

TESTIMONIES
of a GOOD
GOD

BYRON VAN DER MERWE

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Testimonies of a Good God

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my beautiful wife Tammie, our daughter Hannah, our son Joshua, my parents, and my brother Grant and sister-in-law Kerry. Thank you all for always standing with me and for all the support. I love all of you deeply. I would also like to thank Tammie's family for loving me and for making me a part of their family.

I also dedicate this book to Thomas Crickett. My friend, you were an inspiration and a great man of God. You may not be here on Earth anymore but we will meet again in eternity. I want this book to be a testimony of God's goodness to your family, even if it's just in a small way. So 25% of the after tax profits of this book will go to helping support your family. Love you Thomas.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Lisa Oliver for all of her hard work and support. Lisa, thank you for your encouragement.

Thank you to Patrick McCarthy for all the help, friendship and advice with the website and making it happen. Your contribution has been invaluable.

Thank you to Keath, Michelle and the team at Kingsgate Church for being who you are and doing what God has called you to do. As a team and a church, you all are truly an inspiration and a model of what the Kingdom of God should look like in everyday life.

Thank you to Brian Kettles for always encouraging me and for believing that God has great things in store.

Thanks to Rob and Natalie Pick for all of your hard work and help with this book.

Thank you to Sue Griggs for your input and encouragement on this project. I'm so very grateful.

Thank you Christy Lawrence for all the work you put in. You and Justin are truly a blessing to us.

Thank you Aksinia Tweeddale for your help, hard work and encouragement. I really appreciate you and Pasquale.

Thanks to everyone else who has already read this book and encouraged me to take a step of faith and publish it.

Endorsements

I have known Byron and Tammie for a few years now. I have had the pleasure of praying with them and have seen the authority and power of their prayers. Having just read this book I can see why they pray and speak the way they do. Byron is able to encourage and strengthen those who are in trouble or facing difficulties. You don't become an overcomer without going through some battles, so as you read about Tammie and Byron's journey you will be energised for your own breakthroughs and victories. Our Heavenly Father is indeed a Good God!

John Alcock

*Co-founder of Mobilise Now ministries,
United Kingdom*

I have known Byron & Tammie for about 8 years now. The two things that stand out above all else about them are they are humble people and they have incredible faith, especially in the area of finance.

They live by a simple paradigm that if it

says it in God's word then it must be true and I can base my life on it.

I know that at numerous times over these years, when faced with major financial decisions, I seek out their advice because I know it will be both faith filled and real.

I've also watched how Father has refined them over time and how they possess the humility to let him change them and make them more like Jesus.

You can trust the man writing these stories because they aren't pet theories or vain imaginations, they are the realities he and Tammie have faced together with Jesus.

Paul Harper

Pastor and Elder Kingsgate Church

Kingston upon Thames, United Kingdom

Congratulations Byron & Tammie, Your book is so full of wonderful testimonies of God's goodness upon your lives. It is a must read for every Christian whether they are or not facing giants, trials or tribulations. This book is jam packed with so many encouraging testimonies, all praise and glory to God – our good God who loves giving His children good gifts. Amen!!

May your sell thousands of copies of your book.

Blessings with our love.

Arnold & Gisela Nel
Lead pastors Lusaka Family Church,
Zambia

We have been friends with Byron and Tammie for many years now and have witnessed first-hand how they have stepped out in faith and in turn seen Gods faithfulness to them through their obedience to His call.

They are genuinely passionate about Jesus and have inspired us in so many ways to live a more obedient and generous life.

“Testimonies of a good God” will inspire you and fill you with Faith and Courage to step out and be obedient to Gods call on your life.
– An excellent read!

Tim and Paula Petersen
Lead pastors CityHill Church Amanzimtoti,
South Africa

Introduction

This book is the result of a 16-year pursuit of God. It is the story of my life so far. My walk with Jesus and how He has come through for me in seemingly impossible situations. Having lost my sister, experiencing heartbreak after a failed relationship, nearly losing my brother and facing many other trials, I pray that you will find this story encouraging and faith building.

My prayer is that through the testimonies you read, you would not see me but see God, and see God for who He really is. He is a good God. He loves you, He will deliver you, He will cover you and He will protect you.

