ISSUE # 8 - HEROES OF THE FAITH

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Category: The Main Issue

Stephen is the first known martyr for Christ and just maybe the first real hero of the faith.

Stephen confronted the religious leaders, those who coerced Pilate to crucify Christ, with the truth. And the truth made them angry enough to kill. Just like the truth spoken by Jesus made them angry enough to kill. So they killed Stephen. They stoned him.

Since, there has been thousands of followers of Christ who earned the entitlement, Hero Of the Faith. Most of the twelve apostles were murdered, as was Paul. You know there were thousands thrown to the lions during the first few centuries after the crucifixion of Christ. And you have heard of the Spanish Inquisitions where many faced the guillotine after surviving imaginative torture techniques. Perhaps you don't know that thousands behind the iron curtain were severely persecuted, jailed and killed, and their families forced to live in poverty. And perhaps you don't know many thousands (millions?) in China and elsewhere suffer today because they dare bear the name of Christ.

Not all heroes of the faith are martyred or even severely persecuted, especially in North America. But they earn the entitlement simply because they went further than most. Their faith in Christ, their commitment to Christ, their uncommon love for Christ caused them to do exploits for Christ.

This issue of The Main Issue gives but a sampling of heroism. Enjoy.

EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER SENT BY A DEAR CATHOLIC LADY:

Dear Larry,

.....I am answering your article 'Christianity vs. Catholicism' because I feel for you. And for all those whose minds you touch. I am only a little soul but God is my Everything. I concur with you that the aim of Christianity is union with God. This union has brought me so much joy that nothing else in life can compare with it – neither material, nor even the best of human love can begin to touch the wondrous embrace of God with His creature. The things of this earth, however beautiful and good – all these are love letters from God.....

.....Christ's sorrow surrounds me as I think of you and of the people you are misleading. Somehow you have heard the letter of the Law and have failed to understand its Spirit. Perhaps your teachers fell short – and don't we all – we are such unfinished beings until we see the face of God. Or perhaps your own spirit was not accepting of the truth at that time. In any case there is both truth and grave error in what you report.....

.....You, in your letter, stated that you write these things because it is a matter of our eternal death if we don't accept your version of the truth. Now, are you suggesting, for example, that Mother Theresa is to be damned because she does not follow the teachings of Larry Jones?

.....In your description of confession, which must be seen in a wider context of reconciliation with God and community, I see a basic lack of faith in God's way, in His chosen way of operating with us. Jesus often used physical things to heal – a piece of mud, a bit of spittle, etc., not because He needed these things to heal us, but because we need physical assurances – we need to see with our eyes and hear with our ears and to touch and be touched as Thomas did.....

.....If you, Larry, were not converted to Christ as a Catholic, that is precisely where you failed as a Catholic, and as such, you surely cannot give a true critique of the Catholic faith.....

.....Well, this short letter has grown very long, but I pray that the Spirit of God will speak to you through my words, that your inaccurate and distorted portrayal of Christ's Church, like Paul's first faulty zeal, will give way to the truth, lest you too hear Christ's accusation: "Larry, Larry, why are you persecuting me?"

Sincerely in Jesus,

Name withheld

(Response On The Next Page)

MY DEAR CATHOLIC FRIEND,

I thank you so much for your letter. You have been wounded by the article Christianity vs. Catholicism and I derive no joy from this. Unfortunately there were many, of your religion and others, who shared your hurt and anger. Yet I do not regret writing Christianity vs. Religion (Issue #7 of The Main Issue) though I did so with much apprehension. I know there are many who were helped.

There has probably never been a paper like Christianity vs. Religion, at least not one placed in the hands of the general public. Issue #2, Jehovah's Witnesses: Christian or Cult? likewise offended many who had the same affection for their religion as you do yours. Like yourself, some accused me of false information and evil intent. One gentleman asked me, "What kind of an animal are you?"

It was my intention with Issue #7, Christianity vs. Religion, to lump all religions together, at least the major ones, so people caught in one religion could identify with those ensnared in another. The Catholic might realize that he and the Mormon have much in common (as does the Mormon and the Jehovah's Witness, and the Jehovah's Witness and the Mason, etc.). For most of these religions are much alike, each claiming to have a special status with God, and insisting that obedience to its rules is a requirement for salvation.

While your faith, Catholicism, claims to be the one true church of God using as an argument it is the oldest religion calling itself Christian, the Jehovah's Witnesses likewise consider themselves to be

God's organization on earth, they being the true sheep of His pasture and everyone else goats. The Mormon Church has convinced its people that it is God's one true church and they have a 'witness in their bosom' to prove it. While the Masons claim to respect every other religion they actually believe they alone have the light and everyone else is in darkness. Then there are the Moonies, the Worldwide Church of God, Christian Science, etc., etc., etc.

As a Catholic who believes all other religions are, to say the least, inferior to your own, you must see so clearly the absurdities of the claims of other religions mentioned in Christianity vs. Religion. From the outside looking in, you might wonder how people could believe such fantasies. But can you not also see they look upon your religion with equal amazement, and marvel that someone would actually believe the things you believe? I did hope that, just possibly, someone as yourself might realize that since so many people in all of the other religions have been duped, perhaps you too have been likewise deceived. You might think, If it happened to them, maybe it happened to me as well. Of course, your letter reveals that, for yourself, this did not occur. You conclude, I assume, that Yes their religions are all false and they are deluded, but mine alone is true and I alone am on the right path. How fortunate that of all the faiths in the world, I just happened to be born into the right one!

I ask you to consider the possibility that the reason you are a Catholic today is simply because you were born into Catholicism. The same is true of most Catholics, or they became so because their husband/wife was Catholic. My wife became a Catholic because I was one. She wanted to be of the same faith as me and her children and was therefore easily persuaded. People, generally, believe not according to reason, but convenience. People follow after the one or the group most dear to them. It matters little whether that person (i.e. pope, deacon, pastor) or that group (i.e. church, religion, cult) they love is true or not. With some determination and manipulation the shoe can be made to fit the foot.

When a person is convinced their spiritual leader(s) is God's appointed agent (i.e. the pope being the "Vicar of Christ on Earth," the Mormon president being the prophet of God, the governing body of the J.W.'s being God's ruling authority, etc.) that person lets down her defenses. She is afraid challenging the teachings of her religion is thereby challenging God Himself. This person has to be convinced her spiritual leader and teacher is supposed to be none other than the Holy Spirit.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1Timothy 2:5) This one Mediator promised "He would never leave us, or forsake us." (Hebrews 13:5) He is with us by His Spirit "who will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13) That is why John could declare (1John 2:27), "the anointing that you have received from Him (Jesus) abides in you and need not that any man teach you.... the same anointing teaches you all things, and is truth, and is no lie." The man who has accepted man as teacher and director of his life is in spiritual bondage, the worst kind of bondage. That man must somehow be persuaded to remove his loyalty and trust and dependency from man (pope, pastor, church, whatever) and place that loyalty, that trust, that dependency on Jesus Christ,

who will in response give His Holy Spirit. My question to you is Who is your teacher, man or the Holy Spirit?

I wish you could see what is so obvious to an outsider – if you were born into, say, Mormonism you would be a Mormon today. (The same is true if the Mormon were born into Catholicism.) Perhaps you would have written me a letter defending Mormonism with the same passion and non-Biblical logic (no offense intended) used to defend Catholicism. You would be quoting the Book of Mormon, and telling me of this witness you have in your bosom.

And if you were raised in the Kingdom Hall you would be standing on the street corner with an Awake! magazine in your hand. It would be almost impossible to rescue you, for in your mind you would be fully persuaded. If you happened to have read Jehovah's Witnesses: Christian or Cult? it would have had little effect. In your conditioned sight I would be a heretic, a mere pawn motivated by satan. So what, you would reason, if the founder, C.T. Russell, perjured, gave false prophecies, made embarrassing claims about himself (as well as his Miracle Wheat, his changing "most accurate" measurements of the pyramids, etc.), and so what if this spokesman of God was divorced by his wife because of "conceit, egotism, domination, and improper conduct in relation to other women." You might have written me a letter saying, as you did on page two of your letter:

"I won't belabour all the juicy stories, those that are true and those that are products of malevolent gossip – suffice to say that there were popes that were scoundrels. But despite this the Church stands to this day. A miracle? Well, Jesus promised that He would be with His Church until the end of the world and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. Oh the gates of hell have surely tried, but despite those individuals who chose to behave shabbily, the teachings of the Church remain intact from the beginning."

And so what if there were so many false prophecies throughout the history of the Watchtower Society. Perhaps you would have written, as in page five:

"It seems that whether you like it or not God was to continue using weak men to do His work."

Do you hear me? Your logic may convince the uninformed, but it is not Biblical. Your words and God's words are different. Contrary to your logic, the same logic other religions use, Jesus said, "You shall know them by their fruits...a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit." If Catholicism is a good tree it cannot produce bad fruit, but because it has produced bad fruit it has proven itself to be a corrupt tree, and cannot be the one true church of God you say it is. That, my friend, is Bible. That is God's perspective. That is truth.

In Issue #2 I wrote of a young man approached by a group from a cult, overwhelmed with attention, drawn away from his sphere of influence, manipulated by the giving and withdrawing of approval and affection, and thoroughly brainwashed by an unceasing assault of cultic logic to the point where his family and friends became his enemy and the cult leader became his lord and savior. I was making the point that those raised in a religion have much in common with this young man. Though

the indoctrination process is less harsh, it starts from childhood and is non-ceasing. I know it is hard to see, but you too have been programmed. Your influence comes from one direction. Your perspective is a perspective that has been induced upon you. You have simply become the voice of another. Your logic is a product of a person in bondage. You say what one would expect someone of your upbringing to say. If you were on the outside looking in at yourself you would see it so clearly.

A young man, a Seventh Day Adventist, phoned to share his belief that Christians are to keep Saturday as a day of rest. The Seventh Day logic goes something like this: The true church of God can be easily identified because the true church of God obeys God's commandments. Since one of the Ten Commandments commands people to keep the seventh day (Saturday) holy, and since the Seventh Day Adventist are the ones who obey that command, they therefore must be the true church of God. And if you want to belong to the true church of God you better become a Seventh Day Adventist!

When I pointed out to the caller Romans 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law," and Galatians 3:24, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we may be justified by faith," he replied, as every good Seventh Day Adventist would reply, that the law referred to in these verses must not have referred to the Ten Commandments but only the dietary laws and the civil laws. I explained how Paul settled the same dispute arising in his day (Romans 14:5,6): "One man esteems one day above another, another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord; and he that regards not the day, to the Lord he does not regard it." Now that is very plain language, easy for anyone to understand - except if you happen to be a Seventh Day Adventist! The words of Paul prove God does not require Christians to hold one day above another, not Saturday, not Sunday, not Monday or Tuesday; however, if a Christian should decide to do so, that's okay. That young man simply refused to accept these simple words of Scripture.

I am trying to help you to see something by holding this young man up as a mirror to yourself. I do no want you to see the conditioned mind of the Adventist, but your own cultivated conceptions.

The Adventist would have no problem with Matthew 1:25, " knew her not until she had brought forth her firstborn son." Nor would anyone else have a problem with this verse..... except perhaps if one happened to be Catholic. Since the Word of God smacks against the Catholic doctrine that Mary is a perpetual virgin, you say (page 10): "The word 'until' that you referred to suffers the same inexactitude in its translation into English."

Please be patient as I lift up another mirror before you.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have their own verses to trip over. They cannot accept John 1:1 which says "and the word was God," because their religion teaches Jesus is not God. So they changed "was God" to "was a god." I suppose they would consider this verse an "inexactitude in its translation into English." I pointed out a book in our library listing 26 of the most popular translations of the Bible, and

the fact that every one translated it the same, "and the word was God" or a similar meaning. I pressed the point because I reasoned if I could persuade some that Jesus really is God, the Watchtower Society could not therefore possibly be God's authoritative voice it claims to be (they have repudiated the divinity of Christ since its inception).

For the same reason I am going to press the point that Matthew 1:25 is not an "inexactitude in its translation into English." If Mary really did have sexual relationship with her husband, as Matthew 1:25 so clearly states, then the Catholic church, which claims infallibility on this issue, cannot be infallible at all. It teaches error. Hopefully that conclusion will set you free from the terrible grip it has on your life.

