

MORE THEN FAITHFUL - ISAAC JOE

Booze bottles were strewn all over the place and the air was thick with cigarette smoke. When my turn came to go on, I started the first number with my bass guitar and then the following songs, moved on to playing the lead. As I started the lights in the auditorium went off but fortunately the stage had power. I had no problem playing in the dark and really went to town with the number much to the amazement of the crowd. During this time my eyes were closed and when I opened them, through the thick smoke, all I could see were a whole lot of lighted cigarette ends. I was quite pleased with my efforts when I heard a voice – a voice so distinctly different from the noise of the crowd – saying, “Joe, are you using your talent constructively or destructively?” I looked beyond the crowd but all I could see was a haze. The voice that I heard did not come from the haze in front of me. I could discern clearly that it was the Lord Jesus who had asked the question. My mind started racing as I fought to find a pertinent answer. I couldn't come up with anything that satisfied me. It suddenly dawned on me that the people around me were halfway to the grave and here I was trying to impress them with my music. I was encouraging them to go further in the same direction because I was more worried about being a great hit. I had become a slave to my music and till now nothing else mattered to me. But the voice that I heard continued to ring in my ears long after I finished playing. I couldn't find a decent answer. It did not stop ringing till...

Want to find out more???

Here's how the Lord changed me!

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Psalm 34:8

When I was about nine years old, I accepted the LORD Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour at a Vacation Bible School class. At that time the Lord gave me a vision of His Second Coming. The following year I started going through a lot of problems. I started falling ill frequently and as both my parents were working at that time, I was by myself being the only child. It is a pretty miserable scene to be on your own with no one to talk to or even to listen or help you. Television still hadn't come to India! Attracting attention was definitely on the agenda. Around that time, I suffered numerous accidents at school even getting my nose cut up and I comforted myself with my friends who were a bad influence on me.

ILLNESS

My biggest childhood misery was the frequent attacks of epileptic fits. The doctors who examined me put me under heavy medication to control the fits. I was told to strictly avoid any sort of physical activity – no easy task for a boy in his preteens! There seemed to be no respite and the doctors recommended diagnostic neuro-surgery. Those were the days before scanners were invented and the local trend in medical science was to open up and cut out the offending part! My mother was on her knees praying and begging the Lord to touch and heal me. I wanted to know why all this was happening to me. There seemed to be no forthcoming answers.

HANGING OUT WITH THE GANG

Thoughts of rebellion dominated my mind as I was miserable being ill and I dreamt of running away from home. I started hanging out with the wrong crowd. I would go to school in the morning and soon after getting there, I would jump out of the classroom window and head back to my place. The gang would land up at home as my parents would be away at work during the day and we would have the place to ourselves. We got a great thrill out of collecting gang weapons like knives, cycle chains etc. Our modus operandi would be to go

out in the streets after dark stealing motorcycle parts and whatever we could lay our hands on just for the thrill of it. Throwing stones at doors of houses at night and scaring people was another pastime. I went so far as to throw a rock and break someone's front door and disappear in the dark knowing fully well that there were girls in that house and that they would be too scared to open the front door even if someone knocked. My mother was totally heartbroken with my rebellious ways and cried out to the Lord to touch me somehow. It was at this juncture that I started seeking the Lord. All else seemed utterly hopeless.

SUICIDE ATTEMPT

Despite hanging out with the gang, life still seemed pretty worthless and once I was by myself, I was literally consumed with thoughts of committing suicide. I decided to take the plunge and one morning after my parents left for work, I went up to the open terrace on the 3rd floor of the apartment building where we lived. I thought the best way to make a quick exit from this earthly life would be to read the Bible, say a prayer and then kill myself. I was about to jump off the terrace parapet wall when I looked down and saw some telephone wires below me. If I fell on the wires, there was no way I would hit the pavement below. I was figuring out how to avoid falling on the telephone wires when I heard my grandmother crying out for help from below. Hearing her cry, I was distracted and ran downstairs to her aid. I believe the Lord saved me from eternal damnation that day. Praise the Lord!

MUSIC:

The Lord spoke to my mother that I should learn to play a musical instrument as that would help me to relax. So she found a music shop and asked the man there to make a violin for me. Back then in the 70's, western musical instruments were rare and expensive and so the only resort was to get it made locally. So she gave this guy the money necessary but there seemed to be no sign of any violin. Finally he turned up with a guitar and said that he could not get a violin for me. I didn't have anyone to teach me to play the guitar nor did we have a music system at home. I used to listen to my neighbors playing music and started strumming along. With the help of some friends and intense practicing, within six months time I was playing with a local professional band regularly. I poured out all my energies into mastering the guitar and was soon very keen to play bass guitar. The only problem was bass guitars were expensive and rare.

BANK LOAN FOR EQUIPMENT

One morning, I got this idea to go to the local branch of the Indian Overseas Bank and approach them for a loan to buy the guitar, amp and speakers. I walked into the manager's office and asked him if he could help me. The manager was taken aback and was quick to inform me that so far the bank had issued personal loans for buying home appliances but never musical instruments and that they were not planning to set a precedent in my case. As I was coming out of the bank dejected, I met a lady who was a close friend of the family. She asked me what had happened and I told her what had happened. She promised to help me out and so she being a highly esteemed client of the bank, was able to convince the manager to sanction the loan for me. So I got a bass guitar made (the guy who made it for me ripped me off!) and bought a amp and speakers.

STRUMMING IN THE DARK

The next hurdle was that my parents coming from a working background, we lived in a single bedroom apartment. There was no space to practice on my guitar. So I used to play the bass guitar sans amp and speakers by holding it close to my chest and feeling the vibrations as I played it to

avoid creating a disturbance. I got used to sitting up at night doing this in the dark while my parents were fast asleep. The other thing was that since I did not own even a cassette player or any music to listen to, I started composing my own tunes.

The positive side of owning a bass guitar was that local bands used to call me to play with them. These guys were all as old as my dad and they played instruments like the saxophone and keyboards. Their repertoire of songs were ancient and I learnt to play all these songs by ear as I still couldn't read sheet music. Nevertheless, soon I was competent enough to play at weddings and other social functions. My evenings after school would consist of going from gig to gig and jamming with each group before finally heading home at 4 am. I had become a slave to music and nothing else mattered to me. I also shared a similar passion for sports and after the Lord heard my mother's prayers and touched me, I excelled in sports and participated seriously in sports events at school. Both my music and sports brought me a lot of (fair weather) friends and I thought to myself, that I was happy with what I was doing. Little did I know the Lord's plan for my life!