My desire is that through this book you will truly understand that with God nothing is impossible (see Matthew 19:26). I've seen first-hand that this is true, even when life hasn't always gone the way I wanted. Looking back over my life, the hand of God is so prevalent. He has remained so very close to me even when I wasn't aware of it.

Even during times when I was bitterly disappointed and life didn't seem fair - HE brought me through, and I have come out stronger and more convinced that God loves me unconditionally and that He is a good God.

I would encourage you to take this book as a testimony of what Jesus has done for me and begin to prophesy the same victory over your life (see Revelation 19:10b). If God did it for me, He can do it for you. Not that God is a formula. The way He has worked in my life may not be the way He will bring about victory in yours. Even the teaching chapters (Chapters 9 & 10) at the back of the book are tools, not rules. These are things God has shown me to keep me walking in His freedom. Ask Him to show you what will work for you.

I wish there was a simple answer to overcoming all of life's struggles. I haven't found there to be a quick "microwave answer" so to speak, but I do know the One who knows all the answers and has the solution to all of life's difficulties. His name is Jesus and the more I've gotten to know Him, the more grace and wisdom I've received to walk through life victoriously in every situation.

The Bible is not only the word of God but IS God (see John 1:1-5) and the Holy Spirit makes it come alive. Just learning or memorising the Bible without the Holy Spirit, in my experience, has been very unfruitful. However, I can honestly say that the greatest victories my wife Tammie and I have seen, have been in those moments where the Holy Spirit has highlighted scripture to us. We have meditated on those scriptures, taken communion over them and stood in agreement that God would honour His word. We took those words as our own and stood on the word of God (the Bible) until we saw breakthrough.

Some breakthroughs were instant but some have taken a few years to see complete healing or victory. Even now, as I release this book I am facing the biggest health challenge I have ever faced, but God is the same yesterday today and forever (see Hebrews 13:8). What God has done for us in the past, He can still do for us in the future. I have no reason to believe that the same God who brought me through into victory then will not continue to bring me through into victory now.

Truthfully, there have been times when believing God and trusting His word were hard. Especially when the situation seemed

so opposite to what we know the Bible says. But the more I walk with the Lord, the more intimately I know Him. And the more I know Him and His word, the easier it becomes to walk in victory every day.

Tammie and I are just normal, everyday people. We don't speak Greek or Hebrew. We are two Christians who are relentless pursuers of His word and His presence. In a way I suppose we just have simple faith - what we read in scripture we have chosen to believe. The more we have believed the word of God, the more we have been able to navigate through life's challenges.

I pray that through this book God will give you a greater desire and passion for His word and that He will show you that He is still the God of miracles.

He wants to call you into a deeper and more intimate relationship with Him. The closer you get to Him, the more clearly you will hear Him. In Him is the solution to every problem you will ever face. Like I said, God is not a formula; He wants a relationship with you. His victory is not hidden from you, it's hidden for you. God already has a blessed plan for you.

I encourage you to stop limiting God whilst asking Him to bless your plans. Find out what His plan for you already is and jump into it because it's already blessed.

We are victorious and Jesus paid the full price for freedom. Now let's take hold of it by faith and move into more of the freedom that Jesus has already given us (see Galatians 5:1).

Hearing God

In this book I speak quite a lot about hearing God. I'm not talking about hearing an audible voice or anything like that, although that may happen for some people. I'm talking about the everyday relationship with God that is available to every Christian that has made Jesus their Lord.

The Bible is filled with accounts of people hearing and speaking to God. God spoke with Adam and Eve. He spoke to Moses face to face like a friend. God spoke to Joshua, to Samuel, to Nathan, to Solomon, to Elijah, to Saul who became Paul, to Ananias, to Stephen, to Simeon and many more, Old Testament and New Testament. (See notes below for scripture references).

In the New Testament, Jesus promises all of us the Holy Spirit, who will show us all things and remind us of everything Jesus has said to us (see John 14:26). If God speaks, and the Holy Spirit is God living in us and having a relationship with us, (see Romans 8:11), then it makes perfect sense that we can hear from Him and talk with

Him. God is alive. People that are alive, speak. Dead people don't speak. To have the Holy Spirit in us yet never having him speak to us is strange to me and is not congruent with God's word. If we believe He is alive then we must believe that He speaks.

Jesus also tells us in John 10:27 that His sheep know His voice and will follow Him. Psalm 23:1 describes the Lord as being our Shepherd - to lead, guide and protect us.