The same book conveys the fact that every one of the translators translated Matthew 1:25 in such a manner as to convey the truth that Mary had relations with Joseph after Jesus was born. The footnote in your own Jerusalem Bible, a Catholic Bible, makes this statement regarding Matthew 1:25: "Lit. 'and he did not know her until the day she gave birth.' " "Lit." means the literal translation, or the exact translation. Matthew 1:25, according to the translators of your own Bible and every other Bible I have ever read, is not an "inexactitude in its translation" as you say.

I remember watching this old movie. A detective was trying to convince this girl her boyfriend, I think his name was Johnny, was a bad mobster. He wanted her help in catching her boyfriend. She refused to believe it. He gave much evidence but she would not hear. There were eyewitness accounts but she said they must be lying. He finally sat her in front of a film of her Johnny robbing a bank (I think it was a bank), but she closed her eyes refusing to look. In exasperation, he yanked her head backwards by pulling her hair. Her eyes opened and there before her was her Johnny shooting at police. Finally she was convinced.

What would it take to make you see what is obvious to those on the outside looking in? Your beloved Johnny, the Catholic church, is not what you think. The eyewitness accounts are not false. The atrocious behavior of the one you love dearly is a matter of record – I learned these things in a Catholic high school, taught by a Catholic priest! The Catholic church is apostate and fits the definition of a cult, and the affection you have for it will not change that.

You say you love Christ but do you love Him more than Catholicism? You cannot pledge allegiance to both, for their words oppose each other. To date you have chosen to obey the words of Catholicism over the words of Christ. For example:

You explain why you are justified to call priests "Father" although Jesus said explicitly "call no man Father for one is your Father and you are all brethren." Listen to your own words to me (page four): "You quoted the passage which said that we should call no man father. (Christ also said that if your hand should offend you, cut it off, or if your eye should sin, pluck it out. How many of your confreres are walking around minus hands and eyes – or are they all perfect now?) I believe Jesus meant to say that all fatherhood comes down to us from God and should be acknowledged as such and be

recognized as such. We have to see things as they are and have our priorities right."

You say, in effect, Yes, Jesus tells us to call no man Father. But Jesus meant something else. That is why I call priests Father. So you rationalize how you can do exactly what Jesus commands you not to do! Anything to please your first love, Catholicism.

Catholicism and the Bible are at conflict. Matthew 1:25 is but one of many examples, but it alone proves that indeed Catholicism and the Bible clash. Both cannot be true. One must go. You are in the same difficult position as those of other religions and cults – you must make a choice.

The teachings of the Catholic church are mostly erroneous, including the doctrine of the priesthood, the sacraments, saint worship, indulgence, the pope, etc., etc. These teachings are at enmity with the Bible. Catholicism will keep multitudes from "the simple gospel of Christ" causing them to perish, not in purgatory, another CC invention, but in Gehenna, "the lake of fire."

I say in love you are part of the problem. You do not preach Christ of the Bible but (a false) Christ of Catholicism. You are teaching your children, and others, to call evil good. You readily mix the holy with the profane and feed this unhealthy mixture to the ones you love most. Catholicism is an idol in your life, and you encourage others to join in worship of this idol.

Most of your arguments I have not responded to – sufficient to say they are not based on God's word, and I leave it at that. Also, I thought it best to not include your name.

I again thank you for your letter and regret not being able to print it fully.

Most sincerely,

Editor

"My Dear Catholic Friend"

"But can you not also see they look upon your religion with equal amazement"

"People generally, believe not according to reason, but convenience."

"He is with us by His Spirit, 'who will guide you into all truth'"

"Do you hear me?"

"You shall know them by their fruits...."

"You logic is a product of
a person in bondage."

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"If Mary really did have sexual relationship with her husband, as Matthew 1:25 clearly states, then the Catholic Church ..... cannot be infallible"

"I think his name was Johnny."

"Your beloved Johnny, the Catholic Church, is not what you think."

HARALAN POPOV (1907- 1988): PASTOR

Sofia, Bulgaria, July 24, 1948. Four am.

Haralan Popov and his wife Ruth were awakened by an impatient ringing of the doorbell. Three men, two in police uniforms. “We have come to search your house.” After three hours of searching they take Haralan away for “a little questioning.” The interrogation led to thirteen years of imprisonment and torture, his crime being his love for the Lord Jesus Christ and the propagation of the gospel.

Their young child Rhoda could not be consoled. “They’re taking Daddy! They’re taking Daddy!” She would be a young woman before she saw him again, a man aged far beyond his years. Baby Paul slept through it all. Ruth fell to her knees, asking the Lord to bring her husband back home.

At the police station he was brought to a filthy cell, an old clay pot in the corner was the toilet. It stunk bad. The “little questioning” began at 8 pm and lasted 12 hours. They wanted a confession for the crime of espionage with the West. He was forced to stand exactly eight inches from a white wall, eyes wide open, and they screamed at him if he shut his eyes. The long night over, he fell to his bed. Bedbugs and lice and vermin soon covered his body so he had to pace his cell to keep them off. They gave him only enough food to keep him alive. The nightly interrogation and torture went on for a week, and because of long hours of standing in front of the wall, the blood settled in his legs causing them to swell.

Then the Black Raven, a police car, took him to the dreaded White House (nicknamed after the American White House), the headquarters of the Secret Police. Here, most who entered would never leave. Many levels of cells went deep underground and occasionally muffled screams of tortured men could be heard in the streets above. Fear gripped Haralan as he was being led to cell 21, and he breathed a prayer, "God, my life is in Your hands." Fear left, peace came. His heart was filled with praise and worship to God.

Same smelly bucket. Walls painted with blood of dead bedbugs. Slogans and prayers and Bible verses inscribed on the walls by former prisoners. Daily diet of two slices of bread and six tablespoons of slimy soup. A sound resembling a rifle shot every ten minutes throughout the night. Guards with faces defying description, long ago having sunk to animal state. Standing motionless, eyes wide open, eight inches in front of a wall painted with high gloss enameled white paint. A fist to the head when the interrogator didn't get the answer he wanted.

Burning eyes, swelled legs, unbelievable fatigue. Hunger and deep thirst accentuated by the sound of the interrogator's munching of food and drinking water. Hallucinations. Spots on the wall came alive. A mad kaleidoscope of colors. Fear of going insane.

After ten days Haralan heard the snoring of a guard and dared to stretch a little. Turning his neck he saw an old man in a nearby window who had the appearance of a monster. It repulsed him. Realizing he was the monster, he wept. Alone and hopeless.

And then the audible voice of Jesus, "I will never leave you or forsake you..." and the presence of God filled the punishment cell, infusing him with strength and warmth and joy. The guard awoke with a jolt. Something had happened, but what? He ran to get another guard and together they tried to figure it out. Their prisoner was somehow rejuvenated and filled with a power.

After more of this torture Haralan prayed for death, longing to see his Savior face to face. After fourteen days he felt death coming. The guard sensed it too and ran for a doctor. "This man is dying," the doctor proclaimed. Haralan's eyes were black holes in his head, his legs those of an elephant, lips cracked and bleeding, long beard matted with blood, pulse very slow. The tormentors did not want their victim to die. Back in his cell he revived somewhat but the next night he was brought before more interrogators. They jeered, they scoffed, and then began hitting and shoving. They wanted a confession.

One of the guards drew his pistol and led Haralan to an execution room splattered with dark blood marks and chips from bullets. Many had died here. On the count of five, the guard threatened, unless there was a confession, Haralan would be shot through the head. One...two...

Haralan was ecstatic with anticipation. He had no doubt he was washed in the blood of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, and soon he would be with His Master.

Three...Four...

And then a power, a Holy Spirit power, rose up from within Haralan. With strength he shouted, “Don’t wait! Don’t wait! Shoot me straight in the head!” The guard never did intend to pull the trigger. The display of strength from the weakened prisoner unnerved him. Haralan, deeply disappointed, was thrown into his cell.

There were days alone in his cell when the Lord felt so close it caused tears of joy. He had nothing, yet he had everything – Christ. Never in freedom did he have such sweet communion with God. His union with Christ was enriched and fortified. Many years previous Paul the apostle wrote, “All those who will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Haralan was in jail because of his stand for Christ, and in that he took much comfort.

He did not have to be here. He could have avoided all this. When they invaded his home he knew the inevitable had come and, in a sense, he asked for it.

When the communists ran for election to govern Bulgaria they gave many promises. When elected they soon disposed of the opposition, and Bulgaria became known as “little Russia.” The writing was on the wall. As in Russia, Christianity was to be banished. There were a few years before the communists became entrenched and organized, and some Christians used this time to work feverishly, preaching the gospel and nurturing the many converts. Haralan Popov worked as hard as any, pastoring and evangelizing, knowing his days were numbered.

They rounded up the leaders and, not wanting them to appear as martyrs, accused them of espionage with the West. The torture was to break their will, at least temporarily, and get them to sign a confession.

Imprisoning Christians to stamp out Christianity often backfires. Nothing could stop Popov from witnessing Christ throughout his thirteen-year incarceration. On the streets one might walk away, but a prisoner is a captured audience, and many were converted to Jesus Christ. Some of these were released and brought the gospel to family and friends. One method of preaching was tapping the gospel to the prisoner in the next cell, using a cup and a crude signal system, making converts he never did see. Other times he preached openly. When guards caught him or an informer reported him, he was led away to be beaten, and then he would come back and pick up where he left off, sometimes in front of the same informer.

The mock trial date was set and Haralan was not yet broken. The guards responsible for getting a confession were panicky. Back to the punishment cell. Twenty-four hour days of interrogation and punishment, head swollen from hard blows, legs bruised and bloody from heavy boots. Seven days of unrelenting torture. Scripture verses flashed through Popov's mind. “But all these things they will do unto you for my name’s sake... For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ; not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake.” Empowered by these thoughts, he managed to last seven days of this nonstop torture.

November 7th was the day Haralan Popov lost his will. Hallucinations. Snakes. Mad faces laughing

hysterically. The edge of madness. It took three months, but now they had him.

"You are a spy of the first class."

"Yes," Haralan replied. And he signed the confessions. He was temporarily reduced to a parrot, a robot, willing to say or sign whatever. He was now ready for trial.

The Secret Police finished, Haralan was transferred to Central Prison, an old prison built for 300 to 400 prisoners, but filled with over 5,000. Haralan's cell was next to the toilet, the place where prisoners emptied their buckets.

The trial took place in Courtroom 11, the finest in Sofia's huge court complex. Journalists from the West, including those of the New York Times and the London Telegraph, were special guests. Haralan was one of fifteen of the highest church leaders who were tried together. They had been well fed the past few months, each dressed in his own suit and shirt, and no one could guess they had been tortured into submission.

The three puppet judges simply went through the motions; the real decisions were made by the secret police seated in the front row. The broken prisoners readily confessed to the crime of espionage. Both the prosecution and defense lawyers showed disgust to these traitors who hid behind Christianity. After twelve days of false witnesses and accusations, it was concluded that, although they each deserved the death penalty, because of the mercy of communism they were to receive varying prison sentences.

Orders went out that anyone helping the prisoners' families would be sent to a concentration camp. Ruth and Rhoda and Paul were helpless, forced to leave their home, and Ruth lost her job. Sometimes it was a few carrots slipped to them by a fellow Christian that kept them alive. Knowing his wife and children were destitute was Haralan's greatest suffering, and he cried out to God.

And then a miracle. The Swedish government successfully appealed to have Ruth, a Swedish subject, and her children released to return to her home country. On hearing the news Haralan was overjoyed, and deepened his commitment to preach Christ fearlessly. Every time he moved to another prison or cellblock he established secret Bible studies, did what he could to comfort others and prepare them for their coming eternity. Many came to the saving knowledge of Christ under his ministry of love.

Persin Prison, September 25, 1961. After thirteen years and three months he walked outside the prison doors, no one to meet him. Alone with a suitcase in hand, he looks back at the prison and remembers the nightly beatings and other horrible atrocities so wicked he would never speak of them. And he remembers the men whose lives were enriched by the gospel.

He should have died in prison, but the Lord sustained him. Like the time he was placed in a cell so deep it was total darkness. Left 35 days in the cold without clothes or food and water, he felt the presence of Christ as few men ever have, a highlight of his life. And the Christmas Eve he fell into the

swelling Danube River. A practiced swimmer would have made it to shore with difficulty, but for Haralan it took the supernatural empowering of God.