I decided to enter an interschool music competition which was reputed to be a major talent event. I was studying in 12 Std at that time. I got to the venue and while I was waiting for my turn to go onstage and play, I decided to check out the audience. Most of the crowd there were either drunk or stoned on drugs and they weren't even looking at the performers on stage. They were way past all that. Booze bottles were strewn all over the place and the air was thick with cigarette smoke. When my turn came to go on, I started with my bass guitar and then moved on to playing the lead. As I started the lights in the auditorium went off but fortunately the stage had power. I had no problem playing in the dark and really went to town with the number much to the amazement of the crowd. During this time my eyes were closed and when I opened them, through the thick smoke, all I could see were a whole lot of lighted cigarette ends. I was quite pleased with my efforts when I heard a voice – a voice so distinctly different from the noise of the crowd – saying, “Joe, are you using your talent constructively or destructively?” It suddenly dawned on me that the people around me were halfway to the grave and here I was trying to impress them with my music. I was encouraging them to go further in the same direction because I was more worried about being a great hit. I had become a slave to my music.

When I heard that voice asking me that question somehow it struck a cord in me and I knew I had messed up. I was disturbed by all this and my next thought was to get out of that place. I was so desperate I just grabbed my gear and got into an auto without even waiting to collect my certificate. I got home and remained in a state of turmoil for a week. The Lord started drawing me to Him and deep down I had a desire to change my lifestyle. The main drawback in doing so was that I would lose my friends. I was game for that but they didn't want to do that. So I got worse and became highly erratic in my ways. At this point my mother decided to pray and commit me to the Lord.

THE TOUCH OF GOD

Soon after I took a strong decision to play only Christian music. It so happened that around this time we moved house to another locality and so I was off to a fresh start. Soon after we moved in, a Christian believer came to my door and asked me if I would play the guitar in an outreach program. He was highly persuasive but I was determined not to go as I felt that my relationship with the Lord was not right. After that brother left I broke down and cried out to the Lord. I said, “Jesus, if you are the real God why can't you change me? If you are real, change me and I will serve You all my life! I'll do anything for you! I never thought the Lord would take my prayer seriously.

Later that night, the Holy Spirit brought to my mind all the sins in my past. I started acknowledging each sin and asked Jesus to forgive me and cleanse me with His blood. More and more sins came to my mind through that night and after a while, I felt something heavy lift from my heart as if I had just vomited poison. I felt a great sense of relief and when I came out of my room to the balcony that night, everything in that night sky looked so fresh and beautiful. I told the Lord, "If you change me completely, I will definitely serve You all my life!".

RESTITUTION

After that night, the Lord spoke to me clearly as to what I had to do. He told me to do restitution. I went out and apologized to the people I had offended. I would go with certain apprehension but would return home comforted. A police complaint had been made to the local station when I had broken a door in my previous neighborhood but no one was aware that I was the culprit. The Lord asked me to seek out that family and go and apologize to them. As I was bathing one morning a verse given in a small printed card fell out of my pant pocket. When I picked it up I read the verse ***"This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men."*** – **Acts 24:16**. I knew from this that the Lord was directing me to go and do as He said.

As I went across to my old neighborhood and stepped into the street where the house was located, I saw the same gang hanging around. I quickly prayed and asked the Lord for help as I didn't want to see them. By the time I got to the house, they had disappeared. I gingerly knocked on the door and an elderly Anglo Indian lady opened the door and looked at me enquiringly. I said I wanted to talk to the owner of the house and so she called me inside. As I entered I saw several people were praying there. I asked this lady if she remembered her door being broken 3 years ago. I confessed to her that I was the person responsible and asked for her forgiveness and I offered to pay whatever it cost for the damage I had caused. She just smiled and told me, "Praise the Lord! You don't worry as there are angels guarding my house. We are having a Bible Study here." I bid her good bye and returned home with joy in my heart. It was a 6 month period of restitution and setting my life right in the sight of God. Soon I was able to discern the leading of God through these instructions He gave me and the joy of the Lord filled my heart as I implicitly obeyed Him.

GETTING INTO COLLEGE

I studied very well for my +2 finals as I attended school by day and tutorials at night. I was totally thorough in all the subjects and a whole lot of my classmates would come to me for help. All the boys I taught passed with good marks in the exams but I flunked my math paper. As I started writing the exam, I lost my train of thought and got totally confused and ended up handing my incomplete answer paper at the end. So I ended up sitting at home for a year till I got a chance to rewrite the exam and pass it. I joined the Alliance Francaise and studied French in my free time. While I was studying there, I met a Catholic Nun who had also enrolled for classes. One day in course of conversation she asked me what plans I had made for my future. I told her that I wanted to go to college the following year. This nun gave me a letter of reference to one of the Jesuit fathers at Loyola College and after I had passed my exams, I applied to Loyola and was admitted into the English Literature course for which I had opted. I joined this course as I wanted to improve my English!

COLLEGE LIFE

I was a new believer when I entered the hallowed portals of Loyola College. I had given up my music by then as I felt music was my first love and that it was not right in the sight of God. In fact I took great pains to hide the fact that I could play a musical instrument but my friends gave me away. My college mates tried to get me to play for cultural events but I was totally against doing so. During

my 2nd year in college, the Secretary of the Students Union approached me and asked me to play at a Christmas program but I refused to do it. He was very insistent and assured me that all the other musicians who were expected to be there were Christians. So to discourage him, I told him my terms of acceptance. They were:

- (1) I would bring a recovering drug addict to share his testimony
- (2) I wanted a preacher of my choice to give God's message during the program.
- & (3) I wanted to bring a Muslim convert to share his testimony.

To my surprise he agreed to all three conditions and so we went ahead with the program which was a great success. Some of the professors who attended later told me that it was definitely a unique program in the history of Loyola College. Till this event, I was under the misconception that I could not minister through music as that was what I was told by several others in ministry.

