two things aren't even 'works' they are a normal part of our relationship with Him, in the same way that having dinner at home with your family is just a normal family thing you do together. This was about to completely change my world.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV)

God must have been chuckling at all this, and He reminded me of one of my friends. “How did you become friends with him?” He asked me.

“We spend time together. And the more... I suppose the more we spend time together, our relationship grows,” I said.

“Then André,” God said, “invite me into your life.”

I sat and thought about those words for a minute. God was asking me to invite Him into *my* life? He would *ask*? This was crazy. See, God does not force anything. He will wait until you allow Him to come into your marriage or your job or your finances. He wants us to invite Him, to give Him space, to come and move in our lives. To accept Him. This is completely different to any religious idea you will find out there. Religion tells you that you need to toughen up and push your way in through all your good works - but God rather wants to be *invited* in.

“What do you do like to do with your friends when you spend time with them?” God asked me.

“We ride bicycles. We swim. We watch movies. I really like movies.”

I really did like movies. I used to often just skip school and rather go to the movies. Of course, my parents didn't know all about that. It was my favourite thing to do, and I often enjoyed doing it on my own.

“Then,” God said - and I am sure He was smiling - “take me to the movies with you.”

“Huh?” I said. But I decided to rather not question this time. “Okay, I will.” While I was confused at this, I was happy to comply. I wanted God’s voice to stay with me. I wanted to have this relationship so badly.

The very next morning I was at the movie theatre close to where we lived. But when I got there I suddenly realised I had no clue what to do next. “How do you go to the movies with **God?**” I thought. This was difficult for my mind and my heart to truly grasp.

I looked at the movie posters indicating what was showing. I saw one and got excited - I had been waiting for it for awhile and thought it was so great that it was now released. It was an action movie and a bit rough. It’s not the kind of movie I would take my wife to! That had never bugged me before but now a thought came to me. “André, you’re here to spend time with God. You’re not here to watch what you want. That movie has an age restriction!”

“So,” God said, interrupting my thoughts, “what movie are we going to watch today?”

I tried to quickly find one with no age restriction. So I literally pointed my finger at one that I spotted: a kiddie movie.

Nice effort at being holy, wasn't it? But the Lord has never again rebuked me like He did that day. “André, stop trying to impress me and be so holy,” He said. “I know you. I know what it is you like to watch.”

I was a bit stunned at this, and even embarrassed. Religion taught me that every time I get close to God I must perform. I must look good. I must do something to be more acceptable to Him. I must hide things from Him. That's how we think. It's amazing how we try and show God our good side and our own performance kicks in even when we are close to God - even when we are right in the middle of a conversation with Him!

God then named the movie I was thinking of originally. “I want to watch this with you,” He said to me. “You see, the key to two people spending time together is they must both enjoy

the time. Your best friend is your best friend because you both have something in common. You like to do the same things together or play the same sport. There is a connection between the two of you. You don't spend time with someone you don't enjoy being around and have no connection with. You don't want to be with someone who you're always wishing the time would pass by."

I stood there, thinking about it.

"We can watch the movie you want to watch," God continued. "It's about us spending time together and doing something together. It's about me being a part of your life."

I rushed to the ticket counter and quickly bought a ticket. I was so excited, but as I walked away from the counter something strange happened. It's hard to explain. A wave of emotion, of deep pain, just came over me, and I almost burst into tears. My heart felt utterly broken.

"What?" I said. "God, what is this happening to me? Is this part of what you're doing inside me?"

“André, you’ve already forgotten me,” God said.

“No Lord,” I said. “I’m aware that you’re with me.”

“Then why did you only buy one ticket?”

I just stood there again, embarrassed. I think God allowed me to feel the pain in His heart when we forget Him; when we leave Him out. That’s the best way I can explain what happened.

“But,” I said, confused and shocked, and trying to recover from the sudden wave of emotion. “Why do I need to buy you a ticket? You don’t need one. You are spirit, aren’t you? You can move through walls?”

Silence.

So I thought of something clever. “Lord, doesn’t the Bible say that we are to be good stewards of our money? I don’t have a lot of money. Wouldn’t it be a waste of money to buy another ticket?”

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with

very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? (Luke 16:10-12 NIV)

“Yes,” God answered. “That is true. But don't you also know that everything you've ever had, and all you have now, and all you will ever have comes from me?”

“A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given him from heaven.” (John 3:27.)

“That's true,” I said, standing there for a second.
“Yes.”

“So buy another ticket.”

“Okay, I will buy another ticket.”

So I did. This was so real to me. I was experiencing God like never before. I kept thinking to myself how strange it all was, and how little I knew, and how exciting it was that I was on this journey. There isn't someone I can find in a

phone book that can tell me how you go to the movies with God. I can't phone my pastor and ask him how it works - asking him what are you allowed to do and not allowed to do. My mother came out of a church that taught us that if you go to the movies, you go to hell. Imagine me telling her pastor that I was going to the movies with God! I was experiencing this all on my own and would have to figure it out on my own.

After buying the ticket, I also bought a huge popcorn and a soda — which was what I would usually do. But as I walked away from the counter, happy with myself and eager for the movie, I was suddenly struck with the same pain and emotion again!

“God, are you fixing me today or healing me emotionally or something?” I asked.

“When you are with your best friend do you always only buy snacks for yourself?”

“No. I always share and buy for my friends.”

“Why then, a few moments ago, did you buy just one soda and popcorn for yourself?”

I stopped dead in my tracks again. I often wonder what someone would have thought if they were watching me closely that day - all this stopping and thinking; all this going back and forth, buying another ticket, and looking confused. This is actually happening, I thought. This is reality. I'm not making this up. So here is what came to my mind: I thought, you know, God is really busy. There are a lot of people with needs. He has lots to do and many prayers coming to Him every day that He has to answer. But here He is, taking time off, for two hours to be with me, to watch a movie with me. I should take advantage of this. He might never have the time to come to the movies with me again.

So this time I forgot any excuses and went and quickly bought another soda and popcorn, the exact same as I had bought for myself. But carrying two popcorns and sodas is quite awkward, and I was walking around awkwardly, trying to keep it all from spilling over. I thought to myself, "I wonder if God can't carry His own snacks, at least?" But I didn't say that to God. I just thought it

Suddenly I thought that people were watching me and wondering what on earth I was doing.

Maybe they would think I was crazy. I wondered what would happen if someone asked me why I was carrying so much popcorn and two sodas, and I would reply that this was because I'm going to watch a movie with my imaginary friend. "I better get into the movie as quickly as possible," I thought, "so that no one else sees me." So I got in the line and got to the front and suddenly realised I had a small problem. I've got two different tickets, and I'm holding them both up! This makes it obvious to the person checking the tickets that there should be two of us! Plus the extra popcorn and all of it! But it was too late now to hide the second ticket.

The ticket clerk took the tickets, looked at them, looked around me, and then looked at me.

"Where's the other person?" they asked, holding up the extra ticket, "for the other ticket?"

"I don't know."

He first smiled, thinking I was joking. But I was looking at him quite seriously. And then he started to get irritated.

“*Where* is the other person?”

“I... I really don’t know,” I said. He looked at the two sodas and popcorn I had. I felt so embarrassed. “I don’t how this works. I don’t know if he is already there or coming. I don’t know!”

I really had no clue what to do, so I just pushed past and walked right through and ignored the ticket collector, and their confused look. I got inside, put my soda and popcorn next to my seat, hoped that no one was staring at me and wondering if something was wrong with me, and then put God’s soda and popcorn next to His seat.

Then I sat down, relieved, confused, and excited. What was this all about?

I’m waiting for the movie to start. I once heard someone say that if God takes you, He does not take you to the movies. Well, He took *me* to the movies. And what happened in the next hour and a half completely changed my life.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Growing Relationship

I walked out of that cinema that day with an awareness of God in my life. Something inside of me opened up and completely changed. It was like I was given new eyes.

“Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3.)

It had been the strangest movie experience of my life. Whenever people laughed in the movie, I would cry. And whenever they cried, I would laugh. I was having a supernatural experience with God in a movie! It was crazy. It felt like the movie that defined my past and my future, the moment when it all came together. And I gave my life, in that hour and a half, completely and utterly to God.

Some might laugh at this story and think it is a bit odd. Who goes to the movies with God? Who buys two popcorns and sodas and two tickets? But here is what is important about all this: it helped me to be aware of God and know that He is always with me. People often ask me, “Well, how did you meet God?” I answer: “Once God and I went to the movies and He never went home again.” He is with me wherever I go. Whatever I do, He is there. I left the movies that day with a deep-seated knowing that God is in all the details of my life; that He cares about every second of every day.

And so the journey of my relationship with God began. I started by making sure to spend at least one whole day a week with God alone. We wouldn't always do something specific, like going to the movies or having lunch. Sometimes I would just sit with Him and He with me. Sometimes He wouldn't even need to say anything, but just to be with Him would be amazing on its own. I would call on Him and say, “Father” and He would respond and say, “Son.” Then the tears would roll down my face. I couldn't believe it - that the Lord was my Father. At last, Psalm 23 made sense to me:

*The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside quiet waters,
He refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for His name's sake.
Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.*

Or Psalm 16:

*Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;
you make my lot secure.
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant
places;*

*surely I have a delightful inheritance.
 I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;
 even at night my heart instructs me.
 I keep my eyes always on the Lord.
 With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
 my body also will rest secure,
 because you will not abandon me to the realm of
 the dead,
 nor will you let your faithful one see decay.
 You make known to me the path of life;
 you will fill me with joy in your presence,
 with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

We would do this together regularly. Looking back, I cannot overstate its importance. It helped me find my identity. God had to step into my life as a true father. He had to teach me who He was, and even who I was. I had to know that I was truly, without any doubt, His son.

But there were times I would cry out and ask God to help me to get to His level - to His holiness; to His heights and depths. "André," He would say, "if you want to get to my level then you need to get lower. Because sometimes you are too high for me."

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:26-28.)

God is unlike anything religion can understand. He does not seat himself as higher than us, always making sure He is unreachable - but rather decides to come down to our level and be with us in our life and be our Father. Jesus chose to be a servant. He chose to get on the dirty streets and be with all those people who religion rejected. Why? Because He is love. Because He sees value in every single person on this planet. God Himself has chosen to make Himself available to us at a level where anyone can actually seek Him and find Him. That is why “the word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart.” (Romans 10:8.) We don’t have to climb the highest mountains, or go into the darkest depths, to find Him. He is here, right now. His Word can be shallow enough for a baby to play in and yet deep enough for an elephant to drown. He has chosen to place himself where everyone can find Him; to hide himself where He can be found.

At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. (Luke 10:21 NIV.)"

Even children can find Him. And so, after my day at the movies with God, I went home and found Him there. He has never left. And then something else happened that evening when I got home, which completely surprised me. It was late at night and I switched the T.V. on. In South Africa, you should not watch T.V. after eleven at night! It's just a bad idea! I flipped through the channels. I was alone at home. Then a Delilah-like lady appeared on T.V. It was the restricted channel and I thought, "this is nice. I'll watch this."