Ahead of him was much work in a much larger prison, for now all of Bulgaria had lost its freedom and was one big penitentiary. It was not uncommon for pastors to report nightly for beatings. The church had gone underground and was in need of pastors who knew the Word of God. Haralan worked tirelessly.

Many saw a need for Popov to somehow get to the West to express to Christians the plight and needs of the underground church. Christians everywhere began to pray, knowing it would take a miracle for an ex-prisoner to get permission to leave Bulgaria, especially an unreformed ex-pastor such as Haralan. Jesus had said, "With God all things are possible." Soon Haralan was in the arms of his wife and children and grandchildren in Sweden.

From there he traveled extensively, warning the Western church about the illness of communism, and making them aware of the plight of Christians behind the Iron Curtain.
(More information is available by typing Haralan Popov in Google search engine.)

"Harlan Popov and his wife Ruth were awakened by an impatient ringing of the doorbell."

"They're taking Daddy! They're taking Daddy!"

"he saw an old man in a nearby window who had the appearance of a monster."

"The tormentors did not want their victim to die."

"yet he had everything - Christ."

"nothing could stop Popov from witnessing Christ throughout his thirteen year incarceration."

"Knowing his wife and children were destitute was Haralan's greatest suffering"

DEMOS SHAKARIAN (1913 - 1993): BUSINESSMAN

Demos Shakarian was the founder and president of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, a Christian fellowship with active chapters in most countries of the world, and most cities in North America. Demos was a wealthy dairyman, a big man with a powerful handshake, slow talker, gentle and sincere. Demos dearly loved his wife Rose. Together this simple unassuming couple have many times traversed the globe, spoke to thousands of gatherings, and conversed with rulers and kings and princes. They both dearly love the Lord Jesus Christ, and have brought his gospel to millions of people all over the world through the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship.

Demos was named after his grandfather. Grandfather Demos was a Christian who lived in Kara Kala, Armenia, situated at the base of Mount Ararat (on which Noah's ark settled thousands of years ago). The farm Grandfather owned had been passed down through the family since ancestral times. Life was simple and unchanging in Kara Kala – until the Russians came to visit.
They were 'pentecostal' Christians. Strange people these Russians as far as Grandfather was concerned. They spoke in tongues. And prophesied. And prayed for sick people who recovered and, well, it just wasn't Armenian!

Anyway, Grandfather and Grandmother had a problem. They had five children, all girls. No sons. Five

girls and zero sons. A real embarrassment to an Armenian. Grandmother Goolisar cried a lot. Magardich Mushegan was one who received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit at the influence of the Russians. One day he prophesied to Grandmother, "Goolisar, exactly one year from today you will give birth to a son." Grandfather was still not convinced when one year to the day he had his long awaited son. Perhaps Magardich just got lucky!

When the Russians came there was always a feast prepared for the occasion, and the day was set aside as a day of the Lord. Grandfather chose his best steer. But his best steer had a flaw, a blind eye. So what? – no one will know – just hide the head in a bag. No one could possibly know.

But he knew – the bearded leader of the Russian caravan knew. God told him. It was when he was asking a blessing over the great feast. Suddenly he lifted his arms to silence the people and walked to the barn with an expression of consternation on his face. He pulled the sack out of a pile of wheat and placed it before Grandfather Demos and said: "You still do not believe He speaks to His people today as in the past. The Spirit gave me this word of knowledge for a special reason: that you and your family might believe. You have been resisting the power of the Spirit. Today is the day you will resist no longer."

Grandfather and Grandmother received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that day, both speaking in tongues, a language strange to them but understood by God. They would become known as Pentecostals because they experienced the Holy Spirit in the same manner as the apostles shortly after Christ's death. (This occurred on a holy day called Pentecost, thus those who receive the same baptism of the Holy Spirit are often referred to as Pentecostals.)

Now we must back this story up fifty years.

Efim Gerasemovitch Klubniken was eleven years old at that time. Efim was a very unusual boy, fasting for days at a time and sometimes praying around the clock. On one occasion God called him to pray and fast for seven days, after which he saw a vision. The vision warned of a terrible calamity that was to come upon all the inhabitants of Kara Kala in some future time. God instructed the people that at a given time they were to leave Kara Kala, travel across the Atlantic Ocean to the United States, and journey across America until they came to the west coast. There they would settle. God would richly bless those who obeyed and He promised their offspring would be a blessing to the entire world. To add weight to this illiterate boy's vision, the eleven-year old Efim drew maps showing exactly how to get to this new land. It was indeed a traumatic message for this conservative Armenian community. Some believed Efim, and some did not.

Grandfather was one who believed the prophecy, and when his promised son Isaac was thirteen years old they sold their farm and headed for America. Those staying behind jeered and scoffed. It was a very long, arduous journey and when they finally arrived in Los Angeles, California, they were broke.

They heard the devastating news after they arrived. In 1914 the Muslim Turks mercilessly

slaughtered a half million Armenians and drove millions more into the Mesopotamian desert. Every inhabitant of Kara Kala, every man woman and child, died in the death march into the desert. Efim proved himself to be a true prophet.

Life was hard for the immigrant Shakarian family. No one spoke english, they shared a house with two other Armenian families, and grandfather was forced to take a job working on a new highway through desert country. Many, including grandfather, fell over dead in the 120 degree heat and now Isaac, fourteen, was the head of a large family in a strange country. Isaac delivered papers earning ten dollars per month, and then a job at a harness factory which paid not much more. Understandably, the immigrants began questioning the boy prophet's prophecy saying that God would richly bless them in America.

But God's word proved true. Isaac saved enough to buy a horse and wagon, and began to sell fresh fruit and vegetables to awaiting housewives. Soon he could afford to sell his business and purchase a small farm where he began to raise dairy cows. He and his son Demos eventually turned that small farm into the world's largest dairy. Many others from Kara Kala became equally wealthy.

Demos loved God from an early age, and he loved the Armenian culture in which he was raised. Hard work, Godly parents, lots of sisters, and Armenian mentality filled his youth. Sunday was a three hour trip to church, five hours for the service and the meal following, and a three hour return trip. Demos was molded by this Christian community that centered their lives around the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Demos received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in his thirteenth year. He was in church when the Spirit of God alighted on him. He had an urge to tell Jesus he loved Him, but what came out of his mouth was a language he could not recognize. All that day, whenever someone spoke to him, he could only reply in this strange language. When alone in his bedroom that night he slumped to the floor under a renewed anointing of the Holy Spirit and was helpless to move. It was glorious.

Healing, prophecy, deliverance, words of knowledge and encouragement – these were all commonplace to the Shakarians. One day in church Demos was urged by the Holy Spirit to pray for his sister who had seriously injured her elbow. She was healed. Demos himself was almost deaf when God instantly restored 90 percent of his hearing. Demos had no way of knowing he was a chosen vessel of God to bring these gifts of the Holy Spirit to people all over the world.

He got his first hint of this calling when he and his wife Rose were sitting in their parlor with Milton. Milton was a painter, a joyful painter, pentecostal through and through. Suddenly the painter closed his eyes, raised his hands and spoke in a loud voice: "You are chosen vessels…you are being guided step by step…keep your mind on the things of God…you will enter through the city gate and no one will shut it against you. You will speak of holy matters with heads of state around the world."

Nothing could have been more difficult to believe. Demos and Rose were the stay-at-home type, never having left California, their life was their family. And they wouldn't have believed it except for a

second prophecy a short time later, this time by a pastor in a church service: "My son, you are a chosen vessel for a specific work. I am guiding you. You will visit high government officials in many parts of the world in the name of the Lord. When you arrive at a city the gates will open and no man will be able to close them."

When Demos occasionally peeked outside his enclosed Armenian pentecostal world, he noticed to his surprise and horror that there were actually people in California that did not know God, did not have a relationship with Christ. After praying about what he could do he heard from the Lord. In obedience he rented a lot across the street from Lincoln Park where people crowded on Sundays. Demos was to do the preaching. Unfortunately for Demos, Rose got the same message so he knew it was God. Now Demos was a pretty good dairyman, but not much of a public speaker. What if some businessman recognized him? How would this affect their reputation, their business?

To his surprise some of the crowd moved closer when the choir began to sing. Now the dreaded moment, the moment that caused him sleepless nights. With sweaty hands Demos stepped to the microphone, picked out some poor victim in a yellow shirt and let him have it, speaking to him directly. He was distracted by a voice in the crowd, "Isn't that Demos Shakarian?" Gulp! A business associate had recognized him. And then he heard this weeping noise that made him wonder if he was crying, but it was the man in the yellow shirt! What's the matter with this fellow? It never occurred to Demos that someone would actually respond to his message. The man testified to the crowd about his success as a businessman and his failure with God.

The crowd thickened. Another man gave his testimony and then another. People listened attentively and six people were saved that day. This went on every Sunday, all summer, and when it was over Demos had lost his fear of man. The next year with the cooperation of different denominations they set up a tent so people could come every evening. It was at these tent meetings he noticed something that astounded him – the women outnumbered the men about ten to one.

This grieved Demos enormously; it was never so in his Armenian church. He prayed about it often and God answered his prayers. One day at a fund raising dinner he noticed a peculiar light dancing around the face of a certain gentleman, a businessman, and Demos asked him to share what God was doing in his life. The man had an outstanding testimony. Then he saw that same light on another man, and another and another, and Demos called each to share. For an hour and a half businessmen shared their love of God and the audience was captivated.

Usually it is a practiced speaker or preacher who does the talking. But Demos had discovered a new means of communicating the love and faithfulness of God - businessmen relating to businessmen. The farmer, the plumber, the merchant, the dentist, the car dealer – they each had something to share about how the Lord was working in his life.

Demos, for example, had amazing accounts of his own to share. Like the time his younger sister Florence was in a bad car accident. She was thrown from her car onto burning asphalt, her back

severely burned, and she had several bones broken. Demos tracked down an evangelist in town, a Dr. Charles Price.

"Dr. Price, my name is Demos Shakarian, and my sister's been in an automobile accident, and the doctors in Downey Hospital say she can't live, and we wondered if you would come."

It was the end of a long night for Dr. Price and he was weary. Nonetheless he agreed to come, and on the way he said, "Don't be anxious, son. Your sister will be healed tonight."

In the hospital room the power of God fell on the three of them in a profound way. Florence shook violently for twenty minutes, and Demos and Dr. Price had to duck the traction weights that were swinging everywhere. And then.... Florence was still. She whispered to her brother, "Demos, Jesus healed me."

And then there was the time when he and Dad were about to lose a thousand head of cattle to tuberculosis. Inspectors came every thirty days during the epidemic to test each herd. If a certain percentage reacted poorly to a test injection the entire herd must be destroyed. Many herds in nearby counties had already been exterminated, and it was inevitable that the herd of the Shakarians was infected. The inspectors would return in thirty days for the final test.

It so happened Demos and his father were listening to the radio to a Dr. Kelso Glover declaring that God had the power to heal every disease. Demos phoned him the next morning. "When you said 'any disease,' sir, did that include sickness in cows too?" It took a while for Glover to answer but finally replied, "Any disease. In animals or men." The same day Dr. Glover was praying over the herd, "Lord Jesus! The cattle on a thousand hills are Yours! In Your Name, Lord, we take authority over every tuberculosis germ attacking Your creatures."

Three days later the inspectors were shaking their heads. There was, they said, no medical explanation. Not one cow was infected, not even those that had a bad reaction to the test thirty days previous.

Yes, Demos had many accounts of the involvement of God in his life to share with others. And so did every Christian businessman. How powerful it would be if businessmen could get together to encourage each other, to lift up the name of Jesus, to tell of Christ in their lives, to pray for one another.

That was Demos' dream and vision and hope. He had the name picked out already – the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International. The 'International' on the end embarrassed him, but he felt confident God wanted this fellowship to reach the world. But first Los Angeles.

The first, first of many thousands, Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI) breakfast took place in Clifton's Cafeteria on Broadway and Seventh, Los Angeles, California on an October Saturday morning, 1951. Demos had thought of everything – he made all arrangements with the restaurant, procurred a renown speaker, and phoned every Spirit-filled businessman he knew in

Los Angeles. Demos expected, oh, maybe three or four hundred.

Twenty-one! And that included Demos and Rose. But surely, Demos thought, the next year would see a vast growth. But it didn't. He bribed many by buying their breakfast, but still no growth. A year later attendance dropped to sixteen. One of the directors of the FGBMFI told Demos, "I think the whole idea of the Fellowship is a dud. Frankly, I wouldn't give you five cents for the whole outfit…Unless a miracle happens between now and next Saturday, you'd better count me out."

