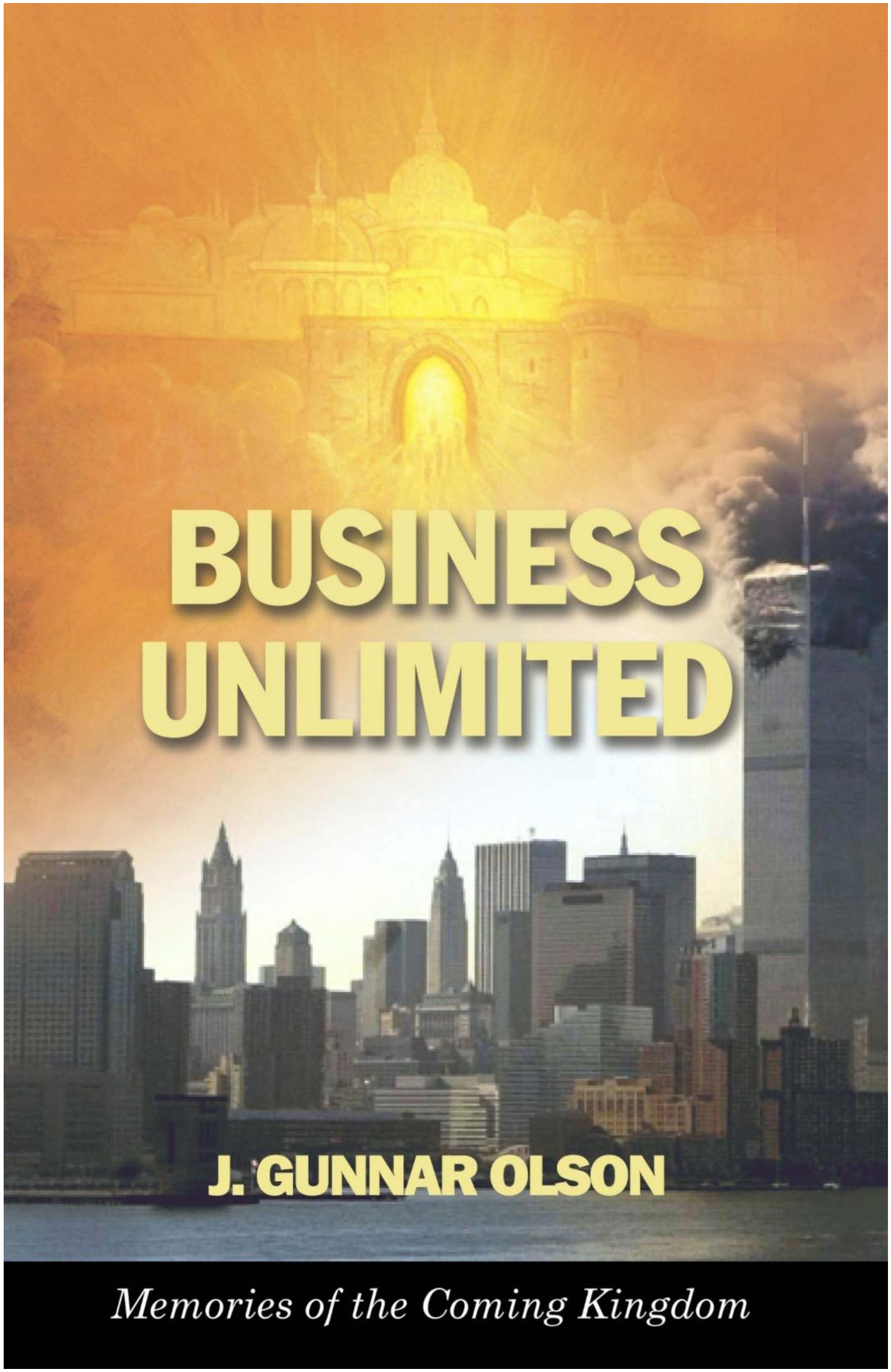

BUSINESS
UNLIMITED
J. GUNNAR OLSON
Memories of the Coming Kingdom

BUSINESS UNLIMITED

Memories of the Coming Kingdom

By J. Gunnar Olson

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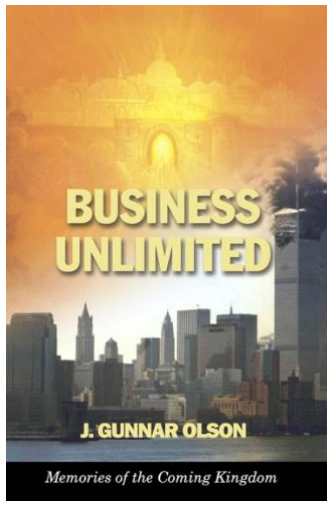
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Business Unlimited

Business Unlimited is the story of J. Gunnar Olson, an ordinary man's life turning into an extraordinary journey impacting nations, presidents, and kings. It tells of a dream becoming reality, influencing the lives of people throughout the world. As he experienced the limits of success and personal ambition he discovered an incredible liberty that tis available to everyone. A must read for every serious follower of Jesus Christ in the marketplace.

Practical and Inspiring



"Love this book. One of the best I have read so far. The insight, knowledge gleaned is practical and speaks about how we can really engage and impact the world around us."

Highly Recommended
"Wonderful resources for Christian in businesses or looking for some guidance on navigating the business world as a Christian."

Excellent
"A great inspiring book for any businessman. One realizes you are not alone in this world. We just have to have a little faith and He will do the rest."

Outstanding!
"This book is filled with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is life giving and a must read for anyone seeking Jesus Christ and His purposes."

Beyond expectations!
"I am a business owner, and I was reading this book with my board. It opened my eyes to new, amazing dynamics of business. At first, I thought this book was poorly written, but then I couldn't put it down! It has changed my perception of business."

Life changing book!
"This book is for those who seek more than financial success. It is for those, who wants to understand the living Gods kingdom here on Earth a fulfill his will through business."

Great book
"Gave me a vision for what work is meant to look like for Spirit filled and driven disciples today."

How Great is His Promises