"André," God said suddenly. "What are we watching? I am with you."

"Lord, I'm sorry!" I replied. "You cannot see this stuff! I forgot you are always with me!"

So I switched it off.

I couldn't really believe how easy that was. Something like that would have been so difficult before. What changed?

We often think that when we do ungodly things God isn't there - that He leaves the room. But He is always with us. And that's why I turned that channel off, because His presence was there, and His presence had changed me. It wasn't because it was sinful to watch it or because I was trying to be a good Christian. This time I turned it off because I truly loved Him. It was my love for Him that motivated me to just obey Him.

Here's a story that I often tell that showcases how silly we are when we think God abandons us when we do something sinful. In South Africa, the speed limit on the highway (the motorway) is 120km per hour (about 74 miles per hour). Religion taught me that if you drive the speed limit and obey the laws of the road, you are in God's will, and therefore He is with you. But if you drive a few miles or kilometres over the speed limit, say at 140 km per hour (about 87mph) God gets out the car. And if you drive at 160km per hour (almost 100mph)

the devil gets in! I think at about 180km per hour, the devil leaves as well!

Religion taught me that when you sin, God waits around the corner until you're finished and ask for forgiveness. It taught me that when you go into a pub, God waits for you outside. He does not want to go into places like that. But God is not actually like that at all. Jesus shows us who God is. He was always among the sinners, ministering to prostitutes and murderers and 'tax collectors', who were deeply hated at the time. He did not act like them. He did not sin like them. He did not approve of all they did. But He loved them and had great compassion on them. He always has compassion on those who are weak.

Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and He began to teach them. As He walked along, He saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who

followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Mark 2:13-17 NIV)

Think about this. Say, for example, you have a child who is about seven or eight years old. Tomorrow morning you take them to school, stop and park your car, and then get out as they get out. They are wondering to themselves what you're up to. They grab their bag and say goodbye, but you just walk with them as they go.

“What are you doing?” they ask you.

“I'm going to spend the whole day with you at school,” you reply.

Any normal child that age will probably look at you in a state of panic, saying, “Please don't!” That's because they know you will be with them all day - they will be aware of your presence

with them the whole day. How difficult would it be for them to be naughty in that case? It would be impossible. And that's what it is like with God. But yet, it's different. You want Him to come with you. You want Him to be with you and be involved in everything you're doing. You never feel as if you have a policeman with you, waiting for you to do something so they can write you a fine!

The enemy is always trying to take your awareness of God away, telling you that God is somewhere else and is too busy for you and might not even care. He has no time just to spend with someone like you. After all, just yesterday you had a bad thought, the enemy says, so you need to first show how sorry you are for that before God will be with you again. The enemy will also say that you need to handle what you're facing right now yourself. You don't deserve God's attention. The enemy might even tell you that God wants you to 'grow up' and deal with your situation yourself, because it's time you learn to be independent. I am sure you recognise all these lies as the enemy's lies are not very original. We all get told the same lie. They're always the same. But there are two

sides to my story of a parent being with their child all day. The first is what we mentioned above. But the second is that if they get into any trouble, you are with them, and you can stick up for them and get them out of the trouble. Your child then becomes aware of your bigness and greatness and concern for them. Their love for you grows and and they will want to be closer to you. God is with you every day wherever you are, and He doesn't run away when you mess up or even forget about Him.

So suddenly, I was surprised to find myself in a place in my life where I didn't want to do bad things because they were wrong and immoral - and because I would be a sinner if I did them - but because I truly loved the Lord. My heart completely changed. I was truly born again! It became as 1 John 3:9 says:

“Anyone born of God refuses to practice sin, because God’s seed abides in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.”

This does not mean that we do not fail sometimes, or that I was perfect after this. But rather it means that our motivation for refusing sin

has changed. And this love for Him, which I've cherished ever since, started to grow stronger and stronger each day. It has changed everything. Love overcomes sin. Our love for God is what will overcome those sinful things in our life that drag us down. It is as the scripture says:

Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? (Romans 2:4 NIV.)

A fear of punishment from God will not stop you from sinning. It is God's kindness which leads to repentance. There is no fear in love. Rather, perfect love casts out all fear. (1 John 4:18.) God's plan is to make you perfect in love. God in my life now was no longer the God who stayed in His house, locked up inside with a chain around the door keeping Him there. Suddenly I was experiencing Him more and more and could see Him working day after day even in the lives of those around me.

I never got the opportunity to go back to school, and these days I see that as a blessing. With

no worldly future I had to become dependent on God's voice. And that changed everything. I got a part time job at Sasol, the oil company. Since the town of Trichardt is surrounded by Sasol's plants, pretty much most of the town works at Sasol, at least at some stage of their life! My job was to fill gas bottles. I started at the age of sixteen, but it was only about two years after this when God called me clearly for full-time ministry. He simply came to me one day and said, "Could I use you? Could I use your hands and your feet and your mouth? Will you say what I want you to say to others?"

"God, if you can use me as a I am," I said. "Because, you see, I am not the best. There might be someone who is more able than me. But I will go and do whatever you tell me."

"I'm not asking you if you are able or if you have the ability," God answered. "I am asking you if I can use you. I am asking if you would be willing and obedient. I only need a willing heart."

"Yes, Lord," I said, "I am willing. My heart is willing. Send me to do your will."

I thought of that for a moment and then continued: “What will I tell people, though? I don’t know how to preach.”

“I will open doors,” He replied. “All I’m asking is that you would share your testimony of what I did in your life. I want you to share about what it means to have an intimate relationship with me.”

The most powerful tool that anyone can have is their testimony. That’s why Revelation 12:11 says that the enemy is overcome by the Lamb (Jesus) and the word of our testimony.

And so I went and began to share my testimony wherever I could and with whoever would have me. My parents, with my dad also being in full-time ministry, were delighted with this. I moved to Pretoria to be closer to them as well. Two years went by and opportunities kept coming up where I could share my testimony. God can use anyone. He really can, and He really does. You don’t need to have the right abilities or be smart or clever or even know much. He equips people for the work He has for them. He will equip you. I learned that God

uses those with ability and those without. He uses whoever is willing. You just need a willing heart.

I experienced many challenges as I moved forward in God's call in my life. I didn't know what to call the gift God gave me initially, but I would just go with it. In the early years my challenges had much to do with my age. I was young and people did not always recognise the gift of God in my life. I had also not gone back to school, so many might have seen me as uneducated and perhaps irrelevant. They would only see a young boy. Perhaps a passionate boy, but young nonetheless, and therefore inexperienced in life. But those that did see God's gift in my life soon reaped a reward from it, which is what God intends to do with our gifts.

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:11-16.)

The gifts that God gives are not for the person with the gift, but for the others who benefit from the gift. Ministry is for the people who are ministered to. I started to speak at schools and at small home groups and churches and camps. Any door that God opened I would walk through. I was old enough to drive by now and I would spend most of my time in my car, driving from place to place, sharing my testimony. I kept a blanket and pillow in my car as often there was no place to sleep. My car basically became my room and my house. I was amazed as thousands of people put their faith in Jesus and got saved. I would just drive and wait for God to open the next door, and He would always do so.

It's an old saying but it's true: God works in mysterious ways. He didn't tell me what to say or speak about, but wanted me to first just step out and speak. He might ask the same of you. And as I did I would see Him work. He would always say to me, "Just tell them about our relationship. While you do that, don't worry, I'll do the work." And amazing things would happen.

For two years I was on the road constantly, receiving many speaking engagements and people asking me to come to their church and share my story. I could not actually manage the invitations, there were so many! This eventually became a problem. I realise now that if the enemy can't oppose you from the front, he will oppose you from behind. He will drive you. He will keep you busy. He will make sure you are distracted with the good work you have to do. And he will slowly wear you down that way. The enemy is patient with this sort of thing. If he can't bring you down quickly, he'll just find a way to gently erode God's presence from your life, until one day you realise you actually don't have the kind of relationship with God you used to have. The devil will make sure you don't have time for the important things - especially the

most important thing: just being with God. Getting to know Him and abiding with Him.

I'm sure you remember what Jesus said to Martha.

As they traveled along, Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet, listening to His message. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations to be made. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord replied, "you are worried and upset about many things. But only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42.)

One day, at the age of 22, I was on a five hour drive to a church which wanted me to come and share my testimony. It was a wonderful morning and I felt happy. As I was driving, just minding my own business and in my own thoughts, God suddenly came and spoke to me.

“I would like to talk to you,” He said.

“Any time,” I said. “I love to listen to you. It’s a long drive, so it would be great to talk to you while I am driving.”

“No,” God said. “Pull off the road. I want your full attention.”

“Okay,” I said, a bit confused. It seemed unusual. “This sounds important.”

So I pulled off the road, stopped the car, switched off the engine, and waited. There was silence for a few moments until God spoke again.

“André, I miss going to the movies with you,” God said. “So much time has gone by since we last went to the movies. Could we go to the movies again? Just you and I?”

I burst into tears. I realised immediately that I had spent so much time going around telling people about Jesus but had actually forgotten all about Him! How foolish of me! I hadn’t been spending time with Him! And then I realised how tired I was from all the driving and the

speaking and all that I was doing, and how badly I missed that awareness of God that I had so often enjoyed.

We often think of our relationship with God in terms of what we do for Him. We think it's all about how we are representing Him and what we are busy with. I felt so silly. I realised how foolish I was, driving around telling people about God and how to know Him, but just not actually getting to know Him myself. So I immediately phoned the person who had arranged for me to come share my testimony.

"I'm sorry, I can't come anymore," I said. "I have a problem. I've been on the road for months and haven't actually spent any time with God at all!"

Fortunately they understood that this was more important and were fine with me cancelling. After I put the phone down, I told God I was cancelling everything in my schedule for the day.

"Let's go to the movies right now," I said.

So off I went in search for the closest movie theatre. When I found one, all the movies were

already running and the lines at the snacks were still quite long. “There’s no time to stand in the line and buy a coke and popcorn,” I said to God. But I was hungry and saw a small take-away shop close by. “But here’s a small take-away shop. Let’s get something there quickly.”

I went to the take-away shop and ordered something to eat. As I did so, I quietly asked God if I could order something for Him. I heard Him tell me an item on the menu and I thought, “Well, that’s something I wouldn’t order. It must be God speaking.” So I quickly ordered it, waited for a short while, got our food, and headed back to the movie.

I was pretty experienced with this by now, so I didn’t have the problem with the two tickets like the first time I did this. I got in to the movie and put the food on God’s seat and opened it for Him. I then started to open my own food and something caught my eye on God’s seat.

“Hmmm,” I thought. “That actually looks and smells quite nice!”

I began to open my food and looked over at the food I got for God again, sitting on His seat.

“Um. I wonder...” I thought. “I wonder if I can ask God if we can swap. It smells delicious.”