Even Rose agreed, "If God is in something, He blesses it, doesn't He? And you just can't say the Fellowship's been blessed." Demos was convinced. Best to let the whole thing die. And yet…

He couldn't let it go. Just couldn't. In frustration and desperation he fell to his knees. And there in his living room he had an experience with God that was the turning point of the Fellowship.

Demos lay helpless on the floor, such was the awesome power of God resting on him like a heavy blanket. Rose walked around him and played softly on the organ. Demos praised the living God who had made Himself so real, both in English and in his unknown language. Rose prophesied, "I am the One, Demos, who can open doors. I am the One who removes the beam from the unseeing eye. And now I will let you see indeed."

The ceiling seemed to disappear and up he went, not in body but in spirit, until the earth could be seen below. In this vision he saw millions of men, side by side. With the clarity of a zoom camera he could see clearly the faces of many thousands of these men. To his horror he realized they were all dead! Men from every nation, of every color, lifeless and cold.

Rose spoke again, "My Son, what you see next is going to happen very soon." The world spun before him again so he could see the same multitude of men – but now they were different, alive, joyous, praising God! On every continent it was the same. Men who were dead had come to life. Vision over, Demos was back in the living room.

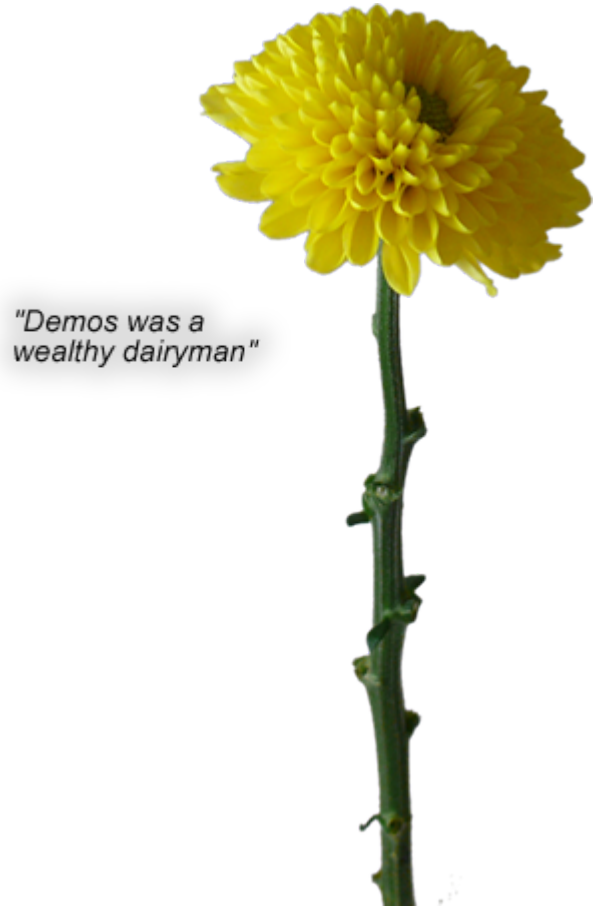
Things were quite different after that awesome experience. Demos learned to stop trying and to start trusting God. A few hours later he was back at Clifton's Cafeteria and the first one to approach him was Miner.

To Demos' amazement, Miner gave him a check for a thousand dollars and said, "I waked up this morning and I heard a voice. It was God – I know it was God. He said, 'This work is to go around the world and you are going to donate the first money!' " Another man drove all night some four hundred miles, at the instruction of the Lord, to offer his printing press services "to put out a magazine…this fellowship must go around the world." Thus the beginning of the Voice magazine soon to be printed in many languages and placed throughout the world.

Soon there was a second and a third chapter of the FGBMFI. And then a dozen. And then a hundred. And then a thousand. Whereas the first convention attracted six hundred businessmen, today a convention can draw twenty thousand. Since the FGBMFI is non-denominational it attracts people of

many faiths. Through this organization pentecost has swept through the Lutheran and Catholic churches, and many other denominations.

Demos and Rose have been busy. Very busy. Demos would often be speaking at a Fellowship banquet and have no idea what city he was in, such was his hectic schedule. Their lives are a definite fulfillment of Efim's prophecy – that the offspring of those who in obedience left their land and traveled to America would be a blessing to the nations.



"and zero sons"

"Grandfather and Grandmother received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that day"

"Demos loved God
from an early age"

"You will visit high government
officials in many parts of the world"

"Demos was a pretty good dairyman, but not much of a public speaker."

"Dr. Price, my name is Demos Shakarian"

"Your sister will be healed tonight."

TEEN PROBE

S-T-R-A-I-H-T T-A-L-K T-O T-E-E-N-S

Hey, it's Bible lesson time! It's been a long time since your last one, right? The Bible. You ought to heed the Bible. Doesn't matter if your friends don't, your teachers don't, your family doesn't. You ought to pay attention to the Bible.

Because it isn't like any other book. If all other books combined are worth a dollar, the Bible is worth a thousand. You ought to read the Bible. It is God's word for you.

The first Bible verse we go to is:

Psalm 14:1 (Amplified): The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.

Come across any fools lately? Guys who think, Hey, there ain't no God! Good luck created me. You know, these billions of nice molecules just came together and here I am. Lucky me!

The Bible (and the Author) calls them fools.

Seen this cowboy show once. Here was this dude, all by himself, rifle in hand, in a wagon in the middle of the prairies. He was surrounded by Indians, lots of Indians, none of whom appreciated some cowboy invading their turf. Each of them Indians would relish sticking his scalp on his spear as a trophy and waving it around in the wind.

You're like that cowboy, see? No, you're not surrounded by Indians, you're surrounded by fools. Everywhere you look there are people who say in their heart, There ain't no God. No, they don't say it out loud, but believe it in their heart. Like those Indians, they are out to get you.

You know what's in a person's heart by how he lives and how he talks. A man who believes there is a God doesn't curse God, doesn't ignore God, and doesn't make light of spiritual matters.

Matthew 7:18 (KJV): A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Good trees produce good fruit, bad trees bad fruit. Wise people produce wise people and fools make fools. A student of fools is going to become a fool, can't help it. You will become like those you hang with. Like those you listen to. Like those you accept as teacher. (Hey, I'm not talking math and science!)

Proverbs 13:20 (KJV): He that walks with wise men shall be wise.

You are a product in the making. If you walk with wise men you will become a wise product. Likewise, if you walk with fools, you will become foolish. If your world consists of fools, those who say in their heart, There ain't no God, you will become the fool they are.

To say you are surrounded by fools – those who say in their heart, There ain't no God – is no exaggeration. Turn on a sit-com and you see a whole bunch at once. Many (most?) of the editorials you read are written by fools who say in their heart, There ain't no God. Many of your teachers say in their heart, There ain't no God. Like the lady who called me after Issue Six to inform me that the Bible is just a book, not to be taken literally. And her students who walk around with weird satanic gook on their jackets – well, they don't really believe that stuff, they're just, you know, having fun. And people like me shouldn't write trash to kids saying the devil is real and you better be careful or you will end up in the same hell he's walking into.

That teacher may have brains, maybe she's cool, I don't know. She may have twelve degrees, maybe she is somebody's hero – but she is a fool. Because she says in her heart, There ain't no God. She is one of the many Indians surrounding you. She produces after herself and those who adhere to her will become as she is.

Romans 1:22 (KJV): Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

You are surrounded by atheists, feminists, agnostics, humanists, scoffers. You listen to their words every day. Those words are programming you, molding you, leading you in a certain direction.

Unfortunately fools do not walk around with an I Am A Fool sign on their back. Matter of fact they got you thinking they are the smart guys. They even give degrees to each other that in effect say, This is one wise dude.

Their words are polished, their arguments sound good, they seem so smart, so finished. Little guys like us have a hard time not being impressed with their words and mannerism. If they say something real dumb like, We are all a product of chance happenings, we drop our guards and accept what any mathematician will say is an impossibility. And if they say we have this Unconscious Mind, we figure they wouldn't say it if it weren't true. If they scoff at the notion of a literal heaven and hell, then for sure these things can't be real.

Romans 1:21 (Amplified): They became futile and Godless in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened.

Hey, God's talking about fools. Futile means they don't do anybody any good. Godless means they leave God out of their thinking. An example of vain imagination is thinking you're a somebody. Evolution is a sample of foolish reasoning. A stupid speculation is saying there is no life past the grave. A darkened mind is a mind that lacks the ability to come to a right conclusion.

Matthew 7:13 (KJV): For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in.

You see, most people are going the wrong way. Most people are headed toward destruction, and you are being swept along. You feel a certain security and warmth being in the flow but their end is destruction.

Proverbs 13:20 (KJV): A companion of fools shall be destroyed.

To a large degree you choose who you hang with, the company you keep, the heroes you adulate, the words you hear and read. You choose the Indians who surround you. But the Bible says, A companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Proverbs 1:31 (Amplified): Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way.

A person eats out of his own packsack. Drinks water from the well he has dug. Reaps from the seeds he has sown. Sleeps in the bed he has made. Slurps the soup he has cooked up. Eats of the fruit of his own way. A person who chooses foolishness has horrible consequences that will catch up to him some day. It may be down the road of life, but calamity awaits with jaws wide open, eager to devour munchy little fools.

Proverbs 1:7 (KJV): Fools despise wisdom.

Fools and wisdom don't get along too good.

Proverbs 12:15 (KJV): The way of a fool is right in his own eyes.

They are convinced they are right. Can't see the emptiness of their own lives, the sadness in the mirror, the hurt in their hearts. Others can see their misery, but they cannot. They are proud and foolish, heading toward destruction.

Proverbs 14:9 (KJV): Fools make a mock at sin.

Everywhere people mock sin. There's the queer jokes. The time-to-find-another-lover songs. Perverse is cool. When an aging actress tells a dirt joke they laugh harder because perverse old ladies are double-cool.

Romans 6:23 (KJV): The wages of sin is death.

Fools are ostriches with heads in the sand, refusing to consider the sure destruction that's going to gobble them up. They are walking into the eternal death their sins have earned them, but they don't

seem to care.

Proverbs 9:6 (KJV): Forsake the foolish and live.

If you want to live, you got to get away from them. Turn your back on them. Make a decision you are no longer going to walk their walk, rap their rap, sing their songs, laugh at their jokes. You really have no choice. The end of the fool is destruction and “A companion of fools shall be destroyed.”

Proverbs 8:33 (Amplified): Hear instruction and be wise, and do not refuse or neglect it.

Not often you will get good advice. When it comes “do not refuse or neglect it.” Right now you are getting good stuff. So listen up. Turn from the ways of the fool and the perverse.

Proverbs 4:7 (KJV): Get wisdom.

In other words, Wise up! Do the right thing, make the right moves, stop walking after fools, those who say in their heart, There ain't no God.

Proverbs 4:8 (Amplified): Prize Wisdom highly and exalt her, and she will exalt and promote you.

If you hold wisdom in high esteem and walk in the way of the wise you will be a winner. You will end up in the place where you want to be.

Proverbs 16:16 (KJV): How much better it is to get wisdom than gold.

If you had to choose between a ton of gold and a ton of wisdom, which would you choose? (Please don't say gold.)

Matthew 7:24-27 (Amplified): Everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them will be like a sensible (prudent, practical, wise) man who built his house upon the rock. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them, will be like a stupid (foolish) man who built his house upon sand. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell –and great and complete was the fall of it.

My precious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ spoke these words. It is a very complete definition of foolishness and wisdom. These words of Christ can be used as an indicator, to let you know if, right now, you are walking in wisdom or foolishness.

The wise are those who build their house – their lives – on the words of Christ, choosing His words above all others.

Fools are those who reject or ignore the words of Christ, choosing to build their house – their lives – on sand, words of another.

Both the wise and the foolish will face the storms of life, but the wise will stand and the foolish will fall.

James 4:6 (Amplified): God sets Himself against the proud and haughty, but gives grace to the lowly (those who are humble enough to receive it).

You must humble yourself, admit you're not good enough, acknowledge your need for Jesus to save you, that you can't make it on your own, that you have been a sin machine who needs to be washed in the blood of the Lamb. (Jesus is the "lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.")

1 Timothy 1:15 (KJV): Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

You are a sinner, doomed to eternal punishment. Jesus came into the world to save you. Because He loves you.