"Absolutely the best testimonial read on how Faith in God will sustain through adversity and how He delivers on His promises."

A must read for business owners
"Fantastic! I'd highly recommend to any business owner!"

Five Stars
"One of the best books ever written. Want to have your life changed? Begin here!"

Wonderful personal journey
"This is a great personal journey of obedience to God in the life and ministry of this Swedish businessman. The lessons learned are very real for the serious Christian."

Thought provoking and inspirational
"I couldn't keep it down. Powerful and on spot."

Amazing read for business
"Awesome read....totally great!!!"

Business is UNLIMITED in the Kingdom of God
"Business Unlimited is a self-account of Gunnar Olson's walk with God through his career and business and clearly paints a picture of how his walk affected himself and his family. After reading the book, I can see clearly that Gunnar was an ordinary person, who because of his faith to walk with God, embarks in a lifelong extraordinary journey.

Through Gunnar's obedience, God not only changes him, but his family, friends, business, church, community, towns, and nations. Who would have thought that a man who came from such a broken family could have such impact?

The hope that his story gives to believers who want to make a Kingdom impact in and through their business is basically that it can be done. The choice that Gunnar made early in his life and career, to trust God with "all his mind, soul and strength" enabled God to be able to use him to further the Kingdom.

Gunnar is realistic when he recounts his life's walk. He does not only account all the great things that happened, but also paints a picture where the reader can see his own personal internal struggle for decisions he had to make in following God's will.

He recounts the sacrifices God has asked him to make such as giving away all his savings when he was about to start his own company, but God always provided for him. By taking a small step of faith little by little in his business decisions and choices, God gave Gunnar more than he could have ever imagined if he were to do things himself.