As the children of God, we are His sheep and He is our Shepherd. In the same way that sheep know and trust their shepherd when he calls them, we should be able to recognise God's voice when He speaks and then we should follow Him.

Notes: Genesis 2:15-20, Exodus 33:11, Joshua 1:1-3, 1 Samuel 3:4, 2 Samuel 7:4, 1 Kings 3:5, 1 Kings 17:8, Acts 9:4, Acts 9:10, Acts 6:10, Luke 2:26

1

Destruction or a Defining Moment?

I was born in South Africa to amazing parents. I was the middle child, having an older brother and a younger sister.

Growing up we went to church, but for me at least there was no relationship with God. Most Sundays I would pretend to sleep in as long as possible so that I did not have to go to Sunday school. One of the few memories I have of church back then is that the pastor spoke about hearing God talk to him. At the time, I remember thinking, “God doesn't still talk to people.”

Our lives as young children were fairly normal I suppose. We were a middle-class family with only my Dad working, and at times, there was “more month than money.” Our home environment was good, nonetheless, and both my parents loved us very much. Life however, was about to change.

When I was twelve my sister Lynda began to suffer from very frequent migraines and headaches. She was eight years old at the time and after a few doctor appointments, as well as couple of weeks of constant headaches, they decided to investigate further.

About a week later, my parents said we were going away for the weekend to the beach. That Saturday morning, my mother and sister stayed at the accommodation, and my Dad, brother and I went down to the beach.

My Dad sat us down and said he needed to tell us something. He said the doctors had done various tests and discovered that my sister had a brain tumour. It was really big, and the doctors needed to operate as soon as possible. They had scheduled her for an operation the next week. The operation would take six or seven hours and she had roughly a 30% chance of survival.

How are you supposed to respond to news like that? At the time, all I could think about was how selfish I had been with my sister, how I always made her sit in the middle seat of the car and that now she may be dying. It's funny what goes through your mind when you are in shock. My brother and I both said we understood, but who at any age can really comprehend that kind of news?

The next week we were introduced to her doctor, and he said that he would do his best.

My sister was very calm. She had believed in Jesus since she was a little child; she would never let my Mom or Dad put her to sleep unless they first prayed with her and asked Jesus to look after her.

As I recall, she went in for the operation on a Saturday. To be honest, I don't remember a lot of the day, I only remember wondering if she would die and then my parents telling us that she had pulled through. The doctors had removed as much of the tumour as possible but were concerned that if they removed all of it she would be left with permanent brain damage.

She spent a long time in the hospital and when she was released, she and my Mom

moved into accommodations at the hospital in Durban, where she was receiving radiation. My Dad, brother and I stayed in Pietermaritzburg, about 60 miles from Durban, where he worked and where we went to school. But we spent the weekends with my Mom and sister in the flat in Durban.

The radiotherapy had many side effects which left my sister feeling extremely unwell. It also affected her walking and due to the cortisone treatments it caused her to retain a lot of water and she got really big. This period of time was very difficult for Lynda and my parents. Unfortunately, people can be very insensitive. Lynda was often stared at because she was large and had lost her hair due to treatment.

Despite this the radiation seemed to work, and for the next year or so things seemed to be fairly smooth. However, my sister then started experiencing a lot of complications and ended up in the hospital for many weeks. During this time she had another operation to insert shunts that would release the pressure on her brain.

After she was released, she went back home and life carried on as normal for a few months, or as normal as it could be in that situation.

Looking back now, it must have taken an immense toll on my parents, but my brother and I never really saw it, as they both always put on a brave face for us.

Around two years after finding out she had cancer, Lynda began sleeping more and more. Then one day she began to have seizures. An ambulance was called and she was rushed to hospital. At the time her doctor was away on holiday, and the only other neurosurgeon in Pietermaritzburg was covering his patients. The new doctor did some tests and spoke to my parents and asked them what her doctor had told them. They said her doctor told them, considering what she had been through, she was doing okay.

The new doctor looked at my parents and said he was very sorry, but the brain tumour had grown substantially. There was nothing he could do. She was dying and would not leave the hospital alive. He didn't know how long she had, but he was certain she would die.

Nothing can prepare you for that. I suppose you just go numb. You never really think about death, or at least I didn't at the time. It can just sneak up on you.