Matthew 16:15 (Amplified): Who do you (yourselves) say that I am?

Jesus asked his disciples that question. Peter spoke up, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now who do YOU say that Jesus is?

Hunh?

Well?

A little louder please, I can't hear you.

John 10:10 (Amplified): I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows).

They is you. Jesus came to bring you life. To bring you out of boredom, out of your emptiness. To bring you to higher ground. A better place.

A story. There was this baby who got mixed up with this other baby and she ended up in the wrong home. Things weren't so good – Daddy drank a lot, Mom was always crying, the bed sheets rarely got changed, they ate a lot of porridge and cheap hamburger meat, everyone looked down on them. Got the picture? When the mistake was realized, thirteen years later, the real parents came to rescue their daughter. Her real Daddy was nice, Mom was altogether, they lived in luxury, and everything was clean. But the daughter didn't want to leave the only world she knew. Dad and Mom weren't happy or successful and didn't show the daughter much affection, but she was accustomed to them. They were family. And besides, she got to watch real hot videos, and get spaced out on rock and weed, and go out with the guys any night of the week – and she knew instinctively that that would change. And what would her friends think? They would probably razz her and turn their back on her.

Her real Dad and Mom knew their daughter would be much happier with them. They would love on her until the wounds of childhood were healed. She would have a clean bed and healthy food and good friends. But they didn't have the heart to just drag her off. They explained the circumstances as best they could, how there was a mix-up at the hospital, how she ended up in the wrong home, how

much better things would be if she made a decision to leave the old life behind and accept the new life. And then they let her decide for herself.

So it is with you. Things did not go as they should have. You were supposed to live in fellowship with God, walk with Him and talk with Him. You would have been happy, very happy. But satan got in there, Adam fell to temptation and...well things got messed up real bad.

Now Jesus comes to offer you a chance to live where you were created to live – with the Father, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit. And with lots of Christians. This world is much better than the one you are used to. If your present life is worth a nickel, this new life is worth a hundred dollars.

Yes, it will be hard to leave the old behind – not because you are happy, but because you are accustomed to it. It's the only world you know. God will not force His will upon you. He sent someone (me and others) to explain the circumstances, how things got messed up, how there is a better life for the receiving. But the choice is yours.

John 3:19 (KJV): This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Jesus is the light of the world. The sin of man is rejecting this pure, wholesome, healthy light, preferring instead the life of darkness where sin abounds.

Proverbs 13:13 (KJV): Whoso despises the word shall be destroyed.

The fool is the thirteen year old daughter who refused an invitation to a much better life. The fool will reject the words of Christ – His invitation to a better life, His warning to those who refuse to be saved, His wisdom – and end up in eternal ruin.

The wise person is the thirteen year old daughter who made the decision to accept the better life, the one who after hearing the words of Jesus Christ, made a decision to build on those words.

Hey! God bless you!

"Hey it's Bible lesson time!"

"you're not surounded by Indians, you're surrounded by fools."

"You will
become like
those you
hang with"

"people like me shouldn't write trash to kids"

"You choose the Indians who surround you."

"A companion of fools shall be destroyed."

"Please don't say gold."

"My precious Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ spoke these words."

"Now who do YOU say that Jesus is?"

SAMUEL MORRIS (1872 – 1893): TRIBAL PRINCE

Kaboo was born of the Kru tribe which inhabits the western forests of the Ivory Coast. Kaboo's father was a tribal chieftain and he a prince. When a child, Kaboo's father was defeated in a tribal battle and, as was custom, the prince was held as a pawn in the enemy's camp until a war payment was paid in full.

The indemnity was promptly made and the child released, but years later the father was defeated again, and again Kaboo was held as a pawn. This time the ransom took several years to pay and Kaboo was treated with unspeakable cruelty by his captors.

And then a third time. Now fifteen, Kaboo was a captive of a merciless chieftain enemy. No matter what his father brought as indemnity, the ruler declared it insufficient. The torture was intense and the father offered to send a daughter as hostage to take his son's place but Kaboo said no, that would be worse than the punishment. Father gave up trying to make restitution and the angered chieftain had Kaboo beaten daily with a thorny poison vine that ripped his flesh and caused his body to burn with fever. A messenger was sent to the father after each beating, describing in detail the agonizing torture of his son.

The teenager was about to die from the beatings and poisoning, but before dying he was to suffer a horrible torture especially designed for unredeemed pawns. A pit was dug near an anthill. After one final beating the captors would bury the young prince vertically, all but his head, pry his mouth open with sticks and place sweet fluids in his mouth to attract the ants. Later they would bring the dreaded driver ants to consume his living flesh. But first there was to be one final beating with the poisonous whip. It was during this beating that it happened…

Suddenly there was a flashing light, like lightning, from the sky blinding all but Kaboo. A voice, audible to all, commanded Kaboo to get up and flee. Kaboo was instantly healed and strengthened. He could now run though seconds before he couldn't stand. And run he did, as fast as he could, straight into the jungle, the enemy in pursuit. The jungle was so thick that in places it was dark in the daytime, making it easy to hide.

Kaboo was still in danger as he couldn't return to his tribe and family, nor could he survive alone in the jungle. Anyone seeing the fleeing pawn would return him to his tormentors. There was danger everywhere, from poisonous snakes to cannibals. But the same friendly light that set Kaboo free guided him through the dark nights and he hid in tree trunks during the day. Guided by the light, Kaboo emerged weeks later at the only safe place in the country, a white settlement near Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, the only important settlement at that time with civilized law.

Kaboo met a boy from his own tribe who led him to Christian missionaries. One Sunday a woman was preaching about Saul, a man in the Bible who was on his way to arrest Christians in the city of Damascus when he was struck by a heavenly light that blinded him. A voice spoke from heaven saying, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” It was the voice of Jesus.

Kaboo shouted, “That’s just what I saw! I have seen that light! That is the same light that saved me and brought me here!” As Saul was converted to Christ when he heard the gospel message, so did Kaboo surrender his life to Jesus. And as Saul (who was renamed Paul by the Lord) had an unusual anointing upon his life, so did Kaboo. Though never to reach his 21st birthday and living only five years as a Christian, the anointing on his life caused him to bear much fruit for his beloved Jesus.

When baptized, he was given the name Samuel Morris. Filled with Godly zeal, he was one to pray out loud and his night-long prayers tested everyone’s patience. One day he led a boy to Christ who had escaped from the same evil chieftain and was a witness to Samuel’s escape. He confirmed the story of the light that saved Samuel’s life

Sam worked at odd jobs in Uberia for two years. He had been told about the Holy Spirit who Jesus promised to be a helper and comforter to His followers. The missionaries’ knowledge of the Holy Spirit was limited. Sam asked a missionary where she got her knowledge of this Holy Spirit. When she replied that it was from a Stephen Merritt who lived in New York City, Sam replied without hesitation, “I will go to see him,” and was soon running toward the coast!

Upon arrival, he spotted a sailing ship anchored at sea and its small boat making trips to shore to pick up supplies. He made it known to the captain that his Father wanted the captain to take him to New York, his Father being the God of heaven. The captain thought him crazy and refused him, but Samuel wouldn’t go away. Since two of the crew jumped ship in the night, the captain took the negro boy on board to work for his passage. Sam was on his way to America to learn more about the Holy Spirit.

The captain was a hard and cruel master of his ship, dreaded by his crew. The crew consisted of

crude transients and derelicts from all corners of the world, one not understanding the language of the other. They cursed, drank rum and fought. They picked on Sam, cuffing and slapping the slight teenager.

By the time they arrived in NewYork harbor five months later the captain and much of the crew were converted to Jesus Christ! They come to love Samuel Morris, the black boy with the anointing of God who prayed the sick to health and was servant to all. They prayed with Sam and sang songs to their Savior. The men took a collection of clothes and pieced together a suit for the youngster, and Sam was given the privilege of being the first to walk the gangplank to shore. The year was 1890.

Samuel asked the first man he seen where he could find Stephen Merritt, a seemingly ridiculous question, but nonetheless the stranger offered to take Sam to Merritt's home across town for the price of a dollar. Upon arrival, Sam told Stephen Merritt, "I am Samuel Morris. I have just come from Africa to talk with you about the Holy Spirit." When the guide asked for his dollar, Sam pointed to Merritt and said, "Stephen Merritt pays all my bills now."

That first night Sam was instructed to wait in a mission for transients until Merritt came back from an appointment, and when he returned there were seventeen men laying prostate on the floor, enveloped in the power of God, surrendering their lives to Christ. Sam brought to America the anointing of God.

Merritt, a wealthy man, was the secretary to an important bishop. Sam won Merritt's heart and that of his household and slept that first night in the bed reserved for the bishop and in the bishop's nightgown - but not before he prayed with his host. The power of God fell and Merritt had a most powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit. When Sam was asked to bless the food at mealtime every eye became wet with tears.

One day Stephen and Sam were on their way to a funeral in a horse drawn coach. They picked up two Methodist clergymen, doctors of divinity, who were clearly slighted to share a coach with a black boy. Sammy asked permission to pray, and the glory of God filled the coach, resulting in a permanent mantle of God's anointing on Stephen Merritt's life (and two ashamed clergymen).

The funeral was awesome as the three men preached the love and tender mercies of God as they never preached before. The people felt like heaven had opened and poured its blessings on them. People repented of their sins. Sam felt the presence of angels.

Sam was invited to speak to young people at Sunday school. Within minutes the altar was filled with weeping, repentant teenagers, such was the awesome presence of God. The young people immediately formed the Samuel Morris Missionary Society, and Sam was soon able to go to school, Taylor University.

Upon request, Sam was directed to a black church. Arriving late in the service, he walked up to the pastor, a stranger, and requested permission to give a message to the people. There was something

about Sam that made the pastor agree, and in seconds the entire gathering was on their knees shouting for joy and weeping before God. The pastor later spoke of this incident: "I did not listen to hear what he was saying. I was seized with an overpowering desire to pray…I know my soul was on fire as never before. The light that had brought Samuel Morris out of bondage in Africa was surely shining into the hearts of our brethren there in Ft. Wayne. No such visitation of the Holy Spirit had ever been witnessed by that congregation."

Taylor University was too much for a young man who could barely read or write, and Sam was given private tutoring until able to enter classes. The school was in trouble in those days. Not only was it ebbing in its fervor for God, but it was on the edge of financial bankruptcy.

The light burning in Sam's soul rejuvenated everyone from the president to the new enlistees. A Faith Fund that had been started to support Sam was used to meet the financial needs of the university; Sam refused to touch a penny, insisting it be used for others instead. His faith was infectious, and as faith was stirred in the hearts of those around him, the necessary funds were raised and the university saved.

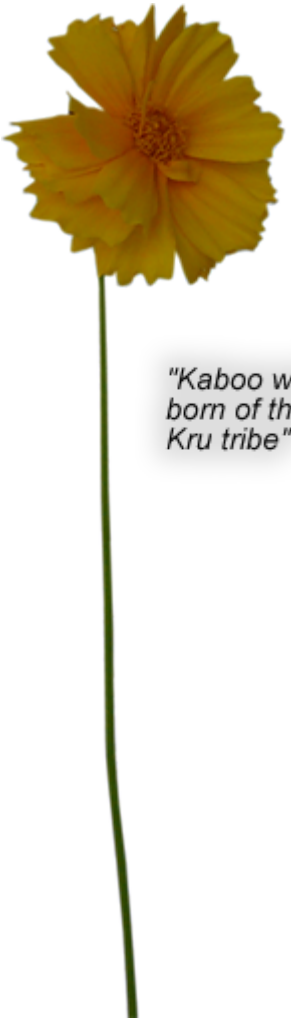
Samuel Morris did not live to fulfill his dream. He ached to return to his tribe and preach to them the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel that radically transformed his own life. He never complained of the cold he caught and the sickness that stole his health, and soon he was dying. Laying in bed, he said to his fellow students, "I am so happy. I have seen the angels. They are coming for me soon," and soon after died, an expression of sheer joy on his face. The community sank into deep sorrow.

The anointing on Samuel Morris caused revival in the hearts of thousands. The captain and the crew remained faithful to God and were like family to each other. Stephen Merritt prayed many sick and insane to wholeness and led ten thousand people to Calvary's precious cross, all because of the unction of the Holy Spirit that fell on him that day Sam prayed in the coach. Sam saved a university, spiritually and financially, and passed on a vision of the bigness of God. Every year missionaries trickled out of Taylor to the nations for decades thereafter. Sam's name was an inspiration to many around the world.