MINISTRY THROUGH MUSIC – HOW I GOT MY GUITAR

I prayed and asked the Lord that if I was to do ministry through music, would He please gift me with a lead guitar. A few days later, I came home from college and found an aérogramme waiting for me. It was from my friend Gary – an American musician I had met earlier on – and it was his first letter to me. He wrote that there was a good lead guitar going cheap and he had thought of me. He said he would buy it for me and ship it out and I had to pay the customs duty when it came here and collect it.

YOUTH FELLOWSHIP & ABDA

I had met Gary three years earlier and had seen the love of God operate in his life. I used to think if God could have saved him from his earlier life and make him a new creation as He had done, He would do the same for me. So through Gary the Lord gifted me with my first Fender Stratocaster lead guitar! This was confirmation to me that the Lord intended to use me through my music to minister to people. So I started a Youth Fellowship at my home on Fridays. I invited well known preachers to come and share God's Word to us. I invited a number of young people to attend these meetings. Soon this group grew and we would meet on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings! This was the training ground for my ministry. Through this group came together the members of my band 'ABDA'. We used to go and perform at evangelistic outreaches, prayer meetings, institutions and wherever we were called.

It was during this time that I first started composing music. One of my first songs was "Blind Man" for which I got the lyrics after seeing a Jenson & Nicholson ad hoarding while traveling on a city bus. As the words came to me, so did the music. When people heard this number, they were deeply touched by the lyrics. Thus the Holy Spirit started giving me song after song – music, lyrics and all. It is really amazing how the Lord gave me this spiritual gift of anointed music. Praise His Holy Name!

THE LORD'S PROTECTION

After graduating from Loyola I enrolled for a Masters program (evening) at Pachiyappa's College with a plan of doing ministry during the daytime. Invariably it was at night that we were invited to minister at various places. I used to go to quiet places and spend time in prayer. One day I felt lead to go and pray in Mahabalipuram which is a seaside resort town 50 miles away from Chennai city where I live. A friend accompanied me on the pillion of my motorcycle and we were halfway there when the engine suddenly seized and we were thrown off the bike. When we got up and dusted ourselves we found to our total amazement that there were no injuries of any sort! The motorcycle started without any problem and so we were soon back on the road praising the Lord for His goodness to us. This time we decided to proceed at a more sedate pace. A few miles before our

destination a similar incident happened – this time my friend on the pillion fell on me and my knee was badly injured.

PRAISING GOD LED TO HEALING

In those days, a Bible verse would come to me again and again – **“I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall be continually be in my mouth” - Psalm 34:1**. This verse had made such a deep impression on me and I used to share it often with Bible School students amongst others. When my knee got injured, I cried out this verse thrice. I tried to get up but found that my knee buckled in the opposite direction. I told my friend who escaped with minor bruises to somehow get me back to the city in one piece. While I was doing this a policeman turned up and started checking us out to ascertain whether we were riding under the influence of liquor. A big crowd had surrounded us by this time and when a sand laden truck appeared on the horizon, they flagged it down and told the driver to take us to the city. So my motorcycle was thrown into the rear of the truck and I was lifted and put in the front along with my friend. The driver promised us a ride up to the outskirts of the city. As we sat in the truck cab I felt my leg had gone cold and numbness crept in. I had head injuries too and felt like passing out at any moment. So I told my friend to keep praying for my knee while I prayed for my head. I kept repeating Psalm 34:1 and saying “I refuse to faint”. After a little while, my friend shook me and told me that he was hearing a tapping noise in my knee. I got angry and told him he must have heard some other noise and not to get distracted from praying. A few minutes later the same thing happened and I admonished him again. It was close to midnight by the time I was wheeled into a city hospital – all this time after the accident we were happy and praising God. When the doctors examined me and took an X-ray to find that my knee was perfectly alright. I went home rejoicing and three days later I went to a church and ministered there and shared the Lord's goodness to me. A young man came to the front at the end of the service and asked me, “Where were you for the last 29 years? I have heard many messages in the past but understood it properly for the very first time when you spoke today.”

SECULAR CAREER

I started my career as a Executive in a finance company while I was studying a post graduate diploma in Personnel Management. This came to pass in a very unique way. I attended an interview at this company for a junior position and was rejected on grounds of being over qualified for the job. I was about to get up and leave and the Lord spoke to me and said “Convince the interviewer to give you the job.” I went back and met the interviewer and told him “My Lord Jesus wants me to take up this job. You can pay me whatever you want to”. He was taken aback and he told me that he was a believer too. I told him that this job would be my first and last one as I was preparing to go into full time ministry soon. I started off in this company as an executive but soon was put in the Accounts Dept. At this time, total sums of Rs.14 lacs were owed to the company by several individuals. Despite repeated efforts to recover this amount, no one was able to go and collect it. So the company asked me if I would try my hand at it. Each time I went to meet one of the people, I would wait on the Lord and then go. My prayers were answered I managed to collect the sum owed without any hindrances.

THE LORD IS MY BOSS

Soon after this happened, the Spirit of God urged me to resign my job and commit to ministry. So I obeyed the Lord and continued to play music, pray and minister to individuals.

BLESSING TO THE NATIONS

In 1990 one morning as I was going through my mail, I came upon a letter addressed to Pastor Isaac

Joe which had come from Thailand. On opening it I found that it was an invitation to attend a Pastors Conference in Bangkok. The Lord had told me long before, that one day He would take me to the nations. Having no income or savings or even a passport, I threw away the invitation and brochure. My father, being a dedicated public servant was quite disappointed that I his only child did not want to take up a Govt job which would ensure me of financial security. He happened to see this brochure lying on the floor under my bed and after going through went to my mother and asked her if I was planning to attend the conference. My mother replied that I had neither the required finances nor a passport to even consider doing so. My father who till this time was firmly against my being in ministry had a change of heart and decided that I should go to Bangkok. So he applied for a personal loan from his office and enabled me to get the necessary travel documents, gave me some money for the trip and saw me off.

Here I must mention that I had never traveled out of Chennai except to my home town and that too only under the watchful eyes of my parents as I was considered to be a mischievous character. I wasn't even allowed to go on local excursions during my school or college days. So heading off to Bangkok, flying for the very first time was quite an experience for me. When I arrived in Bangkok, there was no one to meet me or my friend who had traveled along at the airport. After 3 hours of wandering around, I finally tried to make a phone call to the conference office but unfortunately for me all the answering machines were recorded in Thai. So we hailed a taxi and somehow managed to convey our address to the driver and get there in one piece. The whole time I was praying that the Lord would enable us to get to the correct address and He did just that.