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We spent the next two days by her side 24-7 and some of our family members from around the country started to come to say goodbye. Through all of this, I don't remember my sister Lynda ever being angry, cursing God or losing faith in Him. If anything, I remember her still praying and asking Jesus to look after and protect her, as well as us.

On the second day, my brother and I had just returned home to get some rest. My Dad arrived shortly afterwards crying. He told us my sister had just passed away in my mother's arms.

We all hugged in disbelief. He then took us to the hospital so we could see Lynda and say goodbye. We lived literally across the road from the hospital, and 10 minutes later we were in her room.

I remember walking into the room and seeing my Mom still holding her. Lynda's body was there, but she had left. My Mom put her down, and we all sat in the room and cried. I remember a nurse came in to prepare the body to take to the mortuary. My Mom was furious and told her we hadn't even said goodbye yet.

The next few days were a bit of a blur, and about a week later we had the funeral. At that

time, I didn't believe in Jesus or that a good God could ever let something like this happen. We had even taken Lynda to a healing meeting at a church, and they had anointed her with oil, prayed for her, and she still died. I was angry towards God.

At Lynda's funeral there were so many people that there wasn't enough room in the church. The only thing I remember clearly of that day was that we sang the hymn "The Lord is my Shepherd." To this day when I hear this song, I think of Lynda.

The next few months and years were very difficult on our whole family, especially on my parents. I think we were all disillusioned with life and didn't really know what to do or where to turn. My parents decided they could not live in Pietermaritzburg anymore as it brought back too many memories of Lynda. They decided we would move to Hillcrest, just outside Durban.

Losing their daughter was very difficult for my parents and only now being a parent myself can I begin to imagine what it must have been like for them. In the next few years that followed, we all just moved on, or tried to.

I really enjoyed school, excelled in swimming and spent most of my spare time in swimming training. I remember having a few Christian friends at school, but to be honest they really irritated me because I did not believe in this God they were telling me about. After all, why did He kill my sister and destroy my family?

My first year out of school, I worked for a transport company based in Durban. My role was to drive down to the port and make sure the company's trucks had the right documentation and were loaded correctly so they could be released from the port.

A few months into the job, I was driving in the car, and my vision disappeared. I couldn't see. I felt extremely dizzy and my vision began to blur in and out. I managed to pull over on the side of the road. By this time, I was getting really scared, and I thought perhaps I had been drugged. I had one of those original mobile phones that had a speed dial on it. I called the office and told them what was happening. They weren't sure what to do, but they called my brother and got him to come and pick me up.

My brother came and took me straight to the doctor. He examined me and said I needed to go to the hospital for observation. At the

hospital they did some tests. At this stage I could now see again, but was still very dizzy.

The tests came back and showed nothing wrong. The doctors said I needed to go for a CAT (CT) scan to see what was going on in my brain. Fear gripped me. I was nineteen years old, and I wasn't ready to die. Did I also have a brain tumour like my sister?

They took me up to have the CAT scan and when I got there, one of the Christian girls I went to school with was working there, and she said she would pray that God would protect me.

The scan came back clear. I had never been so relieved in all my life! I was released from hospital a day or two later but still with constant dizziness.

The doctor said that there obviously was something wrong, but I would have to wait it out. That didn't help my nerves, because I thought at that moment I was going to die of some unknown disease. A few days later I went back to my General Practitioner (GP), and he said he would check my ears again. The hospital staff had done this a few times already and said my ears were fine. The GP looked in my ears and said he would like to

flush my ears out as they looked dirty. While he was flushing my right ear, all of a sudden I heard a pop and something dropped out of my ear. Instantly the dizziness stopped, and I felt normal again. The doctor then discovered that the thing that had popped out was a piece of a silicone earplug I had used for swimming training. It had obviously broken off and lodged itself onto my ear drum.

That evening I received a call from a friend's mother, who always told me about Jesus. She said to me, "Byron, how's your ear doing?"

"What do you mean?" I asked. I had not told anyone about what had happened at the doctor's office. She said, "I have been praying and God told me that there was something stuck in your ear and when it comes out you will be fine." Wow, she really got my attention! How could she know this? Had God really spoken to her?

I began to get interested in this Jesus and decided to put my feelings about my sister aside for a while and go and see if there was anything to this "God thing." I called a Christian friend, Dom, and asked if I could go to church with him. I still remember asking what I should wear. He said, "Byron, our church is very relaxed. You can just wear

underwear if you like." I was pretty nervous to say the least, and wondered if he was actually joking about the underwear.