Oddly, I found myself really desiring for that food. While I was thinking this, I remembered that God knows my thoughts anyway.

“Sorry God,” I said. “I got that for you, not for me.”

“Could I teach you something?” God said.

“Sure,” I said. “Please do.”

“When you asked me earlier what food I wanted, I knew what your desire would be later. So I picked this for you. You can have it.”

This shocked me. I know it’s a small thing, but yet it had such tremendous impact. I realised that God not only knows what my desire is going to be in the future, but He also provides for it.

“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your

heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" (Matthew 6:26.)

If God takes care of the insects and the birds, will He not take care of us? Will He not be involved in the details? He will and He'll do it in a thing as small as a meal. If He'll be involved in something as small as that, how much more is God not interested in all the details of our lives and providing the big things for us as well? How much more is He not interested in our finances, our relationships, our prayers? In all those earlier years of my life as a teenager I had come to believe that God is always too busy for me, and suddenly I was now experiencing how He was interested in all the little details and providing for me within them. It was fantastic.

This event has always been a key reminder for me when ministry gets too busy. I realise now that the ministry itself is not my relationship with God. That is not what defines it. My relationship with God is defined simply by my love for Him! Like all relationships! What defines your relationship with your wife or husband? All the things you do? Or your love? I've preached in many churches, but when

I walk off from behind the pulpit, that's where my relationship with God really exists. I will minister to people for the rest of my life, for so long as His grace permits me, but being alone with Him - spending time alone with Him - is more precious to me than standing on a stage with a room full of people eager to hear what I have to say. This habit and belief is fixed in my life today. Nothing will convince me to stop it. I still regularly go to the movies with God or eat out with God. Whatever He wants to do, we do it.

I make sure to spend a day with God alone once a week because my desire is to get to know Him better and better. As I've done this, I've started to experience more and more supernatural encounters with Him. One morning, for instance, I got in my car and drove off to a nearby town to spend my day there with God. I got there really early and drove around a bit, trying to find a restaurant or somewhere that I could have breakfast with God. Eventually I saw one that looked open so I parked my car, got out, walked through the doors, and sat down.

The waiter came and I ordered two coffees and breakfasts. Do you want to know how God likes His coffee? His likes it black, with two sugars.

“Are you waiting for someone?” the waiter asked.

“Don’t worry,” I said. “He is already here.”

They left and God whispered into my heart, “I’ll get the bill today.”

“Thanks God, I appreciate that,” I said in return. “But it’s okay, I’ll get it.”

It’s odd telling the Lord of the Universe that “it’s okay”, He doesn’t have to go through all the trouble of paying a restaurant bill, I’ll get it - as if He is poor or something. But of course, I was thinking it’s impossible that God will actually, physically, pay. I didn’t really examine my thoughts and heart at the time though and just moved on.

God and I had a great time over breakfast that morning, but the waiter kept asking me about the other breakfast and coffee across from me.

“Are they still coming?” they asked. “I can keep their food warm in the kitchen. Would you like me to do that?”

They were about to grab the plate from the table but I just laughed. “Don’t worry,” I said, “He likes it the way it is!”

They looked at me oddly, of course, but complied. I finished my food and realised it was time to go. So I asked for the bill. Five minutes later, however, the waiter came and said to me, “Don’t worry, the bill is paid.”

“How?” I asked, looking around. “Who paid for it? It’s only me here, besides you and the manager.”

“It’s paid,” the waiter said. “Don’t worry. You can go.”

I carried on looking around. There was really no one else in that restaurant. It was still quite early.

“Are you sure?”

“Of course.”

I got up, still looking around, got to the doors, and looked back one more time. Then I walked out of the doors, completely stunned.

“Uh,” I said to God. “How did you do that?”

He didn’t answer immediately. I got into my car and sat for a few seconds before starting the engine.

“No seriously, God, how did that happen?”

I kept racking my brain, trying to figure out how on earth that could have happened, waiting for God to give me some sort of scientific explanation.

Eventually He answered. “Why do you always need to figure it out? Just accept it. I said I would get the bill, and that’s exactly what I did.”

I can tell you, what a fantastic day with my Father that was! I felt like I was a child, just being with my parents, without needing to provide or worry about anything. God just provides. Matthew 18:4 says, “Whoever humbles himself

like a child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Sometimes we have to be like kids again and trust God for everything. After all, we are children of God!

Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1)

When a child goes on holiday, they don't worry about the budget and calculate the daily costs. They don't even think about whether or not their parents can afford the holiday. They simply just enjoy it. They will walk into a store, look around, and choose the biggest ice-cream and the biggest packet of chips. They don't even look at the price and wonder if it's too expensive. They have no idea what the word 'budget' even means! They just believe their parents will provide for the holiday and are able to easily afford whatever they ask. And then they just enjoy everything they get.

I don't know about you, but I want to trust God like that. When we grow up we find that everything is now our responsibility and we have to manage everything and make it happen. But

it's not actually like that. God is always there to help and provide and even give us good things. He is the God "who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment." (1 Timothy 6:17.) And trust me, He absolutely loves it when we ask for help.

Let me recall another evening, when I was younger. I found that evening that I had an incredibly intense desire to spend time alone with God. My parents were away on holiday and I was alone at home, and it seemed like a perfect opportunity to just enjoy the house with God. I got this idea in my mind that I would relax with a nice, hot bath. I went into the bathroom and switched on the taps, and watched it as it filled to the brim. I took everything I could find in my mom's cupboard at the time – bubble bath, the bath salts, oils – and threw it all in. I got in to the bath, breathing a sigh of relief, and was looking forward to a nice time of relaxation with God.

"Lord, sit and talk with me while I relax in the bath," I said as I got in. I sat for awhile, enjoying the warm water, and then a curious thought entered my mind. I wondered to myself if

I wasn't actually taking this all a bit too far - that I was actually being a bit strange and God was asking, "What are you doing, expecting me to be with you and talk to you while you have a bath?" Maybe this is all a bit silly, I thought, and even a little pointless. This thought continued to bug me so much that I eventually got out the bath quickly and apologised to God for it all.

But while I was still drying myself with a towel, thinking it all over, I heard the phone ring. "I wonder who is phoning this late?" I thought. I quickly finished drying myself and left the bathroom, finding my way to the phone. I picked it up and heard the voice of a good friend of mine from a town quite far away.

"Anything I can do for you?" I asked them, thinking that maybe something was wrong, as they were phoning quite late.

"Er," they replied. "Um. Well..."

"Yes? Everything okay?"

"Well, I don't know what's happening. Er... But God told me to give you a call. And He, uh, He

said I must tell you that He sees what you just did and, uh, appreciates it.”

I held the phone, silent. I didn't know what to say. He didn't seem to either.

“So... uh, I don't know what this is about. But, so, well, just know He appreciates what you did. Good night!”

He put the phone down, but I held onto the phone on my side, and my eyes started filling with tears. I was simply stunned. God, the one who created it all, wants to talk to me while I'm having a bath? He loves the small things we do for Him and with Him, even though we sometimes think it's stupid and meaningless and maybe a bit strange. Isn't that amazing?

Occasionally I will go into a restaurant and sit down and order a coffee for God and I. Always black with two sugars, just like me. That's the way coffee should be drunk! People may think I'm crazy while I sit there with God and have a coffee, while the other cup sits on the table, getting cold. I pray God will help them to see the reality: that He is actually there. I know

this is special to Him; I know this matters to Him; and I know He appreciates it. And for me, I need it. It's my personality. It's not good enough for me to sit there and have the coffee by myself. Having that coffee there, physically in front of me, gives me the reminder that I need to know He is there and He is real. Because He is. He likes it when we spend time with Him, just being who we are and He being who He is. Often we just talk and sometimes we don't even have to say anything, we just enjoy each other. This is a relationship and so it functions as a relationship. After all, God is always with us and His Spirit is in us as His people. "The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth." (Psalm 145:18.) Or as John 14:17 says, "He lives with you and will be in you." It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory", after all. (Colossians 1:27.) We either take these scriptures as they are and believe them, because God gave them to us because they are completely true, or we don't. He created us as physical beings and it helps me to do physical things to be aware of Him - it makes the truth of God's promises in the scriptures to always be with us real.

I know that if I am not aware of Him, He is still there. That's a fact and the scriptures testify to that all the time. It is not only my consciousness and experience of Him that makes it true that He is there, because it is true regardless of how I feel. But being aware of Him really helps, and it brings the peace that surpasses all understanding. (Philippians 4:7.) God does not just live in our thoughts - He is always with us even when we are not thinking about Him.

I encourage you, today, if you are struggling to be aware of God, do something physical - even if it makes you feel awkward - to help you be aware of Him. It's so helpful. I have found this to be key in my own walk with God and I trust it will help you too.

CHAPTER FIVE

Three Levels of Relationship

Not too long ago I went to the movies with God and bought two popcorns and sodas as usual. I sat down and put His snacks on the chair next to me, as has become our little tradition. I leaned back, though, and said, “Lord, don’t you think I’m getting too old for this now? Is there not something else we can do?”

He didn’t reply, and so I sat there in silence for a while. The movie was about to begin, and I silently whispered, “Well, Lord, if you want to continue to do this, just give me a sign. Somehow show me that you do still enjoy this and we should carry on doing it.”

When I go watch a movie with God, I usually go early in the morning to the first show of the day, when there aren’t a lot of people around. It’s nice and quiet and I don’t have to get distracted

with all the people around me. People often ask me what I do with the soda and popcorn when the movie is done, but it's not about that. It's about being with God and finding a way to be reminded that He is there. It's just about our relationship together. I usually take the food and throw it away or I leave it on the chair. But I don't like it when people focus on that. However, the reason I am telling you this, is because something unexpected happened that morning with the food.

The movie came to an end and the credits started rolling, so I thought it's time to go. I started picking up all the waste and cleaning my chair. As I'm cleaning everything, I pick up the coke and popcorn that I put on God's chair and I pause. The coke doesn't feel as heavy as it should. I peer into the popcorn. It's not full! I look at the coke. It's only half-way!

God suddenly spoke, interrupting my confused thoughts. "Is this a good enough sign for you?"

I laughed. "God, I'll go to the movies with you until I'm ninety. I'll do it for the rest of my life!"

This is my relationship with God and it's what it means for me to be in His presence. I will not exchange this for anything. It's how I speak to God and how He speaks to me. I remember how Moses' relationship with the Lord is described in the book of Exodus, and I'm sure He also would not have exchanged it for the world.

“God would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.” (Exodus 33:11).

These things I do with God are the moments when I see Him. The first time I read Exodus 33:11 I said to God, “This is it. I want that. I want to hear your voice clearly. I want you to speak to me face to face, as one would speak with a friend.” Notice it doesn't say Moses spoke to God face to face as a friend, it says God spoke to Moses face to face as one would speak to a friend. The initiation was from God's side! Isn't that wonderful? Wouldn't you like that? Do you know you can have it?