THE LORD OPENED DOORSTO MALAYSIA & SINGAPORE

The Pastors Conference was very well attended and there were many pastors from neighboring nations. During one of the sessions my friend and I decided to take a break and we were sitting outside when I met a gentleman who after learning about my visit, invited me to go to Singapore and Malaysia. So we rearranged our travel itinerary and decided to travel into Malaysia by rail. As we sat discussing these plans a German missionary who lives in Bangkok joined us at our table and on hearing that we were leaving the next day offered to drop us off at the train station.

GIVING TO THE LORD

Later that night at the conference, when an offertory was taken, I put a few Bahts into the bag. The Lord spoke to me at that time and said "My son, why don't you put more?" I was arguing with the Lord trying to justify my situation by saying that I had only US\$200 for my 3 months away from home. So the Lord asked me "What happens after you run out of your \$\$? You have to come to Me!" So I realized my mistake and prayed, "Lord, I trust you more than the money I have with me." I slid my hand into my pocket and took out some \$ and put it into the bag when they took the second offertory. The next day we reached the train station and I took the remaining US\$ and gave it to my friend and told him to buy the cheapest tickets he could find as we were short of funds for the remainder of the trip. The German missionary offered to go with my friend and help him find the ticket counter. After a few minutes, my friend returned happily waving a couple of First Class A/c tickets. Then my friend gave me back the US\$ I had given him saying that the German had bought these tickets for us before he left. I was in shock and so we got into our comfortable compartment and sat down thanking the Lord. A little later when we walked through the vestibule to the dining car, we saw people sitting in ordinary compartments sweating it out in the heat. It was then that the Lord asked me, "Do you know now why I asked you to give me more freely at the conference yesterday?" Our Lord is our Provider – Jehovah Jireh.

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

By the time we got to Kuala Lumpur a few days later, we had run out of money. A friend of mine had invited us to stay in his house. An international Worship Conference was scheduled to start in the city the following morning. All the big names in worship leading were going to be at this conference. So I was very keen to attend but I did not have enough money for the registration fee of US\$100. I had only US\$50 with me. There were a number of people who were staying in this house who were all going to the conference. I sought the Lord and expressed my desire to attend this conference to Him. He heard and answered my prayer in a very special way.

There was a young lady staying in this house who worked in the local hotel industry. The Lord gave me a word of knowledge for her and so I shared it with her. She asked me if anyone had told me about her and I told her that it was the Lord who spoke to me and added that the Lord must really love her so very much to speak to her. After she heard this, she fasted and prayed that night and knocked on my door the next morning before leaving for work. She thanked me for speaking with her and gave me an envelope and left. On opening it, I found US\$50 inside! I was able to make it to the conference in time! It was here that I experienced my first praise & worship session. In those years, we did not have any of this audiovisual material available in India or satellite TV and most of us did not have a clue as to what it was all about.

When I went to the venue, I was accompanied by several others who were staying at the same house. They were all local people. I sat in the front row and in the evening these girls came up to where I was seated and said that they were planning to leave then. I couldn't tear myself away from there but the thought of letting these girls return by themselves did not sit well with me and I got ready to leave. Then they came back to me and told me that they had met a friend who would see that they got back safely and encouraged me to stay back till the end of the session. They were worried that I might experience some difficulty finding my way back to the house as it was quite distant from the venue. I assured them that the Lord is my Shepherd and that He would bring me safely home. At the end of the day's session, I found my way to the bus stop and while I was standing there someone who was waiting along with me saw a bus approaching and told me that since it was so late at night it would make sense for me to take that bus (to the Market) and I could get another one from there easily. As I found a seat and sat down wondering how I would manage from there, there was a tap on my shoulder and a man who was sitting behind me asked me where I was headed. When I gave him the address, he promised to put me in the right bus when we got to the Market. He did just that and soon I reached the house without any hassles.

On reaching the house, I found that family standing outside looking anxiously. On enquiring with them, I was told that the group of girls who had left the conference venue several hours earlier with a friend lost their way and frantically called the house. So one of the family had taken their car to go find them and bring them home. They asked me how I managed to get back without any difficulty. I was happy to tell them that the Lord being my Shepherd brought me back safely.

DUMPED IN THE JUNGLE

A few days later I left for Penang where after a brief stay I headed back to Bangkok by train as I was scheduled to fly to Hong Kong and fly back to India after that. The church folk at Penang asked me to stay on for a few more days but I was keen to move on. So I boarded the train to Bangkok at Butterworth and a few hours later reached the Malay – Thai border where the train stopped for officials to board and check visas. I was ordered to take my suitcase and get off the train and the train left without me. I took in my new surroundings and realized that this was a small station in the middle of the jungle and that there were no facilities to speak of. The border area was notorious for

drug trafficking and murders were common. I was told that I would have to return to Butterworth and apply for an entry visa to Thailand as visas were issued on arrival only if you were flying into Bangkok – a major fact that I was blissfully ignorant about. I got a severe shock when I realized that the next train back to Butterworth was not due to pull into this place for another couple of days! One of the locals offered to drive me back to Butterworth at a cost of US\$800 and I was horrified.

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT ON AN EMPTY TRAIN

I believed that my Lord would open a way for me and while I was standing on that platform praising God, one of the girls came up to me and said something in Thai which I couldn't understand. The station master seeing my blank face came to me and told me that they had just received a call that a train headed for Butterworth would be passing through in a few minutes. He promised to put me on the train but said it would cost me US\$9. I thanked God and soon the train pulled in and when I got on, I found it completely unoccupied – it was returning from Bangkok to Malaysia for cleaning and service. My heart was filled with gratitude to the Lord and as I walked up and down the empty train praising God, the Lord baptized me in the Holy Spirit. For a long time I used to go to tarrying meetings praying and asking the Lord to fill me and He did that for me as I was all alone with no other distractions on the train back to Butterworth. What a totally memorable and unique experience it was! On arrival at Butterworth, the people at the church welcomed me warmly and invited me to share God's word with them that Sunday. After that weekend I changed my plans and flew back to India.