When we arrived at church, it was weird and not what I thought it would be at all. Everyone seemed like they were really happy. "This is obviously one of those happy-clappy churches," I thought. "That's not for me."

But there was a strange peace there, and I was uncomfortably comfortable. I went back a few times and finally surrendered my life to Jesus after an altar call.

A new peace and joy began to flood my life. God had begun to reveal Himself to me, and I had an encounter with the Living God. God was no longer this guy who was mad at us and who sat in Heaven; He was this guy who was with me, right where I was, broken and all. God slowly began to restore me and more and more, I began walking in wholeness.

I have asked God many times about what happened with Lynda. I believe He has spoken to me and given me peace that it wasn't His perfect plan, but there are some things in life we are just not going to understand. I have all eternity with Lynda and plenty of time to chat with her and God about what happened. My

role here on earth is to move on and allow God to remove all the hurt and live victoriously as a victor and not a victim.

No one in life has it easy and it's easy to think that we are the only person to go through hardships and that no one else understands. The truth is everyone has issues and troubles. We need to see the light at the end of the tunnel and see that some things will be left for eternity.

I encourage you if you have been through a loss, to look to Jesus and decide to let Him be Lord. Instead of spending your whole life asking why, make a decision to walk forward in victory and leave some chatting to Jesus for eternity. You can move forward whole and complete in Him.

I can honestly say that God has removed the hurt and sorrow in me from my sister passing away. I will never forget her, nor will I forget what happened, but I will not allow it to define the rest of my life. God is good all the time, even when I don't understand. I suppose for me, I've realised that everyone dies, and it's eternity that is important. Philippians 4:7 NIV says "The peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and

minds in Christ Jesus." There is peace available in the midst of not understanding.

It won't be all that long and I will be reunited with Lynda again. So I look forward to that day, but until then, I want to live every day full of hope, full of joy, knowing the future is bright because Jesus has my future. He has my life, it's in His hands, and He knew me before I was formed in my mother's womb (see Psalm 139:13). He knows how to restore me.

It's so interesting that we sang the hymn "The Lord is my Shepherd" at Lynda's funeral as it's from Psalm 23 (NIV), which reads:

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 valley of the shadow of death,
 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;

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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.

I have walked through the valley of the shadow of death. God has restored my soul and He has given me a place of peace. I am seated at His table, and my life is full. I am a blessed man! I have a wonderful family - all of whom now believe in God, a beautiful wife, a beautiful little daughter and a new born son. God is so good; He has restored my life. If He has done it for me, He can do it for you.

I encourage you to let Jesus in to your whole life, even into those places you don't want Him, those places in your life that have caused you to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Stop camping in the valley. Come out instead, and sit at the table God has prepared for you. It's a good table, a feast set up just for you in the presence of your enemies. Don't allow hurt and fear to hold you back anymore. Jesus wants to give you rest and peace and joy that overflows. You can dwell in His house for evermore.

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2

The Tammie Factor

Like any guy, I have always found women interesting. While I was at school and for the first few years out of school, I dated lots and lots of girls. I would never stay with any of them for a long length of time. I was more interested in the pursuit than settling down. As soon as a girl was interested in a long-term commitment, I would lose interest and end the relationship

Without knowing it, I had a real problem with commitment. At the time, I just thought that was normal. But later on, God revealed to me that I had an issue with a woman loving me,

as I had a deep seated fear that she would abandon me, leave me or die, like my sister had. Once I became aware of this, I asked God to remove the lie. Within a short space of time, I felt healed and was ready to settle down.

A few months later I met a girl and within a few weeks, fell head over heels in love with her. She was perfect, she was beautiful, she loved Jesus, and we really got on well. I was convinced that this would be my wife and felt God confirm this for me.

A month or two into the relationship, I went on a mission trip to Mozambique. The trip had been organized by various churches, and there were many different churches represented on the trip. One day towards the end of the trip, one of the men from another church said he had a word from the Lord for me. He said, "The woman you are with now is not your wife." I thanked him for his word and walked away. I felt sure he had heard wrong; there was no possible way. Hadn't God already spoken to me?