God created us for communion and fellowship. That's why we're here. Look at the amazing relationship God had with Adam and Eve before the Fall. God would visit them regularly in the

“cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8). If we look at how they walked with God as a person walks with their friend, we see a model of relationship. We get an idea as to what it’s supposed to look like. Do you know that God wants to walk with you today? He wants to be with you - more than you actually probably want to be with Him. His desire is to be with you. People have all sorts of ideas and philosophies about purpose and the meaning of life, but right through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, it’s all about God restoring a relationship. A relationship with you, with me, with all of us.

Sin does not influence God’s relationship with us, but it does influence our relationship with God. It is us who hide ourselves away from Him. Sin takes away our boldness to step into God’s throne room and sit on His lap, as a son or daughter. When Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they were suddenly full of shame and hid themselves away from God. But He came looking for them.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and

ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." (Genesis 3:6-10.)

God would have known they were hiding. Nothing escapes His knowledge and wisdom. Yet He still asks the question, "Where are you?". He hasn't come to shame them. He hasn't come in as a raging father ready to sort them out. Rather, He calls out to them, inviting them to come to Him. And when they come, He asks another question: "What have you done?". He wants to talk to them about it. He wants to hear from them and help them. He isn't asking it to shame them.

Religion teaches us to run away from God and try to find some way to work ourselves back into His so-called 'good books'. But relationship works on a whole different level. It teaches us to go back to Him. To approach Him. To sit on His lap and say, "I'm sorry," and know He accepts us and loves us and will take us just as we are. He is the only answer and the only one who can restore us.

They hid from God but He did not hide from them. They did not want God to see them because they were naked and ashamed. Their sin led to them being ashamed of themselves, and this shame kept them from God. Does your shame keep you from God? Are you ashamed of who you are? Jesus defeated both our sin and shame! He was a man despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3) and bore that on our behalf. He has taken both sin and shame away! He took our sins and shame upon himself, dying on the cross - a death reserved for criminals - and, in doing so, shamed Satan and the demons!

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive

*together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. **He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.** (Colossians 2:13-15.)*

Now you are a child of God! A son of the most high King of Kings and Lord of Lords! No more shame for you!

We have all heard what Adam and Eve did wrong and how the whole human race has suffered the effects of their decision. From the day we are born we hear how bad humankind is, how Adam and Eve got us into this mess, and how we once lived in Paradise but now live in a fallen world. I've personally heard hundreds of sermons on how Adam and Eve messed up in the Garden and why we are now where we are. We're told constantly how we are wicked sinners deserving of death. But who tells us of the work Jesus did on the cross? Who tells us the story of how Jesus defeated sin, shame and the devil on the cross and set us free? Who tells us about how His love now unites us with

God - so we become partakers of His nature and not of the sinful nature? For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, **and you have been filled in Him**, who is the head of all rule and authority! (Colossians 2:9-10). You may have been born into this world in sin, but you have been *born again* into eternal life! A son of the Living God! And God has given you a new heart!

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:26,27)

This promise is for you and I! Religion divides us. It divides us from each other and it divides us from God. It tells us that we are never good enough, but yet must work and work to try and become good enough. It tells us that we are sinful, but never tells us that Jesus has taken all that away and made us new. Jesus did a powerful work on the cross, and God allowed Him to do it. About two thousand years ago, you and I were reconciled with God and made new.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:17-19.)

But when many people sin and make mistakes, they still try and hide from God, following in the footsteps of Adam and Eve. But we are no longer in Adam, we are in Christ! Read Romans 5 and see! Those who have faith in Jesus are in Christ, not Adam! Everything the enemy took from us by deceiving Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden has been restored at the tree of the cross. We don't have to hide anymore. We should learn that when we make a mistake and sin, we must run to the Lord. Run, run, run to Him! Do not hide away! Do not run away from Him! He is your only hope! We all strive to be holy but holiness is not the absence of sin, it is the presence of God. For God is Holy. It's only His presence that qualifies us. It's in His presence that we are enabled to live a holy life

that honours Him. We need to develop a bold approach to the throne of God, for we now have free access to Him, no matter what.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16 NIV)

I have seen many people angry at God because of something that happened to them. We must be aware of our decisions and how what we do affects others. Every action surely has a consequence, just like Adam and Eve's actions had a consequence for all of mankind and for all of history. One person's actions and decisions can affect thousands of other people's lives, even down through the generations. So while we live under grace and are covered by the blood of Jesus, it is nevertheless true that bad decisions will still affect people badly. Whatever you decide to do today will affect those around you for tomorrow. This does not mean, however, that we hide away from God when we make a mistake.

Think about it. If a drunk man decides to get into his car and drive, but refuses to stop at

every traffic light, the chances are very high that he will drive into someone's car. Was it God's fault that the man behind the steering wheel made such a foolish decision?

Years ago I heard the story of an elderly lady who lost control of her vehicle at high speed. She took her hands off the steering wheel and looked up and shouted, "Lord! I give the steering into your hands now!"

She survived the accident. Afterwards, she testified how God rolled the car three times and kept her safe. We often give our lives to God just as we realise we are destroying it. Why not rather surrender our lives to Him before, when there's still time, and still a life to live?

Scripture speaks of three levels of relationship. It is broken down between those who (1) ask; those who (2) seek; and those who (3) knock.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." (Matthew 7:7,8.)

1. THOSE WHO ASK

All across the world today there are people who sit and ask. They ask and wait for their prayer to be answered, for their breakthrough to come. And then they keep asking. The trouble is, they don't really move beyond asking to where God wants to bring us into; to what the point of Him inviting us to ask is all about — a *relationship*. Imagine if my relationship with you was always about asking? What kind of friends would we be? Imagine if all I ever did when I was with my father was ask him for things? How could that be a healthy relationship? We're called to something deeper than just asking.

Asking is good and it is something God wants us to do. He encourages us to ask and have faith that He is a good father. That's why, following Matthew 7:7-8 quoted above, Jesus says:

“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:9-11.)

He wants us to ask, but He also invites us to go further.

2. THOSE WHO SEEK

This second group of people consists of those who have gotten up from just asking and started to seek God more deeply. They are seeking for answers to prayers because they are convinced He is a good father. They are not just asking for things, but are speaking to God in relationship, believing that He will answer because they know who He is. There's a difference. They are starting to seek to know this Father, to be more close to Him, and understand His ways. Their asking is even changing. Instead of asking for things they're asking God if they can know Him and if He can be with them, and if He can speak to them. They're asking God for this relationship to grow.

It's one thing to know God's Will, but another to know His Ways. "Teach me your way, Lord; lead me in a straight path." (Psalm 27:11.) Too many people just want to know God's Will for their life. They want to know the plan He has for them. In

a later chapter, I'll highlight the importance of knowing His plan for you and accepting it, but His plans go deeper than just an unfolding of your life. That's only a small aspect of the whole plan. His real plan, His deeper plan, or His bigger plan is that you would get to know who He is and that you would truly get to understand His ways - the same as how you get to know the ways of your wife or husband, or of your children, or of your parents. He teaches those who are humble His ways (Psalm 25:9). You get to know God's ways when you get to know His voice. "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27.) He chided His people when they did not learn His ways. "For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know my ways." (Psalm 95:10.)

3. THOSE WHO KNOCK

Lastly, there is a third group of people who have found the door of God's heart and are knocking on it. They have found their answer; they have found their breakthrough; they have begun to understand His ways; and now they know God's address and stand at His door and knock. They

don't sit around and wait, they do not seek anymore because they have found what they were looking for — they know Jesus is the real answer, the way, the truth, and the life. Their breakthrough is minutes away, they have found the door, and now they knock on it. They will not be led to any other door and will not go looking somewhere else. They are done being distracted with all the world has to give, with all of its empty philosophy and restlessness. They are not moved anymore by anything else. They are not interested in gaining material things or living according to someone else's dream for their life. They are solely fixated on Jesus Christ and will knock at that door - the door of truth. Through His grace, He allows us to seek and test many things in life so that when we find Him we can understand the true value of Jesus Christ in our lives today.

From one man He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though He is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.'

As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' (Acts 17:26-28.)

God wants us to seek Him out and find Him. Only when we have lost all hope in people and our things and our careers and whatever else we put our faith in, can we discover the real value of Jesus Christ. He is more precious than anything in this world and all of creation. Not even the stars in all their glory compare to Him. No wonder Paul could say, "everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ." (Philippians 3:8.)

I have spent many hours, days, and years seeking God. It's worth it. "Taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalm 34:8.) I follow everything and anything that looks like Jesus, that sounds like Jesus, and that feels like Jesus. Sometimes people can get to this level of depth in their relationship with the Lord and yet get distracted with supernatural things, like miracles, or a person of God (a pastor or travelling preacher). But here we must know that

we should not even run after people, even men and women of God who are doing great things. As Paul said:

For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings?

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building. (1 Corinthians 3:4-9.)

We should also not run after every miracle we see. Some people run after miracle and miracle, but still they do not actually believe in Jesus. Jesus dealt with this issue himself when the Pharisees and scribes asked Him to perform another miracle and perform another sign, when they had already seen so much.

Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you."

He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here. (Matthew 12:38-42.)"

Miracles should follow you, not the other way around. Don't be distracted with the natural or the supernatural things, but be distracted by One and One only: Jesus Christ, the Truth.

As I've grown in my relationship with the Lord, my desire for Him has grown stronger and stronger every day. Eventually I found that

I had to move from just asking to getting up and seeking, and then one day I found the door. What a day! When I found Him, nothing could replace Him. He has become everything to me in my life. When we reach this stage we reach a stage of maturity in our walk that keeps us solidly on the path of the Lord; solidly living for Him; and unwavering in our love.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. (Ephesians 4:14 NIV.)

It all starts with one simple and profound revelation: ***Jesus is with you.*** Believe the promise of the scriptures - the promise that He gave to Israel for years and accomplished through Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit - that He is Emmanuel, God with us. He is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6.) He is the Helper and the Comforter (John 14:16). He is our Guide (John 16:13). He indwells us and is with us (Romans 8:9-11). He is the Spirit of Life (Romans 8:2). He will give you everything you need.

*His divine power has given us **everything we need for a godly life** through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us his **very great and precious promises**, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:3,4)*

Stop looking at other people for direction. Do not be tossed back and forth, blown here and there by every wind of teaching or idea or conference or book that comes your way. Nowhere in the Bible does it say you should put your trust and hope in men. Love people as God loves them, but put your trust and hope only and firmly in God. Discover the sheer value of Jesus Christ in your life, the Treasure hidden in the field, the Pearl of Great Price, and know He is worth more than words can describe and is able to do far more than we can think or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). He desires right now that you would know Him and He wants to speak with you right now, and every day. We were made for this communion. We were made to live with Him constantly. It is what makes us truly human.

CHAPTER SIX

Today is the Day

For a long time I asked God if I can just be where He is - because where He speaks and where He is, miracles happen. But this always seems just out of our reach. Or so we think.

“I want to be at your level, God,” I would say. “Please can I be at your level.”