LET NO MAN DESPISE YOUR YOUTH

On one of my trips to South East Asia, someone had arranged for me to preach at a church and I made my way there. When I got there, the pastor of the church seeing my youthful appearance asked me to present my credentials. He enquired whether I was married or whether I had a church and so on. I told him that I lacked proper credentials, was single did not own anything but the only thing I was sure of was that when I go to preach I know that the Lord will put into my heart what He wants His people to hear. This reply didn't quite satisfy the pastor and he let me take the pulpit with obvious reluctance. I surrendered myself to the Lord to be used as His humble instrument and proceeded to share what the Lord had burdened me to speak about. Halfway through my message I glanced down at the front row to where this pastor was seated to see him weeping. I thought I had offended him in some way. At the close of the service, this pastor came to me thanked me and told me that the Lord had revealed Himself to this man in a very special way. Praise be to God! I encourage those of you who are new to the ministry to let no man despise thy youth as the only credentials the Lord requires from His servants is that they seek the presence and anointing of the Holy Spirit in order to minister to others.

STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

In those early days of ministry overseas, hardly anyone knew me or invited me to go. In one instance, the Lord clearly spoke to me to pack my bags and go to Singapore. As I lacked sufficient resources to do this my wife and I waited on the Lord. Still no invitation seemed forthcoming. If I were to go on this trip one of the following should happen:

1. Someone could send me an air ticket. OR
2. Someone could send me money OR
3. Someone could lend me the money required OR
4. I would have to sell my musical instruments as a last resort.

Since the first 3 did not happen, I prayed and asked the Lord what I should sell and He told me to sell

my keyboards. I mentioned to a friend of mine that my keyboards were for sale and soon after a man who heard about it came all the way from Erode and offered to buy it. He liked it very much and being keen to purchase it paid me the amount I had asked. So the next morning I went to the airline office and bought my ticket to fly out at the earliest. I called a friend in Singapore and asked if I could stay with him and he offered to meet me and pick me up from the airport. When I got there he shared his concern that I had landed up without prior notice and that it would be impossible to schedule meetings at the eleventh hour. But the Lord saw to it that I received more invitations to minister at various churches and meetings and when I finally left Singapore due to lack of time on my visa I had to cancel over 10 meetings!

MIRACLES IN SINGAPORE

It was on this trip that I saw the hand of the Lord on my ministry in a mighty way. I was to preach at a house meeting and a wealthy Singaporean came to pick me up and take me to the meeting place. When I preached at that house, the Lord instructed me not to give an altar call that night as I usually did at the end of a meeting. Dinner was served after the meeting and the Lord gave me a word of knowledge for a woman sitting there. She was dressed in a black outfit and I went up to her and gave her the word and walked away. Soon after the man who had brought me to the meeting came to me and questioned me on what I had shared with that lady in black. He told me that she was his sister and that he wanted me to pray for her. So we got into her car and as she was driving us back, the Lord spoke to her through me – all her thoughts about her husband, her life etc., When the time came for me to get off she asked me to pray for her. I laid hands and prayed for her and then she left with her brother.

The next morning I got a phone call from the brother and he told me that he was seeing his sister happy after many years of oppression. The last 2 and a half years she had been going through a lot of problems – physical, mental and spiritual. Her doctors had told her that her medical condition was poor as she suffered with an uterine tumor for over two years and she was told that unless a hysterectomy was performed, nothing else could be done to arrest the growth of the tumor. The previous night while I was praying for her, she felt a warm glow go through her whole body. When she woke up the following morning, the tumor detached itself from the uterus and came out naturally. She realized that the Lord had healed her completely. She was so happy and she told her brother to ask me to go to her house. There were a lot of problems in that house and she wanted the house to be cleansed of evil spirits. The servants in her house used to hear voices, this lady's children were unable to sleep at nights and whenever the family went out for an evening, they would return to find, the lights on or the stereo or TV blaring. So I took a friend with me and we went to her house to pray. There were several other people from the prayer group who were already there. There were several Egyptian paintings and artifacts in the living room and the Lord instructed me to tell her to remove them and put them outside. When I told that lady she told me that her husband collected these artifacts on his trips abroad. He worked on an airline and traveled frequently to other countries. We went up to her bedroom and prayed there. I laid hands on one side of the bed and prayed and later this lady told me that was the side that her husband slept on. Her husband was away at Hong Kong and so I laid hands on the lady's head and prayed a prayer of proxy saying, "Lord I pray that wherever her husband is right now, that you will touch him in such a way that he will feel totally disturbed until he draws near to you!"

The next morning, the husband who had gone through a sleepless night in Hong Kong, called up his wife and complained to her that he couldn't sleep. His wife told him that a preacher from India had prayed for her and that she was completely healed of all her infirmities. Her husband told her that he

was happy to know that good things had happened and that she was healed and that he would like to meet me when he got back to Singapore later that day. This couple attended the evening meeting and when I gave the altar call, the first person to step forward was this lady's husband. After this all the problems at their home subsided and they have grown spiritually together and have an active ministry today.

The LORD as He always does restore, blessed me with a new keyboard and since I was going on to minister in Malaysia, a good friend who was returning home to Chennai carried it back to my home for me.

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE LORD

One time I was invited by Teen Challenge to perform at their dinner function in Singapore. So I flew across and after the event was over, thought it would make sense for me to stay on in Singapore for a few more days. I thought to myself, having spent so much money to come here for one event, it would be wasteful of me to return home almost immediately. So I extended my visit by a few more days. Later when I went to rebook my ticket, I was dismayed to find that all subsequent flights were full and my visa would be expiring within a few days. When I pointed out my predicament to the airline ticketing staff, they advised me to get a visa extension. When I approached the immigration authorities for a visa extension, they strongly advised me to leave the country before the visa expired. When I went to the airline office and told them what had happened, they told me that the only thing I could do was to go to the airport before each flight and see if there were any last minute cancellations. My extended stay turned out to be a virtual nightmare. My host was leaving for the Philippines within the week and I would be stranded once he left.

With a heavy heart I called up an uncle who lived there and explained my situation to him. After hearing me he said that he was also going out of town and suggested that I try to get my ticket upgraded from Economy to Business/First Class though that would cost me a lot more money. I was quite depressed about my predicament when I got a phone call from a friend in India. On hearing about my situation, he advised me to go back to the airline and tell them about myself. So I did that and explained to them that I am in full time ministry. They heard me out and said "We advise you to keep trying at the airport as before". So in the evening I went back to Changi airport and searched for the airport manager, who was not at his desk. I approached the girl at the ticket counter and she said that my seat had been confirmed and that I could collect my boarding pass and board the plane.