When projects and plans did not go right, Gunnar shows time and time again of God's grace, favor and power in any situation. Gunnar also shows us that everything that happens is part of a bigger plan and destination, that his business endeavors and contacts would lead him to found his ministry.

I have always wanted to start my own business and run a company where I could further the Kingdom. Reading Gunnar's story I can see how he and his business was used by God. How can I position myself in a way that God can use me to impact those around me, then a community and nation?

I know that God has plans for me, to prosper me and to give me a hope and a future, but there are many areas in my life I still have to grow in in order for me to get to a point where I can truly walk with God without fear or hindrance. Regardless of how I feel about my current state, I know God will use me in spite of myself, so all I can do is to "Go" and take little steps of faith.

The take away from Gunnar's account is that business can be unlimited, and that it encourages us to want that in our life, business, and career because we all can live an extraordinary life too! I want to see how God will use my future business in his plans!"

Testimonies I can identify with

"This autobiography is vivid and very engaging. It encourages me greatly as I seek to exercise my faith in business. I can personally identify with the challenges, mistakes, and miracles the author has detailed in this book. A must read for all Christian business people."

A must read

"Gunnar Olson's ICCC is an institution that truly live up to its responsibility and name. I have had the privilege to meet some members and gone through the book twice. This book will surely open your eyes to what it is to be in business as a Christian and what is expected of you from Elohim in your stewardship. I pray as you read you find your calling and also that the writer finishes well."

God Unlimited

"To me, the greatest thing about this book, is how wonderfully and detailed it shows God's interaction in the business world. It is demonstrative of how God is everywhere, even in places where people would not expect."

Gunnar really is a man of the Lord, and his stories of his career and life in this book are amazing. I could only read a chapter at a time because they were so intense!

This book is incredibly inspiring and reassuring as well, that God operates over all areas of our lives. For too long, the dichotomy of business and ministry has existed - that they are separate. But if you're a follower of God, then is separating certain parts of your life from your faith and walk with Jesus, truly following Him? Gunnar shows how this is not so.

From random people coming up to him, to God telling him to start a business, to praying for crates of sealed plastic bags, this book has amazing examples of God's power and care over the seemingly insignificant aspects of our lives. My hope after reading this book is really ask God to be in my career and do amazing things in my life - both at work and not.

Highly recommended!"

21st Century Book of Acts

"I consider this one of the best books that I have ever read. While reading it I had the feeling that I was reviewing a 21st Century account of the Book of Acts: very practical testimonies of what God is able to do in the workplace and in our lives if we just trust Him and keep our faith in Jesus Christ.

A must read for all Christians that consider themselves kingdom ambassadors or kingdom entrepreneurs for Christ. The author Gunnar Olson is also founder of the International Christian Chamber of Commerce ([...] I also suggest reading books by Myles Munroe for a deeper understanding of kingdom principles."

Business Unlimited
"This is truly an amazing book, recapturing the unbelievable life that God has allowed Gunnar to live. Gunnar is an inspiration to us all, that if you stand on the truth of the Word of God and practically apply it, then God is able to do the most amazing things through you. This is not a once off read, but rather something that needs to be revisited every couple of years.
Thank you so much Gunnar for sharing your life with us."

Outstanding
"Amazing testimony! So awe inspiring for seeking God in business and entrepreneurship. Thank you so much for writing it all down and sharing it with the world!"

Acknowledgement

Writing this book has been like reliving a great adventure. As life keeps flowing in a constant momentum of the present, revisiting my earlier experiences has been like going on a treasure hunt. Some of the treasures I had forgotten, they were so deeply buried under the increasing pace of the "here and now".

In order to uncover the elements of value and the experiences forming my life, I had to find a helper. This person would be able to receive those fragments of my life, which were like a broken mirror, and put them together to form a whole, reflecting the realities of my story so far.