“If you want to be where I am, you have to get a bit lower,” God would answer. “You are actually too high for me.”

I love how God puts this in Matthew 11:22,

I have hidden these things from the wise and learned but revealed it to children.

For me, if things get too complicated, I’m not very sure that God is in it at all. But when things are simple and basic - when it’s something a child can understand — then it looks more like God.

Have you seen your little daughter and noticed how simple things are for her? When you go into her room, you find her sitting having a little tea party with her dolls. She can tell you all their names and what they are saying at the party. She can tell you how they're all feeling right now. She laughs with them and cries with them and enjoys her tea party. And what do you say to her as a parent? Well, you tell her it's just her imagination. It is, but often we want to chalk everything up to the 'imagination' and we lose the awe and the wonder of God and the world He put us in and this thing called life. We have to stop trying to make it so complicated and come down to the simple basic things of life again - like how important it is to just spend time with God. It's far more important than all your complicated work and dreams and ambitions, and even all the things you're going to do for God.

I once heard the sad story of a little boy who went for an operation to have his tonsils removed. The operation seemed to have gone well. He got back home and for the next few evenings he would tell his parents that Jesus would visit him. In the mornings he would say that

Jesus just walks through the window without breaking it, and comes and sits on his bed, and gently puts his hand on his throat where there was blood.

He would tell his parents this story every morning, and they would tell him it was just his imagination. They even got a bit irritated with the story, wondering why he keeps making it up. But several days went by and that little boy passed away to glory. He died because he lost so much blood. His parents, however, were dumbfounded at this. They were so mad at God for it, but Jesus was trying to show them day after day that something was wrong - and He was telling them through what their child was telling them. They thought it was just his imagination - just some story he made up - but it was real. In that home, the only communication from God to the parents was through a little boy who had the faith that Jesus still speaks to us today.

This is a very sad story but it makes us think. It makes us re-adjust how we view things, and to be open to God's voice today. He may be speaking to you right now in some way that

you're ignoring because you think it's just your, or someone else's, imagination. We struggle to truly believe that God would speak to us, and that He cares. But He does. He said in Psalm 139 that nothing can separate you from His love.

*You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.
You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.*

*Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.*

*If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.*

*For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fear-
fully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in
the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
How precious to me are your thoughts,[a] God!
How vast is the sum of them!
Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with
you. (Psalm 139:1-18 NIV)*

I love this Psalm because it shows that there is nowhere we can go to be away from His Spirit. In the darkest pits of our lives, and in the happiest moments, His Spirit is there - always, always with us.

Once I decided to have lunch with God and visited a restaurant, and looked for a quiet corner right in the back where no one would bug us. I sat down, ordered two meals and coffees as usual, and started enjoying some time with God. But as I sat there a stranger walked into the restaurant and marched past my table. As he did so, he looked at me strangely, and then walked on by. A few seconds later he walked past me again and carried on looking at me.

“Hi,” he said.

“Hi,” I said.

He walked past again for the third time and then suddenly came and looked at me, staring at me.

“What is with you?” he asked me. To be honest, he looked quite rough. His clothes were pretty worn in, and he was shabbily dressed. I had

actually chosen a very nice restaurant for lunch and he seemed very out of place.

“Whatever you have, I want it,” the man said. Then suddenly, to my surprise (and more to his!) the Spirit began to fill him! I could see he began to shake, and something was happening to him. This was 2pm in a restaurant! We weren’t at some church meeting. I haven’t even said anything! I’m just having lunch!

I drew a chair closer to my table and beckoned for him to sit, which he did.

“I want what you have,” he said to me as he sat down.

“You have to know the Lord Jesus. You have to have a relationship with Jesus,” I said to him. “Can I lead you to God?”

“Please,” he replied.

“Ok, I want you to pray this prayer with me.” I have a little prayer that I often use to help people come to God. I started to say the prayer but I noticed his eyes were still open.

“You’ve got to close your eyes,” I said. But he didn’t. He just kept staring at me. “Okay. It’s okay. Don’t close them,” I said.

I began the prayer again. I think it’s a beautiful prayer and it’s really quite simple.

“Lord Jesus,” I said.

“Lord Jesus,” he said.

“I invite you into my life.”

“I invite you into my life.”

“I ask you to save me today.”

He stopped. I looked up at him.

“Uh, you’ve got to say the whole thing.”

“He just did it!” he said. “He just saved me!”

He looked at me a little puzzled, and then explained what he meant. I tried to piece it all together while he was explaining. He said he saw a vision while I was praying. In his vision a

man walked into the restaurant and came and stood next to him, put his hand on his shoulder, and said, “I’m here today to remove your sins.”

“That’s why I said he just saved me,” he explained. “I thought you saw it too?”

“No,” I said, thinking carefully about this and praising the Lord in my heart. “Who are you? Where do you come from? Did you know the Lord before now?”

“My parents were Catholic,” he said. “Actually, I kill people for a living.”

I don’t know why I wasn’t shocked or taken aback by this. The Spirit was leading me to ask these questions. I watched as he took out his phone and fiddled a bit with it, then put it in front of me with a set of pictures.

“This morning I landed here in South Africa and I’m on my way to another country,” he said. “The army hires me to kill people. I’m a mercenary.”

He started flicking through pictures of dead people. I just sat there and watched for awhile,

not sure what to think or do, and then I think I asked him to sit a little further away from the table. I wasn't going to have a guy who kills people that close!

"Do you really think God can forgive me for the things I've done?" he eventually asked.

"Yes. Let me pray for you," I said. But as I started praying for him, the Lord showed me that this man has a four year old somewhere in his life - that there is something important about a four year old boy.

So I ask him, "Do you have a son?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"He is in another country," he says. "I know that he made a girl pregnant and they have a boy. I've never seen him. But the boy is four years old now. Every month I send all the money I can to them for that boy."

"How do you feel about that boy?" I asked.

“I love him.”

“But what if he grows up and does bad things?”

“No,” he said resolutely, without flinching. “He’s still my boy, and I love him.”

“What if he uses drugs, what then?”

“No, he’s my boy. I’d love him.”

“What if he kills people?”

“He’s my boy. I’ll die for him.”

“God feels exactly the same way about you.”

As I said this he just broke down into tears. The love of God completely filled him and overwhelmed him. Realising he is making a scene, he got up and apologised to the others in the restaurant. Some were looking, some were not.

I wondered to myself about how this man came to be in this restaurant. God surely organised all this, but how?

“How did you come to be here in this restaurant?” I asked him.

He looked completely baffled. “I. Well. You see, I was at the pub next door.” (I hadn’t seen a pub but I took his word for it.) “I’ve been drinking the whole day. You see, a man like me, well, I like to fight. I like to go and drink and find someone to fight, or to join a fight, or make a fight happen.”

I nodded.

“But. Well. I was just sitting in the pub and I heard a voice telling me to get up and leave. So I got up and left. As I left, the same voice told me to go into this restaurant, so that’s what I did.”

He looked at me very seriously again.

“Was it you? Did you call me to come here?”

I think I must have laughed at that.

Now there’s one thing that happened here that I want to focus on and it’s this: the Spirit of God spoke to that man at first when he was sitting in

that pub, and that man responded. God spoke to him and told him to leave that place, and he left. Isn't it amazing that the Spirit will speak to a drunken man in a pub and that, despite his body being filled with alcohol and the guilt in his life, he can still respond? And the man does?

There are two sides to God's speaking, you see. He speaks, but we must obey. When we obey the voice of God and act on what He says, we activate a positive chain of events. It took obedience from that man to leave that pub. And only when he left the pub did the voice of God speak to him again and tell him where to go next. When you're obedient to God's voice, he leads you and guides you. He doesn't give you the entire story and tell you what's going to happen from A to Z. He gently guides, one step at a time. God didn't tell that man to leave the pub, go into the restaurant, speak to me, and get saved. God's voice just said that he must get up and go, and he did, and then God led him to the next thing.

Our response to what God says – our obedience to His Voice – is the key to having a supernatural experience of Him. That obedience

always leads to deeper and greater things. God is speaking to us constantly, but we're not always responding. We don't always act on what He tells us to do. God wants every one of us to hear His voice clearly. He really does want to speak to you more than you probably want to speak to Him. That man wasn't even a believer when God spoke to him, yet he was still able to respond and act on God's voice! There are two people in the New Testament that Jesus said had great faith – one a Roman centurion, and the other a Canaanite woman (see Matthew 8:5-13 and Matthew 15:28). Both of these were not Christian, nor were they even Jewish people who might know the Lord! Yet they were able to respond in such faith! If unbelievers respond in faith and can have encounters with God, how much more the sons and daughters of God?

We are to obey God's words and live on His words. Remember, when Jesus was tempted, He told that devil that it is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4.) Even Jesus lived on the words of the Father. He compares it to food: it's something you need every day, it provides nutrition to your body,

and as you eat three times a day, you should hear His voice three times a day (at least!). A Sunday service is not enough. We all need to spend more time with God. Too many of us live from Sunday to Sunday, and that's why so many people look like they do on a Sunday at church! They haven't been eating spiritually all week and communicating with God, and so they come into Sundays thirsty and hungry and unable to serve. God has called us to walk with Him and to make Him our source for everything. It's in those simple times where you decide to just be with Him and to hear Him that your relationship with Him grows and gets deeper, and God reveals to you deeper and deeper things.

I love what scripture says about David and his relationship with God, and it's been my prayer ever since I read it. "I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart." But we read that and don't read the second part of the scripture which says this: "He will do everything I want him to do." (See Acts 13:22.) See, David responded to God's voice. He acted.

I remember the first time I saw someone prophesy and I realised that it was something I wanted

to do. I said to the Lord that night, "I must do this. I'll die if I don't do this." He had placed this desire so deeply in my heart, and I wanted it with everything inside of me. God will often do that with your calling. I said to the Lord that I'll give up everything to be able to prophesy. "I just want to hear your voice and speak what you say to others," I said to Him.

God has been training me for years in this. Even though I travel the world and hear Him speak and act on His word, I'm still in training! But there was a morning when I got up and God said to me, "Today I'm going to start to use you."

Later that day I was in a conference and was busy ministering to others. I saw a lady and God suddenly said to me, "I've got a word for her." I was so excited! So I ran towards her. But I didn't ask God what the word actually was! I realise this as I am about to arrive, so I ask God, "What do I say to her?" As I get to her the Spirit says to me, "I want you to tell her that I love her."

I stop. "Lord, come on. Anyone can say that. Give me something deeper. Like an I.D. number

or something big. It needs to be something big for her.”

I must have looked awkward just standing there, and I wonder what she was thinking. In my mind I’m trying to convince God to give me something ‘important’. “Lord,” I say, “I’ve been serving you for a long time. I’m ready for big things. So give all the small things to other people, and big things to me. I’m your guy!”

The Lord must have been laughing. And so He just said to me: “Just tell her that. You said I can use you.”

“Lord I don’t want to say ‘God loves you’. Everyone says that. It’s simple stuff.”