When we returned from Mozambique, the girl ended the relationship with me. I was absolutely devastated, and I could not believe what had happened. I was angry with God and felt that He had absolutely let me down. How

could this be? I thought she was to be my wife. In my mind, anyway.

Surely God was not a loving father. What kind of a father removes the hurt from my sister dying only to put me into the position of someone I loved leaving me?

I was heartbroken. Soon afterwards I heard a message at church of laying down your life for Jesus and trusting Him, that He had the perfect spouse for you. The preacher said we can trust God; He knows better than us, and He is in control and knows what He is doing. I listened to that sermon over and over for weeks as I was a broken man.

Finally after a few weeks I decided to go to England for a month or so to take my mind off things. All that I kept thinking was that God didn't love me, He was not good and He didn't care about me.

While in England I went to visit a good friend, who had been instrumental in my salvation and getting to know Jesus. He was a great person and it was the first time that I had met his wife.

The next Sunday morning when I woke up, I had said to the Lord that I was walking away

from my faith that day, as I simply couldn't believe a good Father would do this to a son He was supposed to love. I had been radically saved and never for a moment thought of not serving the Lord. This morning, however, I was serious. Enough was enough, I was hurt, and God didn't seem to care.

I hadn't told my friends what was going on in me. Once we had eaten breakfast, they said I needed to come to church with them. I agreed, but in my heart had said, "Lord this is the last church service I'm ever going to."

As we arrived at the church, I started crying. We hadn't even sat down, and I was in tears. From the time I got there until the time I left, I cried. I have absolutely no idea what the service was about, what we sang or what was preached but God had met with me.

During the meeting I felt God say, "You have two choices today and they both involve death. The one option is to walk away and you will die. You have seen too much and the devil will kill you. The other option is to die to yourself and surrender to Me and trust Me."

I didn't want to go back to my old life, but surrendering everything to Jesus just seemed so overwhelming. How could I know He was

good? He was asking me to trust Him with no strings attached, even if it meant that I would never marry. I would have to trust Him. So I surrendered. I knew that was the only option.

After I returned home from England, I was on an entrepreneurial TV show. Following that, I felt my ministry was to be on TV. So I decided to move up to Johannesburg and complete a television presenting course and pursue my TV career. It turns out moving had nothing to do with TV, but it had everything to do with my future.

A few weeks before I appeared on the TV program, I was at the evening service of my church in Durban. There was a girl who was sitting on her own and seemed to not know anyone. I asked a friend to ask her to come and sit with us, as she looked lonely. The girl's name was Tammie.

After the meeting, a group of people had agreed to meet at the local restaurant for a dessert and drink. I invited Tammie along. She said she would come and she followed me in her car to the restaurant. She lived in Johannesburg, around 300 miles from Durban. She was down for the weekend visiting her sick grandmother.

Once we got to the restaurant we sat down and waited for the others to arrive. But, no one else turned up and we ended up chatting until around midnight, only to be interrupted by Tammie's younger sister, in her pyjamas. She had driven through the town looking for Tammie's car, as Tammie had said she was going to church at 5pm and it was now midnight.

Tammie then left with her sister but not without giving me her phone number, as I had told her I was moving to Johannesburg in a few weeks, and she had said she would introduce me to some people.

She had clearly expressed that she wasn't interested in a relationship as she had a boyfriend at the time. I was fine with that as I wasn't looking either.

At that time I was really questioning God's love for me and as she left I said to God, "Lord, how much do you love me? Do you love me so much that you would send a girl all the way from Johannesburg to be my wife?"

It was such a random comment and I thought there was no way God would love me that much.

In the next few weeks, I moved up to Johannesburg and after a little while began to get lonely as I knew no one. I was sitting in a restaurant drinking a milkshake alone and feeling sorry for myself, when Tammie called and asked if I wanted to get together for a cup of coffee with her. As it turned out she was in a coffee shop just down the road. So, I walked straight over.

She told me she had broken up with her boyfriend and she just couldn't resist my charm. (Tammie tells me that my recollection of the day's events is slightly different to hers). But nonetheless we started dating from that day. I knew she was the girl for me, when on our first dinner date I asked if she minded if I could let out some wind. She looked at me strangely and said "I suppose so." I let one go and we both had a great laugh. Two years later we were married and lived in Durban together.