As I sank into my seat at the rear of the aircraft, I thanked the Lord for His goodness when a flight steward suddenly appeared and asked me for my boarding pass. When I handed it to him, he gave me a new one and told me to move to my new seat. I was quite agitated by this time. There were a whole lot of pastors on the plane who were returning to Chennai after attending a conference. I met a senior Pastor who asked me what was going on as I passed by and I told him that there seemed to be some problem with my seat allocation. After I moved on, I found myself being escorted by the flight staff to a seat in Raffles Class. I was the only passenger on that flight who was upgraded from Economy to Raffles. I took in my plush and spacious new surroundings and wondered how this had come about. The Lord then spoke to me and said "You were thinking that you had no money to upgrade your ticket but your Heavenly Father will do these things for you."

GOD WILL MAKE A WAY WHERE THERE SEEMSTO BE NO WAY

Once when the Lord gave me a burden to go to Singapore, Hong Kong and Brunei, I knew I had to obey. When I shared this burden with a friend, he laughed at me and told me to first go to one place and not talk about visiting other countries. He said that I was stretching my faith by being thinking of

several places at one time knowing fully well that I had insufficient resources. Despite his negative response, my burden still continued and I was sure that the Lord wanted me to go. So after ministering in Singapore, I continued on to Malaysia. The same burden persisted and when someone in Malaysia enquired of my plans, I said "As by my ticket I have to return to India, but I have this burden in my heart to go and minister in Hong Kong and Brunei. So this person offered to pay for my ticket to Hong Kong but told me that I would have to pay my way to Brunei. I happened to mention this to a friend of mine and he offered to check out what could be done with a travel agent. Shortly after this, he called me and told me that if I bought a ticket to Hong Kong with Air Brunei, I could avail of a free stopover in Brunei.

Meanwhile in Singapore, through a friend of mine, I had met an elderly gentleman who had retired after working in Brunei. He told me that he knew of someone working at the Brunei High Commission in Malaysia and he paid the visa fee for me and I was issued a visa without prior invitation which is mandatory when you apply for a visa to Brunei. Another believer in Singapore referred me to an American pastor who ran a church in Hong Kong and told me to get in touch with him on arrival. I knew someone in Brunei and when I called him to say that I would be visiting there, he told me that he was going to be out of the country for 5 days and that I was welcome to go there as soon as he got back.

I flew into Hong Kong and at the immigration desk at the airport I asked them for a 5 day visa. I was interrogated for 45 minutes and was informed that they would not issue me a visa despite my having sufficient funds. The immigration official who dealt with me was determined not to help me even though some of his colleagues on seeing my guitar told him that I was only a musician and to let me go. This man stiffly refused and he took my passport and went to see his supervisor. I was distraught with worry because for one thing, the pastor in Hong Kong did not know me at all and secondly if I was refused entry into Hong Kong, I would have to fly back to Brunei where I would get stranded as my friend there was not going to get back for another 5 days! The immigration officials took me into one of their offices where I was asked to wait while they discussed what to do with me in the supervisor's office. As I stood there by a pillar waiting, there were two lines of a song that was repeatedly running through my head – "God will make a way; where there seems to be no way." I was singing to myself softly encouraging my faith. All the offices were empty now and there were hardly anyone left. The other passengers had gone long ago. Suddenly a senior official came up to me and handed my passport back to me and told me "I understand that you are a missionary, you are welcome to Hong Kong". When I gratefully took my passport and looked at the visa stamped there, I found that it was issued for a 3 month period. I had asked for 5 days but they gave me 3 months!

ONE NIGHT IN HONG KONG

With a prayer of gratitude to the Lord on my lips I stepped out of the airport and went across to a bank of pay phones and called up this pastor. He gave me directions to hop on a bus and to get to the YMCA where he had his church on the 2nd floor. I found the place somehow and found a service going on when I got there. I stood at the back of the church and the pastor called out to me and asked me if I was ready to come forward and minister. The pastor was dressed like an American cowboy, boots and Stetson etc. I replied in the affirmative and as I made my way to the front he saw that I was carrying an Ovation guitar and he commented that I must be a pretty good musician if I carried an Ovation. I stepped onto the stage and started singing and worshipping God. As the anointing of the Lord came down heavily in that room, the people assembled there started jumping with joy. There was so much of rejoicing in that place! After I finished, a man came up to me and asked to speak privately with me. He took me downstairs and told me that the Lord had instructed him to give me

some money and he took out a wad of cash and gave it to me. He also gave me his business card and told me to keep in touch. I thanked him and when I looked at what he put in my hand there was US\$500 there! I looked at his business card later only to find that he was the director of MTV Channel in Hong Kong!

I was accommodated in an Irishman's apartment and once I unpacked my things, I was taken to another meeting where administrators from Rodney Howard Browne's crusade were present. I shared God's Word at this meeting and when I started to pray, a woman cried out and came forward. She told me that while I was praying she had seen a vision of the Lord Jesus come to her, embrace her in His arms and told her that He accepted her. She had been working as a maid in the pastor's house and being very unhappy was planning to run away but that day the Lord touched her. Later this woman became an important member of the choir.

In the same crowd, there were an Irishman, an Englishman and a Pakistani who were generally known to be very dignified and held stoic expressions on their faces. While I was praying, these three men started laughing uncontrollably and fell on each other with holy laughter. When the American Pastor heard of all that happened at this meeting he opened other doors for me to minister in Hong Kong for the 5 days that I was there. When I got to Brunei there was a mighty revival there and the Lord did so many wonderful things there. After I returned to India I called up my friend who had laughed at me and told him how the Lord had enabled me to visit all the nations as He had burdened me to do.

INVITATION TO KIWILAND

In 1994, a youth mission team from New Zealand visited India. When they arrived in Chennai, my friend who was their host invited me to go across to meet them and have dinner with them. I took my band with me and we spent some time in worshipping the Lord. This was being held out in the garden and was to be a dinner barbecue. As the anointing came down, one of the boys fell on his knees and started crying and praying. Several members of the team were touched and they repented. One of the girls ran off to her room crying and gave her life to Jesus. At dinner the team leader came up to me and told me that the Lord had shown Him what I could do if I was invited to New Zealand. He asked me if I would be open to going to New Zealand to minister there. I said I was open to it and after that night I forgot all about it.