But the Spirit is relentless. He kept going on about this and eventually I needed to say something to her. So I first covered for myself and I looked at her and said, “I’m going to tell you something now, but if you don’t feel it’s for you, just forget about it, okay? Please don’t think there’s something wrong with me, okay?”

She carried on looking at me and quietly nodded.

“Uh. God says He loves you.”

And as I tell her that she falls to the ground! It was amazing. The power of God just hit her like that. I suddenly see that this word was right! I see prophecy working! So now I’m all in and want to be part of what God is doing! So I keep telling her, “He loves you, He loves you, He loves you...”.

After a while she got up and I asked her what that was about. “I’ve said ‘God loves you’ to many people and none of them have ever reacted like this,” I said. “What happened?”

She looked at me and told me her story. “We’ve been at this conference and we’ve been having a wonderful time. But I’ve been going through a very difficult marriage situation.” She paused and it looked like she was weighing up in her mind if she should continue. “I had decided in this meeting that, right after it, I would go home and commit suicide.”

I stood there looking at her, in wonder at God’s ways. “Right here, standing here, I told God He needs to show me He is real. I said, ‘Lord, I’m

not going to make it difficult for you. All that I ask is you send someone to tell me that you love me.”

I couldn't believe it. To me, telling her that God loves her was a small thing. I was asking God for 'big things'. What could be bigger than this? She would go home that night completely changed, knowing God loves her. What if I had been disobedient?

Right now I want to tell you that God has been speaking to you. He has been sharing many things in your life, that you, when you hear it, think is a small thing. But someone's life depends on it. To someone else it's a big thing. Listen to Him. And, above all, act. Respond in the small things. Respond in the small daily things that God tells you to do. You never know what God is going to do in you and through you today.

*“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts
as you did in the rebellion,
during the time of testing in the wilderness,
where your ancestors tested and tried me,*

*though for forty years they saw what I did.
That is why I was angry with that generation;
I said, 'Their hearts are always going
astray, and they have not known
my ways.'* (Hebrews 3:7-10)

Hear His voice today. Obey Him today. For today is the day of salvation! Don't wait for tomorrow but know He will speak to you and use you today!

One day I was sitting with a billionaire in South Africa in his office. We had known each other for a long time. In fact, I had known him from the days when he was actually very poor, and we walked a journey as he began to trust God and God continued to bless him again and again. I went to now visit him as a rich and famous person who, in my mind, really doesn't need anything. But as we're sitting in his office and he was speaking to me, I heard the Lord say to me, "Give him ten rand." (That's about a dollar.)

"Lord, um, do you know who this guy is?" I ask the Lord in my mind.

The Spirit continued to urge me. "Bless him. Just give it to him."

“He’s a billionaire!”

“Just give it to him.”

I kept hesitating and it was eventually time to leave. Knowing that I need to do this because the Spirit keeps telling me to do so, on my way out, I turned to him and said, “I just want to bless you with this ten rand.”

And when I gave it to him he burst into tears! I couldn’t believe it. “No one has ever given me anything!” he said to me. Right at that very moment, God restored him. He needed to know that he was also loved, and that he was also cared for. Most of us would never think that of a billionaire. We would think that they don’t need anything. But God can take something that’s so small and completely restore people.

You know, I’ve had people ask me for some really crazy things. They really do. Some have said to the Lord, “Lord, if you love me, then let someone give me an ice cream.” It will amaze you the weird things that people say to God. Then God tells you to buy them an ice cream

and you say, “No, it’s the middle of winter. This doesn’t make sense. Why should I do that?”

Well I want to tell you today: do it. God has one intention today and that is to pour His Spirit out on all people. He wants to fill the whole earth. He wants to bring everyone into His Kingdom. He wants every single person on this planet to hear His voice. There is not a single person He does not want a relationship with. And He wants you to be a part of that - He wants you to introduce people to Him. So listen. And then respond!

CHAPTER SEVEN

Waiting Forever for Confirmation

In South Africa, we have a disease. It's a horrible disease. It's called 'confirmation'. Confirmation is another religious word that means this: if God tells you to do something, you must first ask Him to confirm it.

There are some times when you do need to do this, but it's not all the time. And most of the time when we do this we don't believe God's confirmation anyway. For example, God might tell you to bless someone with some money and you say to Him, "Okay, Lord, if it's really you then let a white dove fly past me." And it happens! So then you say, "No, no, no. It must have a green mark on it," or you make something up. And when that happens, you ask for another confirmation for the confirmation that just happened!

That's the kind of thing we do way too often. We get ourselves so busy waiting and looking for confirmation that we just never do what God has asked us to do!

But the righteous will live by faith (Romans 1:17). Faith lets you walk into what God has said. You just step into it. You just do it. He tells you to sow, and you just do it. He tells you to bless, and you just do it. You don't need to wait for confirmation! The Lord will look after you if you live by faith.

I can tell you that in our house, if we're not using something, I sow it. I give it away. My wife sometimes gets a bit mad at me for this. We have something in the house and next time she goes looking for it, it's gone! "Where is it?" she asks me. "We didn't use it for three months," I say. "What's the point of having something we don't use? Someone else needs it."

The thing is, someone else is praying for something that you have in your house, in your garage or stored away somewhere, and you're not using it. They're crying out to God saying, "Lord, if you give this to me then I know you are

real and you are God,” and there it is, in your house, gathering dust. So now in our house, if we don’t use it, we give it away. Let whatever it is actually work. Don’t let it sit there doing nothing! Let it reach someone and do something in their lives. You don’t need to wait for confirmation to give it away: just give it away!

In God’s kingdom, we are not only citizens, but also have a position of authority.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9.)

This is our position in His kingdom. We have spiritual authority. “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.” (2 Corinthians 10:4.) With this authority God gives us a spirit of discernment. When you walk into a place, you can pick things up about it, and about the people there. When we pick up something negative in our spirit, the moment we’ve picked it up, God gives us authority over it. And we don’t have to shout

and scream over that thing, but we can just quietly say, “Thank you Father, I take authority over this thing, and I command peace over it.” Finished. Everything stops at that moment. You can get very religious and call ten people and start a prayer meeting and have communion, or you can just say, “In Jesus’ name, I take control over this,” and that’s it. Both work. But sometimes you’re at a place where it’s going to be difficult to do all the other things. You can take authority over things on earth, in the moment, over that situation.

Now in this Kingdom that we are called to there is only one King, and it is not you! It is Jesus! We are His people and He is our hope, our source. He is everything! And in His Kingdom, it’s about others. It’s about what they need. It’s about building them up and encouraging them and comforting them.

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11.)

This is the Lord’s way. It’s why I invest in people and get busy with the Kingdom. Even writing

this book, that is Kingdom. I'm not doing this to impress you but to impart something into your life. I want to take God's hand and your hand and put them together. Because I've seen and learned that as soon as He touches you, you are never the same again. It's impossible for you to be the same.

We all need to touch God, but people touch a lot of other things. Sometimes they are touching the things He touched and they find there is still power in it, and things therefore happen, and so they put their trust in these things. But let me tell you that when you touch the Source, something much more starts to happen. Something divine. Something so utterly powerful, all the other things you touch cannot compare. God is calling you to a face-to-face relationship and that doesn't come in a group. It comes when you spend time with Him alone. I want to encourage you to invite God into your life, into your finances, into your marriage, into everything you are involved in.

One day I spoke to my wife and I told her there is no way I can love her the way she deserves. That is impossible for me. But God can. It

has become a vital part of our relationship as husband and wife for her to spend time with God, and for me as well. There are things I need in my life that my wife can never fulfil, but God can. And the moment we invited Him into our marriage things became so much easier! I don't mean to say it's always a walk in the park, but when we invited the Source in, something happened. Power came into our marriage. It's so easy for me to be with my wife because she is so secure in God. It's so easy for her to be with me because I am completely secure in God. We don't look to each other for our security, but we look to God. A lot of people call me Prophet but my wife knows that I'm also just a person. Come stay with me for a week and you will find I can be difficult! But God fills our needs. I don't know how any marriage can operate without God. I think it's impossible, to be honest.

There was a time when I got this idea that I'm going to make a lot of money. I decided that I was going to buy shares and get into the investment game. So I saved up my money for a long time to buy shares, and I kept saying to God, "Lord, I've got no idea how shares work or anything like that. But I'm going to save this

money and I'm going to ask you, and you will tell me what to do."

Eventually the day came when I believed we saved up enough money. I got the newspaper and started looking over all the share options. I said to the Lord, "You tell my which one, and I'll buy shares in that company. I've got no idea how it works, you just tell me."

I carried on looking over the newspaper, thinking about the months it took to save the money I was going to use to buy some shares. The Lord hadn't spoken to me yet. So I said, again, "Lord, now tell me which one. Any one. I'm not going to listen what people say or what the world says. I'm going to listen to you and you tell me."

Do you want to know what happened next? The Lord said to me, "I want you to sow all of that money." Well, I thought it was Satan speaking to me or something!

"Lord," I said, "I've saved all this money for this reason, to buy shares, and trust you in it."

"I want you to sow it."

I sat for a while, a little upset that I went through all this effort and God wasn't interested in my little plan.

“André,” He said to me, “you cannot afford to buy physical shares if you don't have spiritual shares. I want you to sow all of it.”

What else could I do? I had to do what God said. But can I tell you something interesting? This happened years ago and I'm still receiving dividends from that money that I sowed. That's how God works.

This is my relationship with God and it's how I walk with Him. I'm writing all this because I know that God wants to speak to you. He wants to share things with you. He wants to open up Himself to you. It's not about going to the movies with God. You can try that, but that's how I walk with God, and you can't replicate it. You can't look at what others are doing and think that's the magic formula for a walk with God. You've got to get personal with God yourself. You've got to listen to what He says, and do what you enjoy doing with Him. You've got your way of living. Invite God into that. Whatever you

do, ask Him to be part of that and to speak with you. I teach people how to wait upon God and I find a lot of people sit and ask God to speak with them and they say they hear nothing, and then they say this doesn't work. What was the problem? Well, they didn't actually wait for Him to speak! The world today is all about what is instant. Everything is quickly, quickly, quickly. Right now we want to be able to get on our phone and find the answers to everything, find an app that will connect us with God instantly.

But a relationship with God is something that grows and therefore it needs time to grow. In the beginning I wasn't sure of things and I asked for confirmation on many things, but that time has passed. In the beginning I used to prophesy to people and the only thing that comforted me was the fact that there was a low chance I would ever see them again. But after things started to come into fulfilment - after I saw the prophecies I give actually happen - I began to worry less about that. Today I don't worry at all. I've preached to people that prophesy. I prophesied once to a couple that they would have children, but I didn't know that it was medically impossible for them to have children.