On our wedding day in 2005, as Tammie walked down the aisle, I saw her and how beautiful she looked. As she walked towards me, God reminded me of when I had asked Him how much He loved me, and if He loved me so much that He would send a girl all the way from Johannesburg to be my wife. Well, He loved me more than I could even imagine.

God is so good; His love for us shows no end. Looking back, the best decision I have ever made in my life was dying to myself and trusting God on that day in that little church in England.

I believe one of the greatest testimonies of God's love for and towards us is the spouse that He has prepared for us. They are the very expression of His love. I urge you to honour, cherish and adore the spouse God has given you.

Tammie is the perfect partner in life for me and she takes my faith in Jesus to a whole new level. There is no one on Earth with whom I would rather see the plan of God fulfilled in our lives. She is a loving, kind and mighty woman of God. I know without doubt that I would not have been able to face half the things that I have faced in my life without this wonderful woman at my side. She brings peace, calm and stability to every situation.

I want to end this chapter by imploring those who have not yet found the person God has set aside for them. Trust God as He is faithful. Surrender all to Him; He is good and will come through for you. If He did it for me, He can do it for you.

3

On a New Mission

In the beginning of 2008, Tammie and I both felt that God was changing seasons in our lives. I was previously involved in house building, but the property market had suffered heavily and building was no longer a feasible financial option for me. I was seeking God for the next opportunity that He had for us.

In early February 2008, I was thinking about going to China on a business trip to buy electricity generators and import them into South Africa. South Africa had been going

through an energy crisis and electricity was being cut to homes on a daily basis.

At the time, our friend Renée was staying with us from England and we asked her to pray and tell us what she felt God was saying to us. Renée was an old friend and we trusted that she also heard God clearly. We had not told her our plans as we wanted God to confirm what we thought He had told us.

After praying she said that she didn't hear God say anything specific. Without the confirmation we were not going to move forward. I have found it's helpful with life's big decisions to get confirmation from the Lord through people you trust. We are all still learning how to hear the Lord clearly. I don't believe it's wise to change our lives on a word we think we have heard from God without a lot of confirmations from other people, those whom we trust also hear God clearly.

Having still no idea what I was supposed to do, I began seeking God more intensely. The Bible says "seek and you will find" (see Matthew 7:7), so I began to expect to find what the Lord had for us. A few weeks later I was praying in my lounge, and God spoke to my heart that we were to move to England. It was so left field that I was dumbstruck. I had no

desire to move to England; I was probably one of the most passionate South African people around. I loved South Africa and always thought our future would be there.

I waited for Tammie to get home, and we discussed it. All I could envision in my mind was going for six months, taking some time away from what we had been used to. I thought during the time away God would show me a product we needed in South Africa that I could bring back, and we would be home in a few months.

Tammie, however, was not as keen as I was to go for a short period of time. She did not want to pack up our lives for just six months. After all, we had two beautiful dogs and a wonderful home which God had blessed us with. Tammie said the minimum period she would be prepared to leave for was a year. I reluctantly agreed, and I said I would submit it to the eldership at our local church first. We were not going without their blessing.

I met with one of the elders and he said he felt it was God's plan for us. Nevertheless, he would take it to the other elders, and they would pray about it. About a week later, the eldership came back to me and said they

thought it was God, and we should go to England.

Tammie had a British passport, and we had been married for three years, so I applied for a spousal visa. We had a friend who had recently applied for one, so they guided us through the paperwork. We submitted the application, along with the £800 fee, and we waited.

Within twenty four hours I received a text from the British consulate in Pretoria, stating that my visa application had been processed. How good God was, I thought. We must have heard him right, and it only took twenty four hours to get a visa.

The next day I went to the visa agency in Durban to collect my passport. I opened the envelope and excitedly looked for my visa in my passport. There was nothing there, no British visa, just a consulate stamp!

I then looked at the letter attached and it read along the lines of, "We are sorry but your visa has been denied." Very little further information was given other than, "You have the right to appeal within twenty eight days but don't contact us as it may jeopardize your application." I was in shock! How could that

be? I was sure we had heard God. I was bitterly disappointed.

The denial of my spousal visa had me stumped. I chatted with Tammie, and we decided we needed to appeal the decision. Two of the things they had said on the letter were that they were not happy with our finances and our accommodation once we arrived in the UK. I wasn't really sure what that meant. I phoned all the visa companies I could find in South Africa, and they all said that they did not deal with appeals. Eventually, one of the companies said the only thing they could think of was for me to contact an immigration lawyer in London and ask their advice.