And yet there is no natural logic to explain the success of a penniless black, short in stature, unimpressive to look at, only slightly educated, who never lived to see his 21st year. Jesus said,

"With God all things are possible." He chooses who He will and Sam was His choice.

For more information on the life of Samuel Morris, please Google, Samuel Morris, 1872-1893.



"Kaboo was born of the Kru tribe"

"Now fifteen, Kaboo was a captive of a merciless chieftan enemy."

"And run he did"

"so did Kaboo surrender his life to Jesus."

"Stephen Merritt pays all my bills now."

"Merritt had a most powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit."

"I am so happy. I have seen the angels. They are coming for me soon"

ARTHUR BLESSITT (1940 -): EVANGELIST

The life of Arthur Blessitt is better than fiction. Let's start this amazing account on Sunset Strip, Hollywood, California. It is the summer of 1969, and the Strip has more than its share of hippies and junkies, cons and eccentrics, rockers and bikers, prostitutes and tourists. Chained to a light post is a twelve-foot wooden cross, and chained to the cross is Arthur Blessitt.

Why would a man chain himself to a cross? Here's the story:

Sunset Strip was splattered with every type of nightclub, and Blessitt thought it only fitting to open a Jesus nightclub, a place where people could come and hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. He made a big cross, hung it on the front wall and preached under it every night at midnight. People of every stripe dropped in, many had their lives totally altered by the saving knowledge of Christ. Like Tom.

Tom was a rough and tough biker, one of the original Hell's Angels. He walked into His Place, the name of the Jesus nightclub, just when Arthur was bolting the cross together. Arthur asked Tom for a wrench, but he was scared to go near that cross. Arthur and his wife Sherry prayed for Tom and soon led this hardened biker to Christ. Two weeks later Tom was dead, killed on the Hollywood Freeway, and Arthur was preaching Christ to a number of Hell's Angels at Tom's funeral. Five bikers accepted Jesus.

And so did many others under Blessitt's ministry. A common sight was Sherry holding the babies while husband was inside a bar, handing out tracts, telling people of the availability of a new life in Christ. Sometimes he was even given permission to preach on stage. And later in the night many came to His Place, where there was a team of Christian workers, for salvation.

Unfortunately some businessmen thought this Jesus nightclub was not suitable (or profitable) for Sunset Strip - and Blessitt was evicted. Arthur is a fighter and determined that this witness for Christ was not going to be removed from the Strip. The confrontation led to his arrest, three times, and a second eviction. In protest Blessitt chained himself to the cross, refusing to eat, determined to die if necessary. A man refusing to eat, chained to a cross on Hollywood's Sunset Strip caused national coverage. Many came – some to gawk, some to scorn, some to hear about Christ. Like Bob Friedman, a news reporter for the Los Angeles Herald Examiner, who kept coming back, asking questions, and finally asking Christ to wash away his sins and give him that new life. After twenty-eight days of fasting the battle was over and Blessitt moved His Place into a rented building.

Two weeks later God spoke to Blessitt's heart, instructing him to carry the cross, the one hanging on the wall in His Place, across America - to bring people's attention to their need for Christ and the sacrifice of love made many years ago in payment for their sins. It was decided a team of four would depart at ten a.m. Christmas morning, 1969, and arrive in Washington, D.C. sometime in July. The three associates were to sing and hand out tracts, and Blessitt would carry the cross.

However, shortly before Christmas Blessitt had a stroke. The doctor gave a glum report. "Mr. Blessitt, you need brain surgery immediately. You have an aneurysm in your brain, an abnormal dilation of the blood vessel wall, a blood vessel blown out like a balloon. This is seeping blood, causing your problem." Arthur left the hospital to think it over and pray. Should he go with the cross or have the operation? He decided he would rather die in the will of God than live in disobedience. He would carry the cross across America! At that decision a great joy swept over him. Sherry helped him to the bathroom and together with their small children they huddled in prayer as the swirling water flushed his medication down the toilet.

There were about 200 people to see them off that Christmas day – reporters, hippies, Christian workers, bikers, junkies. They hadn't got far when they were confronted by a deranged man with a big two-by-four in his hands, a pointed nail sticking through at one end. One of Blessitt's friends was a former black militant, another a Vietnam vet, both capable of handling this. But Blessitt felt the Lord saying this was not the way, and he shouted to his associates, "Fellows, we can't touch him. I've never used violence, we can't begin now. If we live we live...if you can't take it…run. If we die, we die…but we can't touch him."

When the man began to swing the board at Blessitt, one of the others stood in front of him, ready to take the blow. They both said, "In Jesus name," and the man, though raging, seemed to be unable to move. Sherry, towing their trailer behind the group, was yelling, and the kids crying and screaming.

The men simply bowed their heads in prayer, placing themselves in the care of Jesus. The deranged man fell to his knees weeping, the spiked board laid on the sidewalk. Though he would not accept Christ, the confrontation was over.

The sight of a man carrying a cross along the roadsides of America was to be repeated in many countries in the years to come. The busy lives of men and women and children were suddenly invaded with the reminder of the cross, the most critical event of man's 7,000 year history. At least temporarily the focus was on Christ. The very sight of the man and the cross was a challenge for people to consider and reconsider the Man who carried the cross from Jerusalem, outside the city gate, to Calvary almost two thousand years ago, the Man unlike any other man who died an innocent death in payment for the sins of all people.

3500 miles later, the small troupe arrived in Washington, D.C. There Blessitt suffered a stroke. Friends urged him to go to the hospital but instead he preached Christ to the people, and entered into a forty day period of fasting and praying. The media coverage attracted many people. The team fed the hungry peanut butter sandwiches and ministered to people all day and all night.

The excursion across his homeland country was just the beginning. Countless millions from a total of 71 nations have witnessed the man and the cross walking their roadsides. His adventures are more numerous than the blisters on his feet, incredible adventures with God who not only leads him from nation to nation, but from airport to street to hotel to village to restaurant. For without God it is impossible for a man to walk into a hostile country with a 12 foot cross where he is often an easy target on some deserted road, and come out again, especially since the Person that the cross represents is the most hated (as well as the most loved) person in humanity's history, the One who like no other divides men, the very One around whom relevance revolves.

How does a man survive a firing squad? Or weeks of drinking putrid, infected swamp water? Or walking with a cross through no-man's land in the middle of a raging war? The only explanation is God. The carrying of the cross through the nations is all God's planning, God's leading, God's timing, God's provision.

It takes God to get a man with a cross through the customs of a communist country that doesn't allow religious symbolisms. Like Bulgaria. The Lord told Arthur to just walk through customs, not to look to the left or the right, just straight ahead. So he just walked through the customs with his 12 foot cross, out the airport and into the street where he prayed for further direction. And there was Poland, 1981. "Are you going to take it with you when you leave Poland," the customs lady asked, "or are you going to leave it in Poland?" Blessitt replied, "I am going to take it with me." She stamped his papers and let him through!

Few have felt the awesome, tender, incomparable and undescribable presence of God as has this disciple of Christ. For a great anointing was upon Blessitt's life. He felt the call to preach the Word at fifteen and his Dad prayed a double portion of God's anointing on his son because he himself had

been called to preach, but refused the calling. And his grandfather, who also disobeyed the same calling, likewise prayed a double blessing. The cross, the man, and the anointing – a powerful combination. Few men have seen such miracles, such healings, so many tears of repentance. Few have had such adventures.

The first visit to Poland was in 1981. The Catholic Poles were immediately attracted to the man with the cross, the man who would dare carry the cross through their country embodied in strife with the Communist government, a country where Bibles had to be smuggled in. They came in taxis, bicycles, motorcycles, on foot. Women with baby buggies, women in their seventies and eighties, young girls. Men, women, teenagers, children – they came to see the cross, to touch it, to kiss it. The crowds got larger and larger. Men left their jobs, kids were released from school. Sometimes they covered the cross with food, other times with flowers. They kissed him and they kissed the cross. Though Blessitt couldn't speak their language, the power of God would fall on the crowds and there was such weeping and joy. They cried together, tears of mutual love for their Savior who bore their sins on a similar cross 2,000 years ago.

One day Arthur was traveling through a small village, his feet burning, his entire body aching under the weight of the 80-pound cross. The street was lined with people, the crowd enlarging by the minute. Traffic was stopped as the crowd followed him. He looked across a large field to see the unforgettable – thousands of people coming – some running, some on horseback, some in cars and trucks – coming toward him, coming to see the cross. Crying, smiling, laughing. The glory of God had come! Such a spiritual awakening. Through a lady who spoke English, he preached the simple gospel of Christ with fervor and urgency.

Day after day they came in great numbers from all over Poland. Many hundreds of Poles found the new life that Jesus came to give. Such an awesome presence of God. So many tears of repentance and joy.

Several times he returned to Poland. In 1982, the country was under martial law, he felt an urgency to take the cross to the people. He was prepared for trouble. Starting his walk at the National Military Headquarters in Warsaw, he was soon in jail, and many who happened to be there were swept up in the arrest, including newsmen and NBC cameramen. God intervened and he was soon released with the blessing of the authorities to go wherever he wished in Poland. The miraculous had happened – the man with the cross was free to travel unhindered throughout Poland during martial law! The publicity of the arrest and release stirred multitudes to come. He was asked to lead the yearly pilgrimage to the small town of Czestochowa which had temporarily swelled to 70,000 people. Many opportunities were given by the priests to preach in Catholic churches. Thousands upon thousands of Catholics came to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Like Anna.

Anna was a beautiful young lady who came running to meet the man with the cross. Someone had told her this man could introduce her to Jesus. Tears were running down her face, her legs were

bloodied from walking up a certain hillside on her knees, trying to prove her love for Christ and trying desperately to find Him. Blessitt was moved by this young lady's sincerity and told her through an interpreter, "Jesus loved you before you ever started up that hill and He loves you now that you have come down. All that blood was not necessary. He has already shed His blood for you. Now I know He appreciates your desire to show your love, but you don't have to do that to prove you love Him. He can live in your heart."

After explaining the simple salvation message, he led Anna in prayer, she accepted Christ into her heart and life, and soon she was running down the road shouting, "I have found Jesus! I found Him, now I know Him. That is all I need. Now I can go. I found Him! I found Him!"

Blessitt also went to places that never heard of the cross, never heard of Jesus, never heard of the new life. Like the Darien Gap in South America.

The Darien Gap is a 400 mile strip of swamp, jungle and mountains connecting North and South America. It is part of the journey one must take on a walk from Mexico to Columbia, which God had directed Blessitt to make. This jungle doesn't lack the difficulties and dangers of other jungles in the world; it is so thick in places one couldn't see a huge waterfall a few feet ahead. A machete for cutting a path is a necessary tool in most places. There are panthers, various poisonous snakes, scorpions, leeches, contaminated water, and numerous diseases common to a jungle. There are deep ravines, spiked sticks, and grass that cuts the flesh. To make such a journey, especially alone, is a feat few have accomplished; to do so with a twelve-foot, 80 pound cross takes God.

One day at a time. To make it through the day is the only ambition he could bear. The first day took more than thirteen hours to reach a small village. He was bruised, cut up and unbelievably exhausted. His shoulders ached from the weight of the cross, his feet blistered and bleeding. But before he could rest he preached Christ and the cross to the villagers in his faltering Spanish, for that was the purpose of it all. On and on he went, day after day, one village to the next, struggling through the thick jungle, stumbling, falling, climbing – and all the while there was the same aneurysm in his head that he had when he first started carrying the cross, his doctor having warned him that the slightest jar could cause a blood vessel to rip open, bringing immediate death.
He preached the gospel in villages where there was someone who could understand his Spanish, but often he could only dramatize Christ dying on the cross by leaning the cross against a hut, stretching his hands out and demonstrate nails being pounded into his hands and feet. With great agony he cried out to the Lord to make the natives understand that there is a God who cares, that a very special Person paid the price of their redemption. Many times naked men, women and children looked on at a white man with hands stretched out on the cross, sweaty, exhausted, a machete strapped to his side, a headband around his forehead, torn clothes, tears flowing down his dirty face, weeping. And then the glory would fall. One would cry in the presence of the Lord. Then others, and then the entire village. Arthur taught them to say Jesus, pointing to the cross, pointing to heaven, pointing to his heart, and then pointing to their hearts. Many understood, and were converted to the

Lord Jesus Christ.