It turned out that they had been trying for ten years! And they had tried everything — all the medical solutions; the eating plans; everything. The only way forward seemed to be adoption. But I had no idea of this and half-way through the prophecy they stopped me to tell me that it's impossible. "We would love to take what you're saying tonight," they said, "but it's impossible. It's been ten years!" But that sort of thing doesn't frighten me anymore. It used to. So I still spoke to them and told them that the Lord says they will have children. It was a word from the Lord - I knew it was. Within nine months afterwards they had a child! See, God can do it. When He speaks things happen. He spoke the world and the universe into existence - surely He can speak anything into existence?

I have found that there are three flows of faith. The first is with the person who prays. The second is with the person being prayed for. And the third is with the group you are praying with. You don't have to have faith for a prophecy to come to fulfilment. People think that when they get a prophecy that they should carry it in some way. But it's the other way around. The prophecy should carry you. It should hold you

up. It will come into fulfilment, don't you worry. God has said it! You must understand that when you get a prophecy, it's only God that is standing right at that place, at that moment, when it is coming into fulfilment, and He is sharing it with you now. It's not something that might happen when you pray enough. It's not the future that God only sees. It's the future He lives in. It's going to come into place. It will happen.

But prophecy can not replace God's voice in your life. Please do not live for the next prophecy. Live on God's words yourself! Why get second hand food when you can go straight to the Source? His capacity is so much bigger than our capacity. God wants to communicate to you and prophecy might stir that up. The Lord spoke to me one day and gave me one promise in my life. He said that wherever I go, after I leave, people will hear His voice clearly. I know that anyone who reads this book will begin to hear God's voice clearly. You will know when He speaks to you. You will just know it. But the second part is you have to respond. You have to move and do what He says. God wants to train us to hear His voice, and He'll start with small and easy steps. But those steps have amazing repercussions!

When I was about sixteen years old there was this boy I knew who was 21. One day I walked past him and the Lord said to me I must give him a hug. And in the moment I quickly grabbed him and gave him a hug. It was all rather awkward, with me being 16 and him being 21!

“André,” he said to me, “You’re like a father to me.”

I was a bit confused by that. “Christo,” I said (that was his name), “I can never be your father. I’m 16 and you’re older than me.”

“André,” he said, “no one has ever given me a hug. That’s why I’m saying you’re like a father to me.”

That changed my life. It was such a small thing but it had such amazing impact. God is constantly speaking to us to do things like this and to act in love. People are sometimes unsure of the way God speaks and they want someone like me to give them the rules. But it’s not complicated. God’s voice builds, comforts, and encourages. The enemy’s voice steals, kills, and destroys. Jesus made this clear in John

10:10 when He said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” It’s easy to know the difference. If I heard a voice that told me to jump off a bridge, I would test it, and I would consider - does this comfort? Does this build? Does this encourage? The answer is obviously, no. And therefore, I know it is not God. So I don’t act on that.

Today I don’t test His voice anymore. I *know* His voice. I have spent so much time with Him and so have come to know His voice, just like a sheep who knows the shepherd’s voice because he has been with them for so long. As Jesus said in John 10:

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact,

they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.” (John 10:1-5.)

The problem with the world today is that people know the voice of the enemy better than they know the voice of God. People know exactly what they should not do. But they don't know what they **should** do. They give more credit to something else than to God. They walk down a street and then something tells them to go right. And I ask them, what did you do? They say no, I went left. Then something horrible happened. Listen to God's voice when He speaks to you. Act on it. Pick it up.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Growing in Your Calling

Some time after my second movie experience - if I recall, about a year - I attended a big conference where several political and spiritual leaders in South Africa were going to discuss the future of our country. It sounded interesting to me, and I thought that it would be great to hear more about our country from those who are involved in the details.

Half-way through the very first day I couldn't take it any more. It was so negative. Eventually, I just got up from my chair, walked to the back of the room, and sat on the last row. I kneeled down and covered my face with my hands, bursting into tears silently.

“God,” I said, “how will the young people of our nation ever find a way to be positive about our country when our leaders are just always so

negative? How can we ever have hope if all we hear about from our leaders is how there is no hope?”

I kneeled there for awhile, feeling sad and hopeless. I wondered: how many people will it take to change our nation? Would it take one hundred? Would it take one thousand? Would it take five thousand? I felt anger welling up inside me - is there really no hope, I thought, for us? Is this it? Must we just accept this to be the fate of our nation?

Suddenly a tall, black American man walked passed. He stopped and noticed me. I wasn't drawing any attention to myself, just silently kneeling at the back, quietly praying in my head and thinking on these things. He put his hand on my shoulder and I looked up.

“God says it can take just one!” he said to me.

I never expected an answer from God. I was just sitting in my own thoughts. Yet He answered me. Isn't that amazing? This message then became something I took to schools, and for years I've been going to schools and saying, “It

only takes one to make a difference. Just one!” I try to encourage the kids that maybe they’re the one. Despite where they come from, where they find themselves, and how insignificant they feel: maybe they are the one. I hope this inspires them to go for something bigger and not just accept the status quo. In fact, let me say to you reading this book, that *maybe you’re the one*.

When God calls us, most of us think that He should have called someone else. We don’t want to take up the responsibility of the call. It’s much easier for God to give it to someone else and have us support them, than for God to actually call us to it. Throughout the Old Testament there are plenty of reluctant leaders who didn’t want the call. Moses was one of them. In Exodus 3, when God reveals himself in the burning bush and calls Moses to go to Pharaoh so that he could bring God’s people out of Egypt, Moses comes up with five excuses why he couldn’t possibly do this. I wonder if you recognise any of these excuses?

EXCUSE NUMBER ONE: WHO AM I? I AM NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

“Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Exodus 3:11)

Moses had been brought up in the house of Pharaoh himself. He had lived in Egypt with all of the privileges of the royal household. Then he killed an Egyptian who was beating a fellow Israelite, and so fled into the wilderness and became a shepherd in Midian.

There’s no doubt that Moses didn’t want to go back to Egypt because he was afraid. He asks “who am I?” when he was one who lived in Pharaoh’s household! He felt he was a nobody. But God had chosen him and wasn’t even interested in bringing up Moses’s past, including his mistakes and sins.

“I will be with you,” said God in response (Exodus 3:12). “And this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

God calls us and promises to be with us in our call. He is always with us. This is His promise! We can do what we are called to do because He is with us!

EXCUSE NUMBER TWO: BUT WHAT WILL I SAY?

Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” (Exodus 3:13.)

If God calls you to speak to people about Him, what will you say? And who would you say sent you? It’s an important question. You’re not actually going to know the answer unless you know God. And you don’t really get to know God unless you spend time with Him.

God answers by revealing Himself. “I am who I am,” He says. And He adds, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:14). God then reminds the Israelites where they come from. Verse 15:

“God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the

God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

Moses thought he needed to have all the answers before he could do something for God. He would have received the best education a man could in those days, being part of the royal household. God, however, says he doesn't need to know all the answers, he just needs to know Him - God. If he knows the true King, it doesn't matter if he doesn't have all the answers.

EXCUSE NUMBER THREE: BUT PEOPLE WON'T BELIEVE ME

Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.'" (Exodus 4:1).

Many of us think our experience of God does not count. As I said earlier, some might think my experiences to be a bit silly, with me ordering a coffee for two at a restaurant. But that doesn't matter. If the Lord sends you, He sends you - with His authority. We cannot worry about

those who will not believe, but be confident in knowing many will believe - and any embarrassment we might receive is worth seeing those souls coming to know Jesus!

God brought His authority into this and promised to equip Moses with what he needs, and to follow his speech with signs and wonders. He gives Moses two signs - a staff that turns to a serpent (4:3-5), and Moses' hand that turns leprous and then is healed (vs 6 - 7). If they do not believe these two signs or listen to Moses, God gives Moses the ability to make a third. "You shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground." (vs 9.) See, He promises to back up your calling - to back you up in what He has called you and told you to do.

EXCUSE NUMBER FOUR: I'M NOT ELOQUENT

"But Moses said to the Lord, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." (Exodus 4:10.)

God does not ask you if you are able, but if you are willing! Moses struggled with the fact that he didn't speak very well. But God is not interested in how eloquent we are, how well we speak, what our abilities are. He is the one with all authority.

“The Lord said to him, ‘Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.’” (vs 11,12).

EXCUSE NUMBER FIVE: I JUST DON'T WANT TO

“But [Moses] said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.” (Exodus 4:13)

This was probably the real reason why Moses was making excuses! He simply didn't want to go! But God gives him his brother, Aaron, to help him.

“Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be

glad in his heart. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs.” (Exodus 4:14b – 17.)

When God has finally dealt with Moses’ five excuses, Moses shows tremendous courage and obedience, character and leadership. Best of all, he holds faithfully to his calling right to the end. There are too many spiritual babies in the church who simply will never grow up until they take the responsibility of their calling and carry it through to maturity.

The biggest question people ask all over the world – whether they verbalise it or think it in their hearts; or whether they even know how to put it to words – is why are they here on this earth? And what are they supposed to do with their life while they are here? At some stage of all of our lives we want to know how valuable we are. We want to know if we are worth something, and if we have value to the world. If you can answer this question you find

you gain tremendous influence. At every funeral or a sudden death of a loved one, we all are confronted with this question. We all wonder: what am I worth? What will I leave behind? Will people remember me? Or will they just move on and never spare a thought towards me?

What legacy are you leaving behind? Not only for your family, but for others? The question is: have you expanded the Kingdom of God, which is eternal, or worked to expand your own kingdom, which will be here today but tomorrow thrown into the fire? Your kingdom is temporary and will fade like the grass of the field. But God's Kingdom is forever. And so you've got to wonder if your name will be in the books of our history, or written in the Lamb's book of life. The latter counts for far, far more, and will last forever. So build the Kingdom that will last forever.

That's why it's so important to find your purpose — to know what it is God wants you to do in building and advancing His Kingdom. He has given you gifts and put desires in your heart. You have to go to God with this question: what was I made for? A product of a maker cannot

go to another product from that maker and ask that product what it was made for. No, it has to go to its maker. Many people fail because they are so concerned about what others think; and they follow someone else's idea on what they should be and what they should accomplish; and they keep comparing themselves with others rather than finding out who they were made to be. This is like a son who tries to follow in the footsteps of his father but never set the disciplines and routines in place that his father did, and so never had his father's character. That son feels like a total failure because he cannot become like his father. You have to, rather, find out from God what to do. You have to ask the Maker of your life what the plan for your life really is.

God often creates a plan before He creates the person. It's impossible for our mind to conceive, but He knows exactly why you are here. "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails." (Proverbs 19:21.)

Don't compare yourself with others. Don't look at their abilities and talents and think that you are not worth anything because you are not as

good as them. It's not a matter of who is better than someone else, it's a matter of discovering the uniqueness of who God made you to be. Compare yourself with the ability God put inside you. Are you using your full potential? We are all equal, but different in function. Nobody on this earth has the same purpose as another. God has created us all unique, and all differently. Only He knows your purpose and why you were created. It doesn't matter if your parents didn't plan to have you: none of us are a mistake. God has had a plan for you all along, and He wants to see you walk in it.