Writing this book would never have been possible without Rosemary Endacott. She is currently living in Newcastle, England, married to Norman, and together they have three sons. Rosemary was presented to me as precious gift from God. An honours graduate in English Literature, her training and broad experiences of life, working as a writer and editor, with many years as an English teacher both in the UK and overseas, had given her this unique ability.

It has been a sincere joy and a privilege to work together with Rosemary. Her gentle approach and sweet personality have reflected the fragrance of the coming Kingdom. It is through her constant encouragement that I have dared to tell my story. I will be forever grateful for her wonderful contribution, making this book into a unique document, retelling my story without abusing the intimate aspects of the hand of the Lord in my life.

J. Gunnar Olson

Foreword

It was in 1978 that I met Gunnar Olson at the FGBMFI European Conference here in the UK. As Gunnar tells, this was the first time that he spoke of his family having given away all their money and having lived, as Elijah, trusting the Lord for each day's supply. It was an unforgettable breakfast meeting for the nearly 3,000 delegates present, as our brother spoke of a walk with Christ that few, if any, of us businessmen had ever experienced. For me it was extra special, because I knew that, as Gunnar was speaking, something was happening within me; I was receiving a vision of what God intended for those whom He has called to serve Him in the marketplace. I saw into that higher realm. I was never the same after that morning.

I have subsequently had the privilege of working with Gunnar in the ICCC since the Conference in Antwerp in 1986, to which he refers in this book. It has been a challenging, exhilarating, and deeply rewarding experience. I love this man; I admire this man and his wife, Asther; I am forever indebted to this man. Above all, I am deeply and eternally grateful to God for having found in Gunnar Olson a man whom He has been able to trust. Trust, with the calling of an apostle and prophet, to show others of us working at the "coalface" in the harsh, competitive world of work, something of the glory of the Kingdom. To show us what God can do through a faithful son or daughter.

This book can change your life forever. It tells of life as it is, warts and all, with all the wonderful potential that God has birthed in each of us to enable us to soar on wings like eagles. The Word that seems to me to sum up this exceptional book comes from Revelation 12 verse 11: "And they overcame him (the Devil and Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death."

Michael Fenton-Jones
President (1996 - 2002), International Christian Chamber of Commerce

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It has been a privilege to get to know J. Gunnar Olson as a close friend and sojourner in the walk of faith. We have all read about people in the Bible that "walked with God." My friend J. Gunnar Olson is one of the people of faith, in modern time, living in the same way. In this book you will follow him through his walk, beginning with the very first discoveries of the Holy Spirit's spontaneous manifestations within him, to the man in Christ he is today. It is that man today who lives a lifestyle woven by, proven by, and matured by those Holy Spirit experiences. I have known him many years and want to affirm that there is a shyness and insecurity about him in regard to his own ability. It is that very facet of his character that has made him utterly dependent on the grace of God – it is what Paul means when he says, that "the power is made perfect in weakness." Through his obedience and his sense of a real, practical trust in the Holy Spirit, Gunnar has overcome the human handicap that so many of us have of being locked in the natural, which creates a hindrance for spiritual growth.

His reflections over his experiences demonstrate a deep knowledge of the understanding of the tenets of faith and of love that govern the Kingdom of God. Gunnar's strong conviction that faith working through love is the way forward for the advancement of the Kingdom of God today is very much in accordance with the principle: "through the Spirit, by faith." One could read this book as an interesting autobiography only and become fascinated by all the strong testimonies he has seen of God's intervention in the affairs of men. One could, but then the risk is that in so doing you would miss the most essential message contained in this book. Gunnar teaches that we need to expose ourselves, daily, to the essential principles governing the life of faith, a life that exists in

a constant walk with God and the Holy Spirit.