God had ways of publicizing the man with the cross, to bring focus on the cross to millions worldwide. This God did in the middle of the Darien Gap jungle.

Blessitt couldn't believe his ears – a chain saw in this jungle? He chased the noise until he came to a caravan of seventeen people. They were making an excursion from the tip of South America to Alaska in two four-wheel-drive vehicles. He was so surprised at the sight of them, but they were amazed at the sight of him!

"What are you doing?" they asked.

"I'm carrying a cross," Blessitt replied calmly.

He feasted on their kindness that day and left with food in his pockets. He preached the gospel to them, but most important the man with the cross appeared on television and in a magazine, giving worldwide coverage.

Blessitt often made the news – like that time in Paris, France....

Ministers invited him to speak at the Arc de Triumphe before a small group of Christians. But they told him the wrong day. Blessitt didn't know it but he was walking into an official celebration where President Pompidieu was soon to arrive to give a speech.

When Blessitt and his wife Sherry and the children arrived they were quite pleased to see the great turnout! When the people saw the cross they opened a path for them. The soldiers let him pass. Amazingly, the steps were covered with a red carpet! – and up he went. He turned to the crowd and said in French, "Jesus loves you! Jesus loves you!" The press and television reported the event to all of France.

Most tourists avoid places in the world where there is conflict and war, but Arthur Blessitt is no ordinary tourist. Often God sends him to the very center of conflict, the sight of the cross having a dampening effect, taking some of the heat out of the dispute. Like Northern Ireland…

Five times Arthur went to Northern Ireland, the first time he took his wife and children. They knew the danger and walked right into it. Arthur and Sherry made arrangements for someone to look after their four children should they be killed. Into the heart of the war the Blessitt family strolled, down the devastated streets, past armored vehicles and armed soldiers. Bursts of firearms could be heard here and there. Sherry pushed two year old Joy and six month old Joshua in a buggy, Joy played with her doll and Joshua sucked on a bottle. Eight year old Gina and five year old Joel pasted Jesus Loves You stickers everywhere. Daddy carried the twelve foot cross.

Up the Catholic side, down the Protestant side. Snipers had Arthur in their gunsights on at least a few occasions but never pulled the trigger. At night they slept under blankets, fighting all around them, soldiers crawling right next to them. Often they were asked, "Why would you come over here in this

war and bring your children?" The answer: "Because we care. God loves you. Jesus is the way. Give your life to Him and live in His steps."

Arthur was invited to talk to a roomful of IRA gunmen and car bombers. He preached Christ and pleaded for love and forgiveness. One killer was on his way to a mass killing when he saw the man with the cross. Arthur and Sherry assured him that the blood of Christ was able to wash away his many sins of murder and violence, and led him to the new life in Christ. That night they were confronted by a group of armed men. One of them spoke up, "Reverend Blessitt, one of my men was changed by your sermon. He wanted out and we agreed to let him go. He was a good man…hard and accurate. We lost a good one. You must be something else. I've seen you around town and had my gunsight on you. Sometimes I've wanted to kill you and sometimes I wanted to join you. I just wanted to let you know that I have to admit, you've got guts. But if you ever speak of who I am or call the troops, you're dead. I'm troubled. I can hardly sleep. Can you help me?"

There were so many like that, worn out by strife and killing and hate. The gospel of Christ was a refreshment to the soul, a beacon of hope in their tired land.

On one trip to Ireland, Arthur took Billy Graham with him, the world famous evangelist. Billy handed out Jesus Loves You stickers and shared with the British soldiers the love of God. When Graham put a red Jesus sticker on his stomach, Arthur advised him to lift it up higher to cover his heart, explaining that if a sniper was going to pull the trigger he would probably use the red sticker as a target – and if Billy got hit in the stomach he would do a lot of suffering before he died, but if he got shot in the heart he would die instantly. Billy removed the sticker and stuck it over his heart.

There were times on Blessitt's world march that could be described as nothing less than glorious and awesome and inspiring. Like that day in Berlin, Germany, June 6, 1981 at the great Olympic Stadium. There was a huge Berlin For Jesus rally. Because the press and television had given him such vast coverage beforehand, the crowd that day was very large, about 15,000. Blessitt was to speak for fifteen minutes. At the end of his message he said, "This stadium was built by Hitler to commemorate the start of the olympics. In just a moment I am going to take this cross and carry it across the field, up the steps, and we are going to raise the Cross above where the torch once burned. I pray that those who hunger and thirst will be filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit. Another fire will be built today, but its flames didn't begin today. It will never be extinguished. It began on the day of Pentecost and it will not die!"

As he traversed the playing field the glory of God was upon him and the glory fell on the crowd. There was a roar of enthusiastic praise and worship to God which escalated as Blessitt climbed the steps to the torch that was lit in 1936. He was boosted up the platform above the torch where he lifted the cross high in the sky. People spontaneously rushed toward the cross. There was an explosion of praise, people everywhere weeping for joy.

Kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall but the power of the cross has never diminished and never will.

There were times when the people were enthusiastic for him and the cross, but the authorities were antagonistic. Like Madrid, Spain…

It was in Madrid that over 100,000 Christians, in the fifteenth century, were burned at the stake or slain by other means, their crime being their faith in Jesus Christ.

November 11, 1972 was the day much of the city anticipated the arrival of "an hombre con la Crosse (the man with the cross)." Blessitt traveled from France, taking six weeks to get there. Sherry was there with one son, Joel. The National Television had cameramen on rooftops to catch the excitement. Newsmen from around the world were there. Blessitt's picture covered almost the entire front page of Spain's largest newspaper. Thousands of people lined the streets as he headed for Plaza Mayor, a cobblestone square surrounded by old magnificent buildings, the very place where Christians were martyred.

The crowd was huge, and it seemed like everyone wanted to get near the cross and the man carrying it. There was a sea of people with outstretched hands reaching for the cross, pushing to get to it, screaming in Spanish. Finally, with the help of the organizers, he was lifted on a platform and silenced the crowd with a wave of the hand. And then he preached through an interpreter: "Jesus came to die for you, for me, for everyone! With His death He paid for our sins. And with His resurrection He gave us abundant eternal life. Accept Jesus into your heart. Today is the day of salvation. Confess Him as your Lord and Savior and you will be saved."

Police cars arrived and many policemen headed toward the cross. One angry officer told them to turn off the P.A. system and to leave. The interpreter showed him their permit but the officer insisted they stop. Blessitt and his companions refused to leave. They would make their stand, live or die. What an honor to shed blood on the very spot where so many thousands had shed their blood centuries previous. The crowd began to sing praises unto God, thousands of voices in beautiful harmony.

Suddenly the civil guards moved in, beating mercilessly at the defenseless crowd. The singing stopped. Click! Click! Click! went the face protectors of the civil guards as they marched on the crowd, swinging their clubs. One could hear the breaking of bones as they beat at random at men, women and children. One old lady was clubbed on the head and lay in a pool of her own blood. Loud screaming everywhere. On and on the beatings went because the people were trapped by those behind them and had no place to flee. But the beautiful crowd began to sing again, more intently than before. This was their day.

Then the guards turned toward Blessitt. They laid six year old Joel on the ground, Sherry covering him with her body to protect him from the clubs, and Arthur covering them both. Then a number of ministers fell on top of the Blessitts.

And then, seemingly miraculously, the beatings stopped. And then a verbal confrontation with the police again. The same police spokesman said, "I knew nothing about the civil guard attacking…I have

orders to clear the Plaza. Disperse now or face arrest." Blessitt's emotions were high as he replied, "You have attacked and beaten a helpless crowd of people, including old women and children. They came in peace to listen to me speak about Jesus, as you reported in your newspapers. They had no order to leave, nor opportunity to do so. They were brutally beaten. I cannot move on. I must take my stand with them and the thousands of others whose blood has been spilled in the past years in this place. I have permission from your government to carry the cross and give my testimony. But I also have a right that is given by God and cannot be interfered with. I shall preach."

When the interpreter translated those words into Spanish, the officer said, "I command you to leave." At that, Blessitt put the cross on his shoulder, his wife clung to his side. Someone from the crowd took their child for safekeeping. Thousands watched in silence as Blessitt, Sherry and two helpers knelt in prayer, anticipating the next move. As the helmeted troops moved toward them once more, he shouted to the people, "Ask Jesus into your hearts. Give your life to Him. Do not return hate for hate, but love your enemies."

They twisted his arms behind his back. He saw them dragging Sherry away. The interpreter was preaching as loud as he could while being carried off. They tried to pull Blessitt away from the cross but he clung to it with all his strength. A club came down on his ribs, another to his arm, another to his elbow. He hung on to the cross. They continued to beat him. Then they knocked him violently to the ground, the cross falling beside him. A guard grabbed him by the heels and dragged him roughly over the cobblestone.

One of the assistants grabbed the cross, lifted it high before the crowd, the people cried in unison, "Hallelujah!" Then he too was clubbed and kicked and thrown into a police car. Blessitt managed to get to the cross once more, lifting it to his shoulder and began to walk with it. Once more the clubs fell and soon he was thrown into a police car. As he was being driven away he watched as someone from the crowd picked up the cross, lifting it high, knowing that he was in for a beating, yet willing to pay the price. When man and cross were knocked to the ground another did the same, and another.

At the jail all those arrested were hugging each other, singing, laughing, praising God. Many times in different countries Blessitt had been arrested, and mysteriously released, and it happened again in Madrid. He refused to leave the jail until everyone was freed, and his cross returned. The next day he walked into a huge church auditorium, the cross on his shoulder, where much of the same crowd awaited him. The air was electrified. Such joy! Such hope! Such victory!

Few men have lived as Arthur Blessitt has lived, walked where he has walked, slept where he has slept, ate what he has eaten, or faced the impossible challenges he has faced. Seventy-one nations, many of them more than once, have witnessed the man with the cross walking their streets and telling their citizens about the Christ who paid the price of their salvation. He has carried the 12 foot, 80 pound cross over 25,000 miles, the longest walk being in Africa. Dozens of times he was thrown in jail, often in his own country. He has preached to the pope, to Arafat, to royalty, to generals. To

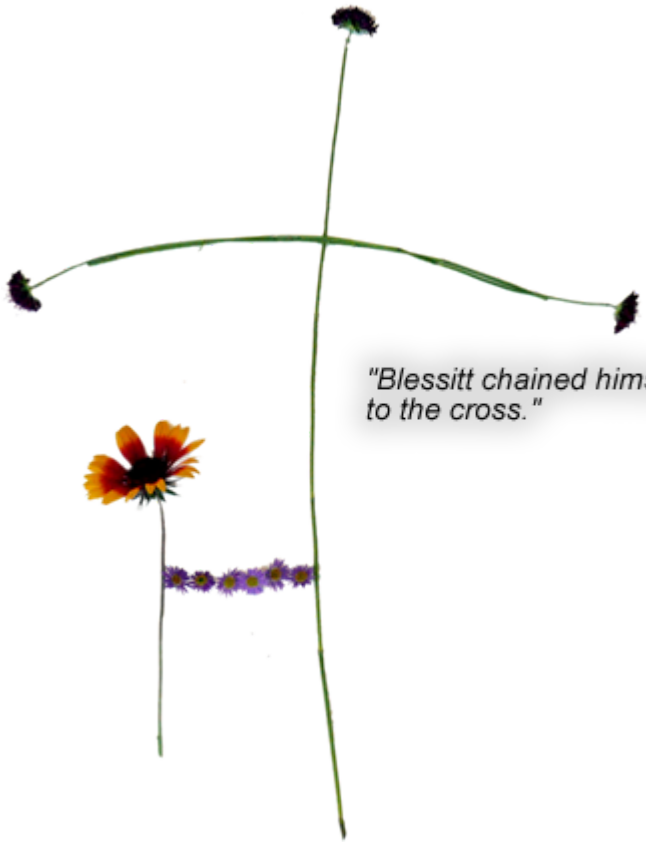
prostitutes, to pimps, to prisoners, to addicts. To peasants, to students, to businessmen, to soldiers. To Arabs, to Canadians, to Russians, to Africans. To Catholics, to Protestants, to Hindus, to Muslims.