For me, I had to look beyond my parents and their plans for me - as good as they may have been — and find out God's plan for myself. My parents cannot control my future or determine my fate. As a parent to my own children, I cannot decide for them what they must do or where they must go. We can do the best for our kids and set them up as much as possible, but it is God's plans that matter most of all, and we need to let God fulfil His plans for them. Where my parents failed, I will succeed, and where they achieved, I will admire them for it and build on it. The same goes for my children. So

realise you have a maker and this Maker knows your name. He knows every hair on your head!

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Luke 12:6,7.)

Your purpose is bigger than the process that got you here on this earth. What is more important: the nine months it took for you to come into this world, or what you will do with the rest of your life on earth?

The fact is that you are here, so what now? We could murmur and complain for all the years of our life, saying that our parents did not plan us or may have neglected us or even abused us. But there is a bigger plan than all of this. There is a bigger purpose for your life than your hardship and struggle. There is a bigger plan than even your parents could have foreseen, even if they were good parents and did everything they could for you. There is a bigger purpose for your life that goes way beyond other people's opinions or ideas.

Jesus knew this about Himself, as well. He was more focused on obeying His heavenly Father than pleasing His earthly mother. His purpose pushed him forward every step of the way.

Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! (Mark 3:31-34 NIV.)

Another human being cannot show you your purpose. It is up to God to do so. That's why I would never try and tell you what to do or who to be. This book is not designed to do that, but to inspire you to walk with God. Get to know Him. Listen to Him. Spend time with Him. And He will tell you. And then He will give you the desires of your heart. For Psalm 37:4 says that when you delight yourself in the Lord, that's when He gives you the desires of your heart. For years I searched for answers, but then I found my Maker.

Recently, the Lord said to me that I am exactly where He wanted me to be and doing exactly what He planned I would do for this season of my life. It was such a relief hearing that from Him. It's a massive comfort to know you are in God's purposes for yourself. I tried for so long to be what others told me to be, but I realised it often had more to do with them than me: it was their dream, their ambition, and what they wanted to do and see.

A father looks at his new born baby and dreams for a moment. He whispers silently: "I want the best for you. I want you to be strong and courageous. I want you to be wealthy and blessed. I want you to accomplish everything you start and overcome every obstacle in your way." What that father is saying is they want that child to be what they could not. They want them to be the husband to their wife they failed to be. They want that child to succeed in business because they have failed. This sounds harsh, but the fact is we really must allow God's purpose to form in others without us influencing them on what we think is best for them. Instead we should pray for them - pray that God's purpose will prevail, and that they will live each day

in His plan and purpose for their life. And we should expect the same from others.

It's only then, you will find, that you have peace. It's only in His purpose for you that peace comes. Otherwise you will find your heart is constantly troubled. You never find contentment outside of God's plan and purposes for you. You will always be restless.

The Father holds you in His arms and whispers: "I want you to be all that you are. I want you to accomplish everything you were created for." Some day, the seed of your true potential will bloom. Everything you were created for is already inside you. A seed cannot be removed from the ground to grow. Nothing can take that seed out of you. It is placed firmly in there by God Himself. God's plan for you, whether you like it or not, is to succeed at what He has purposed for you to do. Having a desire to be greater is not always a sign of pride, but can be inspired by the Holy Spirit. It comes down to what you consider as 'greater'. For, after all, Jesus said:

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be

first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:26-28.)

Jesus isn't saying we must become worms and let others tramp all over us, but He is saying that the purpose He has for us is for service to others. We love others through the gifts and purpose God has made for us. We love others through becoming who we are, who we were made to be. That's why there is nothing selfish about discovering who you are, who God made you to be, and what His plans for you are. Doing so is a loving act - it is doing exactly what God says you should. The Holy Spirit is aware of our full potential. He was there when we were created, after all, and He knows what you are capable of. But from the moment you are born into this world, the picture of your full potential is distorted.

If we look at a tree, from its being a seed until the day it is a full-grown tree, it is perfect. It's been perfect all along, even when you did not see it - even when it was hidden in that seed. You don't need to see the tree in the seed for

it to be perfect. It is perfect. It takes faith to see what's in that seed, to know its potential. Likewise, it takes faith to see what God sees in you. It takes faith to see your potential hidden safely inside you. Whether you believe it or not, it's there - it was created inside you and has been hidden safely inside of you since you were conceived. You have been destined to do great things, so accept it and continue the race. We all make mistakes but it's not the destination that shapes us. It's the journey that matters.

I want to be living God's dream for me, not someone else's dream. To be like someone else is a constant burden, but to be what I am created to be and who I am is divine freedom. Many carry the burden of trying to live the dream of another and therefore they never truly live. They never get to live in their own identity. One way in which we see this is in how we approach finances. We strive to have more money rather than to give more money, because in this world people get judged for what they have. How many people can really afford the cars they drive or the house they are staying in? We are told, from when we're small, to attach our value to what we have. But it is never enough. We will never

rise up to the world's expectations - there will always be a challenge to jump higher, go faster, and be bigger. It simply never ends.

People, possessions, and careers cannot determine your value and therefore have very little to say about your purpose in life. Your Maker determines your value. The day that you get into a car or walk in an amazing house and determine its value rather than determine your value because of it, is the day you've become aware of the seed the Maker placed inside of you.

CHAPTER NINE

Remain in Him

When I go to minister at a church, I don't ever bring a "new word". People are often itching to hear something new and are looking for knowledge. Jesus didn't come to give us knowledge but to open up a relationship with Him. When the Bible speaks of knowledge, it is in the context of knowing God personally - not in the context of knowing facts or some or other teaching. In fact, it tells us not to be taken captive through philosophy.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. (Colossians 2:6-8.)

My job is to encourage people to connect with Jesus themselves, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Colossians 2:3.) Once we come to know Jesus we don’t get philosophy and facts, we get wisdom and understanding - something deeper and better than any human idea. Then, when people have connected to God themselves, my job is to encourage them to respond to the things that God has already been saying to them.

I promise you that God has been speaking to you, and this book is simply a tool to help open you up to hearing Him. In this book I haven’t presented much teaching, and I’ve provided no special techniques or spiritual disciplines. Because all of these things can distract us and move us into religion. Religion will kill the voice of God in your life. Religion will kill everything that God wants to do in and through you.

Too many people are caught up in religion and they don’t even realise it. I was in a church that taught grace and freedom. There was not a word of law and legalism. Yet I still got stuck in religion. Even our most charismatic churches can be caught up in religion, because we lose sight

of a simple relationship with God and make it about our techniques and ideas.

I firmly believe that we are all called for a deeper relationship with God. This is our inheritance, our great reward. This book has highlighted how the Lord has developed His voice in my life. My biggest desire is still to be with Jesus. To always be with Jesus. And my prayer is that it would be the same for you. Be with Jesus today. Be with Him always. He will never leave you.

JOHN 15:

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s

glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other. (John 15:4-17.)

So the final question I leave with you is this: do you know Jesus?

People go through many challenges and hardships and often even give honour to their bad

decisions which got them into trouble and perhaps even got them into jail. Sometimes when we give our testimony we focus too much on the bad things and don't focus on how it is that God has completely saved us. That's why I didn't bother going into all the details of what I did that ended my school career and had me sitting on my bed contemplating suicide. None of that matters. What matters is that Jesus spoke to me and completely changed where my life was going - and completely changed my heart.

We like to speak about people who have completely changed their lives after meeting Jesus, but we don't speak about those people who push in and trust God no matter what. These are the real heroes. In Matthew 15 we see a woman who begs Jesus for a breakthrough in her life and we realise she is not asking for herself but for someone else. The disciples almost crushed her with their feet but she endured through and believed Jesus was going to answer her.

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, 'Lord, Son

of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.'

Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, 'Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.' (Matthew 15:22-23 NIV)

She continued to push in for her child, ignoring the fact that she was being ignored. She did not try to fix the problem on her own but knew that Jesus was the answer and she was determined to get everything for her breakthrough. In an earlier chapter I spoke about those who ask, those who seek, and those who knock. This woman was one who knocks - who knew the door to knock on and was not going to back down.

[Jesus] answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.'

The woman came and knelt before him. 'Lord, help me!' she said.

He replied, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.'

'Yes it is, Lord,' she said. 'Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.'

Then Jesus said to her, 'Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' And her daughter was healed at that moment. (Matthew 15:24-28.)

Jesus honoured her faith and determination to not care about the traditions of men and their prejudice, and He said her request was granted. His word went out and by His authority her daughter was healed at that moment.

Our good decisions - our pushing in; our trusting Jesus - has an effect on those around us. Adam and Eve's fall brought a curse on us, but Jesus' obedience removed that curse.

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:17-19)

Jesus went through so much hardship and trouble, but He still chose to give His life for us - giving up His Spirit in those last moments on the cross. He surrendered to God's will, saying in the garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but yours Lord." That has had a profound effect for all of us! His purpose is not only recognised in history today but in eternity. His life's purpose was bigger than His earthly parents'. He knew that His decisions also have eternal consequences, and He made sure it would be good consequences!

And so do yours. If you come to know Jesus today, that decision will have consequences for not only you, but for those around you - and for eternity. And those consequences will be **good**. As in the beginning of this book, I shared about how reaped all the bad decisions I had sown, but in Jesus that was all changed. Now I reap only goodness, because I made one good decision: to listen to God and start a relationship with Him.

Jesus' focus was the Kingdom of God and not His own kingdom. Even though He shares in the Kingdom of God today, He knew the Father and therefore knew His purpose. You can give your heart to the Lord hundreds of times but you can give your life only once. When you go through hard times or experience some sort of challenge you can take your heart back. But when you give your life it is irreversible. How can you take your life back when you have given it away?

If you have not accepted Jesus as your saviour and want to surrender your life, would you pray with me right now and give your life to Him. Say this prayer:

*“Lord Jesus I need you now
more than anything else.*

*“I believe you died on the cross and
were raised from the dead.*

*“I believe with my heart and confess with
my mouth that Jesus is my Lord and
saviour. I surrender my life to you.*

“In the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

“Amen.”

About André

**“MY MISSION IS SIMPLE: TO FOLLOW GOD’S VOICE,
AND BE OBEDIENT TO HIS SPIRIT.”**

– ANDRÉ BRONKHORST.

André Bronkhorst is an internationally renowned prophetic minister, travelling extensively all over the world as a New Testament prophet. He actively promotes and strengthens the prophetic gifts and ministry in others by teaching, demonstrating, and stirring up the prophetic in churches and conferences.

André is an ordained and recognised minister with Prophetic Life Ministries. He ministers and prophesies with great accuracy and clarity and has worked in the ministry alongside his family since he was a teenager. He currently lives in George, South Africa with his beautiful wife, Zandia and their two sons.

“André Bronkhorst is a young upcoming prophet that, I believe, will make a big impact... He is very accurate prophetically and has unusual and powerful teaching and preaching ministry.”

- ED TRAUT, PROPHETIC LIFE MINISTRIES.

For more information about André, or to contact André, visit propheticlife.co.za