MARRIAGE PROPOSAL

Sure enough a few weeks later, I received an invitation to go to New Zealand and so I started making all the necessary arrangements. It was a hectic time for me as I was in the middle of cutting my album "Yours Forever" and I had planned to do a concert before I left for New Zealand. While I was juggling all this, some relatives came home with a marriage proposal for me. I hadn't given any thought about getting married and settling down and the whole idea seemed preposterous to me and I firmly told my relatives that I could not consider anything till I returned from my trip. They, on the other hand were insisting that I go and see the girl the very next day. I was totally against it. So as they were leaving my house, the Lord spoke to me and said "Go and see this girl tomorrow". So I went out and reluctantly called them back and told them that I would go and see the girl as they had asked me to. I thought to myself that I would do this now and give my decision later.

LORD ORDAINED MY LIFE PARTNER

The following day I went as planned and found a big crowd from both families assembled there. It

was a Hindu household and as per custom all the close relatives and elders were present. The girl was seated there and her father on being introduced to me asked me why I was doing what I did. He was a businessman and was curious about my line of work. So I shared my testimony with him of how the Lord had worked in my life. Usually at such occasions, a collective decision would be taken by the elders of the family after the meeting but that day, the girl's father asked me whether I was willing to marry his daughter. I hadn't met her or spoken to her earlier and so I asked him to give me some time. Whenever I had to take a quick decision in my life, I would always withdraw to a quiet place and pray and ask the Lord to speak to me. In the same way, I went into one of the rooms where I prayed and asked the Lord as to what I should do and He told me that this was the girl He wanted me to marry. So I went out and told the girl's parents that I was willing to marry her and so it was decided that we would be married in 20 days time – after my concert and before my tour of New Zealand!

The next dilemma was whether my bride could accompany me on my trip to New Zealand or stay back here for the next two months – who would pay for her ticket and other expenses? I wasn't happy about leaving her behind with parents so soon after getting married and so in faith I told her in no uncertain terms that we would be going to New Zealand together.

WHEN THE LORD DIRECTS, HE PROVIDES!

A few days before the wedding the Lord instructed me to go to Bangalore to meet a businessman friend. My family did not want me out of their sight so close to the wedding nevertheless I made the trip. Initially it looked like I went to see my friend at a bad time as he was totally preoccupied with some problems that had cropped up at his office. I had looked forward to discussing the imminent release of my new album but after seeing him busy I decided that I would leave and see him some other time. I gave him my wedding invitation and as I got up to go, he motioned me to sit down for a few minutes and called his accountant into his office and whispered something to him. Then he told me that he wouldn't be able to make it to the wedding and wanted to give me a gift. So he took out his chequebook and wrote me a gift of Rs. 25,000/= .

I returned to Chennai and my parents called me and gave me Rs. 10,000/= for my wedding suit and accessories. When I went out shopping, another friend happened to go with me and he out of his love, insisted on buying my wedding apparel at his expense. At the wedding reception I received cash gifts from several people and so the Lord provided us with enough finances for both of us to go to New Zealand.

ON THE ROAD IN NEW ZEALAND

In New Zealand, I had to undertake two tours – one was a CMS road show scheduled over a period of twenty days to visit all the important cities accompanying a group of young people. Following this was the Isaac Joe road show. I preached and ministered at 98 meetings in the 40 days that we were on the road! We traveled 5000 kms by road in a camper van which we rented and we stowed all our PA equipment in the toilet area. We traveled from the northernmost point of New Zealand to the southern tip and back. At the time of our visit schools were generally closed for Christian meetings and ministry. Since I was interviewed by four different newspapers and also on radio, 27 schools invited me to do a short ten minute program during their assembly hour.

We went to all the towns on our way and some farmers were so happy that we stopped even at little villages and performed for them. Quite a few people came forward to say that I was the first preacher to go and minister to them in those remote areas. Wherever we went, people were touched and

accepted Lord Jesus into their lives. We would drive all day, go to a church and minister there, sleep over in someone's house and go to a school in the morning. At some of the places where we ministered, people would come forward crying and asking for prayer even without my making an altar call. It was amazing how the Holy Spirit convicted people and touched them in such a mighty way. The friends who were with me after seeing this happen ever so often used to refer to this tour as the 'Tear Tour'. This was my first experience of a Holy Spirit revival which happened wherever we went – people crying and repenting their ways to inviting the Lord into their lives was such an awesome sight. I visited New Zealand again in 1997 with my wife and my daughter Gloria.

ONE NIGHT IN BRUNEI

In some places the anointing was really spectacular. For instance in Brunei I was invited to a church and after I finished preaching, I called the Filipino congregation to stand to their feet so I could pray for them. The Lord told me to do this and so called for them to stand up. As I prayed for this congregation, I asked the Lord to anoint them and touch them and half the people on one side of the church fell like a pack of cards. The ones who were standing on the other side were totally shocked to see what had happened and when I prayed for them, they fell under the power of God and started crying uncontrollably. These people were built solidly as they were mostly construction crew. It was incredible to see them fall under the anointing crying like babies! By this time, it was time for me to go on to the next meeting and so before I left I went to pray for the worship team. As I moved to pray for the pianist who was seated, one of the singers who was standing far behind me flew into the air, fell down in front of me under the mighty anointing. I had never seen anything like that before.

JEHOVAH JIREH

For 10 long years I prayed and asked the Lord for a portable PA system. I was in Singapore one year and was being dropped back at the place I was staying after a meeting at a lady's house. This lady wanted to stop at an electronics shop on the way to check out some audio equipment for her shop. At the store I asked the salesman if he had any second hand portable equipment for sale. He replied that the shop sell only new ones but they had installed a PA system in an auditorium the day before and they had removed the earlier system which was ten years old but came highly recommended as it was hardly used. They had been asked to sell it off by their client and so he showed it to me. It was a 500W Dynacord system from West Germany. I tested it out and was impressed. It was offered to me at a price of \$300 which is really cheap as even a microphone could cost at least \$150. I was happy to buy this system but the lady who took me there in the first place insisted on paying for it. I didn't even have to pay any customs duty for it when I returned home as it was an old system.