I called a company in London, and they said that the appeals procedure could be quite difficult. However they could do it, but it would require £2000 before they would look into it any further. The other option would be for Tammie to move to the UK without me, and once established, she could apply for my visa, as it would be more likely to be approved. Both those options were not okay with us. We didn't want to spend that kind of money on a maybe, and we were not interested in being apart for several months. There had to be another way.

We fervently sought God but had no breakthrough. Tammie had already resigned from her job and we needed a solution. During that time our church had a leader's weekend away with a guest speaker, who was another pastor in Durban. In the middle of one of his messages he stopped and said, "Where God has called you, no one can stop you." It was just a statement spoken to everyone, but Tammie and I knew it was God speaking to us.

Once we got home it had already been about two weeks, and we still had no idea how to appeal the denial. Finally, I was on my knees praying and suddenly I thought I should contact the British trade department, tell them my story and ask them to give me the phone number of someone at the visa department who could help me. I knew the visa department had to have a phone number and there must be someone who could help us. So, I called the British trade department. I got through to a lady and explained my story to her. She said, "It is very strange that you called because I worked in the visa department for seven years and have recently moved to trade." She said luckily that day the people who worked in her department were off sick, as normally she would not be able to discuss anything like that with me. She then asked me to read to her what the denial letter

said. I did so, and she promptly said I needed to get a pen. Just like that she told me, in detail, everything that I would need to get my appeal in and my application approved. God is so good!

Admittedly, it was a lot of documentation, but we knew what to do. Within a week we had everything we needed and were ready to file the appeal. We would need to drive to Pretoria to submit the application. So, we decided to drive up as soon as we could. It turns out the day we drove up was actually our wedding anniversary, but we both had been so distracted. We only realized this when we stopped for lunch on the way to Johannesburg. The plan was to stay with Tammie's mother in Johannesburg, submit our application and wait at her house for a few days until the application was approved so we wouldn't have to drive back up to Pretoria again to collect the passports. The trip is around 400 miles from Durban to Pretoria and Johannesburg is near Pretoria.

We had one day to hand in our application and then it was Easter weekend. The Tuesday after Easter weekend would be day 28, the final day we could appeal. So, we wanted to get it in before the weekend. We were about to leave for the consulate from Johannesburg

when Tammie's sister said, "Perhaps, we should give the consulate a call. Their website says they are closed." We called, and it turned out they were closed. I was now really nervous. There was no room for error; we could only hand it in on the last day we had to appeal it. I've found that often, God cuts things fine. Walking by faith can be very interesting at times.

Tuesday came, and we submitted the visa. The lady had to come around the glass cubicle, as our mound of paperwork could not fit through the slot in the glass. She took our whole lives in her hands along with the original paperwork for everything we owned, including the title deed to our house and cars. She then gave us a little letter in return, which basically said, "Don't call us. We will call you and your appeal may take 6 months to process."

Six months? We couldn't wait that long. Our lives were on hold, and now neither of us was working.

We waited around in faith for two weeks in Johannesburg with no response. Finally we reluctantly decided to drive back to Durban as we needed to get back home to our dogs. All the way from Johannesburg to Durban, we

were praying that God would intervene and that the consulate would call us. We would then turn around and go back and collect our documents. The call never came, and we were both very despondent.

The next day we decided to go and visit friends of ours, Shaun and Paula, who were our breakthrough couple. Every time we spent time with them, God would break through in some area of our lives.

As we turned off their street and into their driveway, my phone rang. It was the British consulate. The lady on the other end of the line said they had reviewed my appeal and that my visa had been granted. She went on to say that she would call me in the next few days to confirm when I could pick it up. Breakthrough! God is so good! Three days later she called, and we arranged for a friend to pick up the documents and ten days later we moved to England.

Upon arriving in England, we once again saw the favour of the Lord. I had received a prophetic word from a trusted friend before leaving South Africa that God was taking me from the front line and returning me to the hospital tent for some rest and recovery. This

word was specific to business in that I would experience a season of not working for myself.

Within a week of our arriving in England, I got a job doing home maintenance. I started the following Monday and stayed with the company a year until the Lord called me out. Tammie also got a job in the first week, working in the travel industry where she stayed until God called her out.

Six months have turned into eight years and counting.

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