He has slept in a pigpen. He has slept in a prime minister's home. He has slept on a plank between two benches. He has carried the cross in the 135 degree heat of Jordan and the 20 degree cold of Nova Scotia. He has walked alone, walked with his family, walked with friends. He has eaten monkey legs, roots, and many things that could not be identified. He has feasted on shrimp in El Salvador and salmon in Finland. He has drank contaminated water in the Darien Jungle, survived a raging sea storm near Papau New Guinea, faced a firing squad in Nicaragua, been choked by Los Angeles police. He was attacked by baboons in Kenya, crocodiles in Rhodesia, German shepherds in Israel, an elephant in Tanzania. He has preached to the lone peasant along the roadside and to a crowd of half a million at the Atlanta Rock Festival.

God took him through it all, and continues to lead him to this day. Chances are as you read this article Arthur Blessitt is carrying the cross in some distant land, carrying on his shoulder the reminder that the price of man's sins has been paid in full.

The information in this article, and the article following, was obtained from the book, Arthur, A Pilgrim, written by Arthur Blessitt, published by Blessitt Publishing.

"The life of Arthur Blessitt is better than fiction."



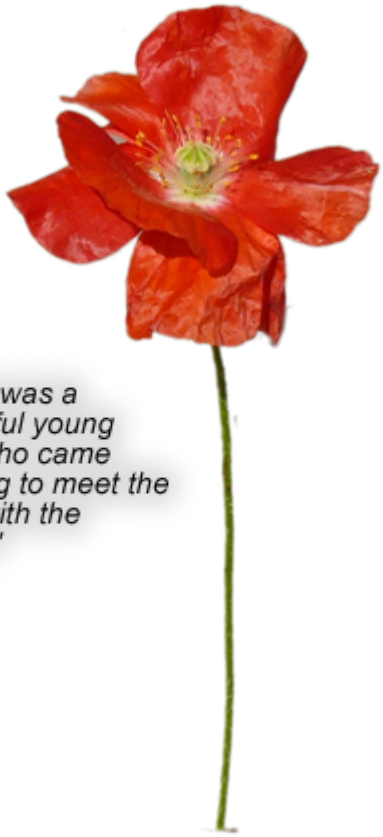
"Blessitt chained himself to the cross."

"Mr. Blessitt, you need brain surgery immediately."

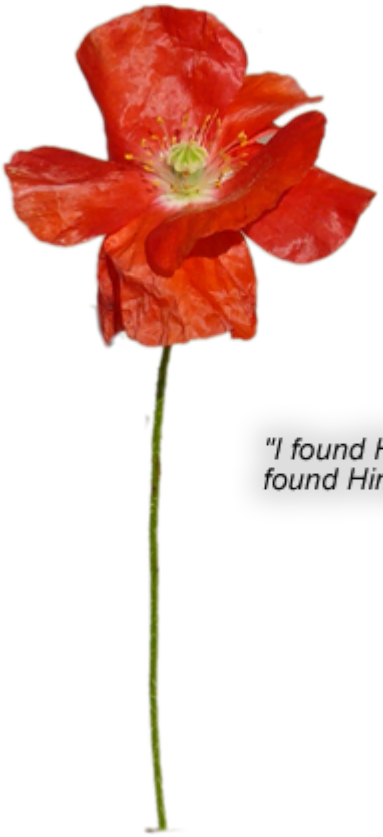
"The Man unlike any other man"

"How does a man survive a firing squad?"

"thousands of people coming"



"Anna was a beautiful young lady who came running to meet the man with the cross."



"I found Him! I found Him!."

"his doctor having warned him that the slightest jar could cause a blood vessel to rip open, causing immediate death."

"I'm carrying a cross."

"Eight year old Gina and five year old Joel pasted Jesus Loves You stickers everywhere."

"There was a roar of enthusiastic praise and worship to God"

"Jesus came to die for you,
for me, for everyone!"

"Click! Click! Click! went the face protectors"

JOSHUA BLESSITT (1970-): STUDENT

Joshua was eleven in 1981. The Lord had commissioned him to walk into a dirty Middle East war with his father, carrying his eight foot cross. In a time of prayer Jesus said, "Joshua, go with your father…"

Israel had attacked the country of Lebanon from the south and now, with three other ally armies, had its capital city, Beirut, surrounded. All four armies were pounding the PLO and Syrian forces with heavy artillery. Buildings were blown up, streets were a shambles, many were killed. Joshua's dad felt the Lord wanted him to go to West Beirut and speak a word of peace with the PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, who he had visited years ago.

So father and son flew out of Sweden where they were each carrying a cross, arriving in Tel Aviv, Israel. Their intention was to take their two crosses into the heart of the battle, right across 'no man's land,' and into Beirut, Lebanon where they would speak a word of peace to Arafat and his troops. Of course to do so was an impossibility. But for God, doing the impossible is ordinary when He has obedient servants through whom to work.

Normally, an eleven year old boy has his mind and heart on things other than the Lord's business. But from childhood, Joshua had been the exception. He was in his mothers womb when his father was making his trek across America in 1969, Sherry always close by with the van. When his mom was called to a forty-day fast when in her third month of pregnancy some thought it would be harmful to the baby, but Joshua was born big and healthy. His early years were spent on European roadsides – he did not know he was an American. Various vans, campers, trailers – traveling thousands of miles with his family of five, often walking with his daddy.

He was a babe when pushed in a buggy through war-torn neighborhoods of Belfast, a small child when walking with his dad along the roadsides of communist Yugoslavia and Bulgaria where the sight of a cross was most unwelcomed by the authorities, a young boy when caught in a terrible sea storm in Asian Waters. He met vicious gang leaders in Papau New Guinea who came under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and turned their lives over to Christ. He was there when Daddy set a crippled little girl on her feet and she walked for the first time. He saw mass healings. He witnessed crowds of thousands mobbing the cross, desperate to hear the gospel of Christ.

Sometimes Jesus used him in most unusual ways. There was no reason to take his skateboard with him to the Amazon River, but he had a feeling he should. On one occasion when he and Dad got off their boat and headed toward a small village to preach the gospel, all the people fled in fear, watching the Blessitt twosome from the edge of the jungle, refusing to come out. There was a hill not far from the river. Dad instructed Joshua to take his skateboard up the hill and skate down. Joshua protested somewhat – it was a steep hill – but consented. The natives watched in amazement as the young white boy skating faster and faster down the hill, finally jumping off and tumbling on the ground before hitting the river. In their excitement they came out to help him. Joshua made friends, and the people heard the good news of Jesus Christ.

Joshua had learned at an early age the keeping power of his God. There was that day in Turkey when his whole family was in a terrible car accident. A heavy truck bumped their trailer behind their car and suddenly the trailer was beside them! Over the bank they went, trailer and car rolling over

each other, not sideways but end over end. The trailer was smashed. The roof of the car collapsed, the sides crushed in. The car had landed upside down on the cross, breaking it in two pieces. Joy went through the front window, Joel flew out a side window, Gina climbed out with baby sister, Joshua and Joseph climbed out the back. Mom was unconscious in the front seat and Dad hung upside down in his seat belt.

Other than a small cut beside his dad's eye, no one was bleeding, none had broken bones, everyone was okay. They did not weep for themselves but for the broken cross. God had kept them.

It was on October 1, 1981 at the age of ten that Joshua received his mandate from the Lord to carry the cross. "Joshua," the Lord said, "make a cross and carry it alongside your father." The next day he told his mom, "Mama, I don't guess I'll get to do the other things that children do as I grow up. I'll be carrying the cross."

The pieces of wood Mom picked out for his cross at the lumber supply were too light. He spotted a two-by-three about eight feet long that seemed just right. His cross was beautiful, and the very next day, just two days after his calling, he was carrying his cross behind his dad before a crowd of 60,000 people at a Jesus Rally in the Pasadena Rose Bowl, and through the streets of Pasadena.

Joshua soon found out that carrying a cross in a foreign land is no easy task. The first country he visited with his cross was the Philippine Islands. They were walking around the island of Romblon. When they peaked a jungle-covered mountain, Arthur turned around to see how his son was doing. Tears were falling down Joshua's cheeks. "I'm okay, Daddy," Joshua said. When his dad ordered him to take off his boots they could see the blood-soaked socks. His feet had blistered, the blisters burst open, and new ones formed in their place.

"Joshua, why didn't you tell me?"

"Daddy, I decided I would walk as far as I could until I couldn't take another step."

Though Joshua had seen so much, it was a shock to his young heart to be in the midst of the Middle East war. The sight and sound of man clashing with man – rockets, tanks, bombs, artillery, flashes of fire filling the sky – made him cry. Daddy held him tight and offered to take him back, but Joshua replied, "Daddy, Jesus told me to go with you as far as I can. I can't turn back. I will stay with you. Jesus is with us. Let's go. I'm okay."

And so on they went.

When they got to Lebanon there was no way they could get close to Beirut. Only those who had a pink slip could get closer, and it was impossible to get one. But God opened a door:

They were in a restaurant talking to a Norwegian waitress whose boyfriend was a bodyguard for an Israeli commander. Soon father and son were dining with the commander who was so taken up byJoshua that he gave them a pink slip to go anywhere in Israel-held territory.

They passed through about thirty barricades on their way to Beirut, many of the guards surprised to see their pink slip. But there was no way they could hope to get through the barricade surrounding Beirut itself. Again God opened a door.

Joshua handed a Jesus Loves You sticker to one of the nearby newsmen who then recognized the man with the cross. The reporter suggested they outflank the Israelis and try to get through the barricade of one of the other three armies surrounding Beirut, as that was the way they slipped in one of their reporters. The newsman drew a map and soon Dad and Joshua were standing before a Philangest commander at the edge of the barricade. The commander insisted they could not pass until they got permission from the Israelis. There was an emotional controversy. The Spirit of God fell on the commander. Joshua heard Daddy say, "In the name of Jesus, we must go in." Dad and commander stared at each other for a long time, both being bathed in the presence of God. Finally the commander gestured to them to pass saying, "God be with you."

Past the devastated buildings they walked, hand in hand, each with their cross on their shoulders. Soldiers yelled at them to come back, some ran after them, but they rushed out into no-man's land in the midst of five fighting armies.

"Pray, Joshua, pray! If you've ever prayed, pray now!"

The monks at the monastery where they slept the previous night said they would die if they tried to cross into Beirut. The commander who gave them the pink paper said they would die. That morning a priest told them they would die. As they got closer some policemen said they would die. A man tore up his white shirt, tying a piece to each cross, and told them they would die. The Philangest commander said they would die.

But they did not die. Prayerfully they chose the path to walk so they would not step on a mine. The CBS, ABC, NBC, Polish television, British television and Swedish television caught the moment. People from all over the world witnessed the father and son team, each carrying a cross across no-man's-land, each cross bearing a white flag, both waving Bibles and smiling. Past tank barricades, past mounds of dirt from bombs, past unseen mines.

Into the Syrian PLO lines they went, soldiers cheering; they had broken the Israeli blockade and to them it was a victory. Photographers clicked their cameras as Yasser Arafat, who had spoken with Blessitt two years previous, appeared at the scene while the world looked on. Even the communist countries carried the story.

Eleven year old Joshua did not eat that day. The screams of hurting children were everywhere. The hotel where they slept was badly bombed and the building shook from missiles all night. But Joshua didn't complain. He never complained. He was aglow with the Spirit of God. Jesus had called him; Jesus had kept him.

John 3:16 declares, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever

believes in him should not perish but should have eternal life." The truth of that verse impacted the nations that day. Hearts were suddenly focussed on the Christ who died so others might live, on the Man of peace who paid a debt He did not owe.

Joshua was privileged to carry his cross into what people call the Holy Land, where Jesus preached, healed the sick, suffered and died, and rose from the grave. And privileged to have drank from Jacob's ancient well where the woman gave Jesus a drink of water. His eleven-year-old heart must have been moved as he carried his cross, a few step behind his dad, through Old Jerusalem, so familiar to his Savior, and along the same path Jesus carried His cross on His way to Calvary. And Joshua's heart must have been affected when he stood on the Mount of Olives overlooking the beautiful city of Jerusalem where his Jesus wept over the city that rejected His salvation, where his Jesus sweat drops of blood, knowing the agony He would suffer the next day, where his Jesus was taken into heaven, the disciples looking on in wonder.

"Their intention was to take their two crosses into the heart of the battle"

"Joshua, why
didn't you tell me?"

"Pray, Joshua, pray! If you've ever prayed, pray now!"

"But they did not die."

*"the Man of peace who paid a debt
He did not owe."*