One day I was riding on my bike and as I passed a car, I saw a baby peer out of the window. I prayed and told the Lord, "Lord, could you give me a car when my child reaches the stage of standing up as it is unsafe to take the child on the motorbike". The Lord enabled me to buy a van around the time that Gloria started standing to her feet.

Similarly when Joshua was born, the Lord gave me a car like I had desired. I didn't even know what make or model that I wanted except that it looked sleek in front. One day there was a knock on the door and a man stood there with a set of keys in his hand. He handed me the car keys and said that he was a driver and that his boss had asked him to hand over a Suzuki Swift to me. I called up the donor and he told me that I could pay him whatever I felt like giving him, whenever I could. The Lord enabled me to pay the full value of the car within six months time.

I was at a musical instrument store in Singapore browsing around and my eyes fell on a particular

guitar accessory but the price was far beyond my means. I bought a cheaper affordable version of the same thing but my heart was on the one I had seen. Two years later when I was visiting Singapore again, I was put up in a church. The Lord spoke to me that He would bless me that day. Later that night as I was being dropped back after the meeting, I found to my dismay that the building was locked up and I couldn't get to the room I was staying in. The person who drove me there invited me to stay at his place and so we went there. We spent most of the night talking and sharing our spiritual experiences – he was a guitarist. At 4 am he went upstairs for a few minutes and came back and gave me the same gadget I had seen in the store two years ago and told me that he had bought it two years ago, but never used it and that he felt led to give it to me. As he handed it to me, he said “I must have bought this for you.”

THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

A few years ago, my daughter Gloria suddenly fainted and collapsed in a heap on the floor, foaming and frothing at the mouth. I called a friend for help and rushed Gloria to Child Trust Hospital. By the time I got her to the emergency room at the hospital, Gloria had stopped breathing and the duty doctors there said there was no pulse. After quickly ascertaining that money was no criterion, they tried to resuscitate Gloria without any success. There were 6 doctors, some of them interns and they were trying to get hold of senior consultants to come in and advise. I was asked to sign a whole lot of consent forms to give them total control which I did. Meanwhile I was seated outside in the corridor praying. Since the previous week the Lord had been instructing me to keep my eyes focused on Him despite whatever circumstances I face. Even in the hospital, I prayed “Lord I see You seated on the throne. You are in control. I am trying to look beyond what I am going through. Lord, even if the doctors mess up, I believe Lord that You will come and change this negative situation to a positive one. I will keep my eyes on you”.

After a while Gloria was taken to the Intensive Care Unit where she was put on the ventilator. I couldn't even let my wife know what was happening as she was expecting our second child at that time. For two and a half days I stayed by Gloria's side in hospital after which she began to make a quick recovery. I cried out to the Lord, “Give my child life Lord, You know that my family and I serve You”. Jesus heard my prayer and restored Gloria to us. I wrote the song “Keep your eyes on the Lord” after this experience. At the time that Gloria was admitted in hospital, it was in faith that I told the doctors that no expense was to be spared to treat Gloria. My friends in Singapore who were totally unaware of my circumstances sent me some money around that time and I was able to meet all the expenses incurred. I even received money from an anonymous donor in Singapore. The Lord saw to it that I was not ashamed in any way.

I had been helping some poor orphans by giving them room in my house, feeding them and teaching them God's Word. I was keen on rehabilitating these children. After Gloria's recovery, some time later my wife who was pregnant fell seriously ill and had to be rushed to hospital. She couldn't digest any food that she ate and would throw up everything. Her blood levels were becoming toxic and she had to be treated intravenously in hospital. Gloria who was only 3 years old stayed with her mother in the hospital. I would be running to and fro taking care of things. When my wife was discharged from hospital and we returned home to find that the children who I had kept in my house had stolen all our belongings. I did not lodge a police complaint but praised God instead.

JOSHUA – MIRACLE BABY

Shortly afterwards my son Joshua was born and he grew up to be a chubby baby. As a baby he never crawled or sat up by himself. My wife and I believed in faith that he would walk. One day Joshua fell

ill with a fever and we took him to see a pediatrician recommended by a friend. The doctor examined him and said, "This child is not normal – he has rickets (Vitamin B deficiency). When blood tests were done, his platelet level was very low and doctors suspected that he had contracted dengue fever. We prayed and when the results came there was no dengue fever. The doctors told us that Joshua's condition was brought on by malnutrition and lack of sunlight. This was impossible as Joshua always ate well and spent time outdoors.

I was broken when I heard about Joshua from his doctors and cried out to the Lord saying, " You are a God who has given me a ministry outside and if my child is like a vegetable, how can I leave the house and go to serve you?" I believed that the Lord would heal Joshua but my heart would break whenever I saw Joshua. He was being given a regular course of injections and had to be kept in hospital under observation. The Lord reassured and comforted me that this was a time of rest for me and that we would return home soon. On hearing from the Lord I was very excited and I told my wife that Joshua would be completely healed. Since Joshua's condition was extremely rare, the doctors sought medical advice over the internet. I got Joshua discharged from hospital and took him to see another pediatrician who encouraged us very much. I had an invitation to go to Singapore and the doctor encouraged us to take Joshua with us. So we made the trip and my wife, Gloria and Joshua fell ill simultaneously and were sick for over a fortnight. My friends – Timothy, Karen, Jean and Jeremy – were of great support to me at this time as I had several engagements every day and they looked after my family. The ministry was very powerful wherever I went and finally on the day that we were leaving to Malaysia, I appealed to the Lord to heal them so that the four days we had in Malaysia we could enjoy ourselves. As we stepped off the plane at Langkawi, they recovered fully and we had a wonderful time there.

Three weeks after we returned to India, one evening as I entered my home, Gloria came running out to greet me with a big smile saying, "I am very happy Daddy, my brother is running around the house!" When I got in and took a look, I could see Joshua running around at full speed on his toes! My son had never crawled or walked, he ran! When we went back to the doctor, after examining him, they were stunned that he had recovered in such a short span of time. The orthopedic surgeon who was a non- Christian confessed that Joshua was indeed a miracle child. This doctor who is a Senior Professor in the medical college requested a copy of Joshua's X-rays to keep in the college library and he had never seen such strong evidence of a miracle earlier. Since then Joshua has been blessed by the Lord and has to be seen to be believed! The Lord is great and greatly to be praised!