He has had the courage to both accept the challenges laid out in his business life and the ability to take prophetic initiatives even when those initiatives spoke of serving nations. It is this ability to coexist to both the business and prophetic realm that gives to his ministry its unique Kingdom character. The book points far beyond the words on the page and the immediate story. It opens wide horizons for those who would see and believe to experience the eternal reach of redemption and recapture that which was lost for mankind through disobedience. His message is that only the supernatural life by and through the Holy Spirit is of true relevance as we face the challenges the church needs to meet in the end times.

Sven Nilsson
Pastor, Christian Centre – Orebro

As J. Gunnar Olson's pastor I have had the privilege to get to know him closely over the last few years. He has generously allowed me to share in his personal life and experiences and has given me an insight and understanding into the ministry and work that is his calling.

I view this as an expression of his desire that his ministry should be regarded as an intricate and extended element of the Body of Christ, even though his ministry is both wider and larger than what the local Church can embrace.

J. Gunnar Olson is for our time what Joseph was in the time of the Bible, a man who God is leading into royal palaces and places of power, and one on whom God can bestow wisdom to become a blessing to the nations. I regard very highly our relationship both as his pastor and as a friend of the family.

Per-Ake Eliasson
Pastor, Christian Centre – Orebro

This is a personal book, one man telling his story about his life and what he believes. It is about a life in intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, and this is the story told here, of intimacy, of love, of revelation, and as Gunnar opens his heart about his own journey, he opens to you the very heart of God.

While there is an inward reluctance on his part to tell this story, there is within the story itself, this remarkable teaching of what we need to do, to embrace and hold sweetly, the very presence of Jesus. Yet, in those gentle sounding words lie warfare, a battle call, a sounding cry to seize hold of our Lord's trumpeting sound to move forward and reclaim our lost spiritual land. This is a story of bravery, something he would be embarrassed to have me say, and while it deals with what has passed, it is about today and the tomorrows ahead. It is Gunnar's story, but more importantly, it is God's revelation.

A Friend
The man who gave him the ICCC pins almost two decades ago

Chapter 1

Faceless people

The scorching heat of the African day had passed, and the air smelled cool as we drove through the velvety darkness. The plane had touched down late at night and a minister from the Foreign Office had come to escort me across the border. We were now on our way to the capital, but although I was quietly excited, my eyelids were already closing. It had been a long flight, and I was weary, too tired to talk. While we travelled, I explained that I would not be part of the morning's inauguration as it was late, and I was exhausted. However, I would be there for the workshops and seminars. My host had assured me that would be fine.

Deep in my dreams there was a loud banging. Someone, somewhere, was urgently knocking on a door. The noise increased. And grew nearer.

8:30 a.m. The hammering was real. What's more, it was coming from outside my hotel room. Bleary eyed, I staggered to the door.

A man in uniform stood there. Dressed impeccably. "Your limousine's ready, sir."

Suddenly, I was awake, standing in crumpled pajamas, and talking to a government official.

"What limousine?"

"To take you to the opening ceremony, sir."

"There must be some mistake. I'm not coming this morning. I told them last night." The man blinked slowly.

"Sir, you must come," he continued, holding my gaze, "you're one of the main speakers."

What! I was stunned. That was the first time I knew about this! Reality dawned like a bad dream. My unexpected visitor waited patiently while I rapidly dressed and hurried to the car.

We arrived just before the President. Three thousand people were standing there: the Deputy Secretary General of the U.N., the Minister of Finance from the Ivory Coast, and other high-ranking officials and government guests. Everyone was waiting for the President and his entourage, and he was expecting me to speak! Public speaking always made me nervous, and this was the worst thing that could ever have happened to me. I was awake and standing in a nightmare. My mind was like a sheet of white paper. Completely blank. I had nothing prepared for this morning. Nothing. And then, as I walked to the platform, I remembered my dream.

As I lay in bed that first night in Benin, I had experienced the most vivid dream. I dreamt I was in the interior, wandering through endless villages and every person I met had no face. It was bizarre. I was walking through the country and seeing thousands of faceless people. Now, as I stood looking out over the vast auditorium, staring out over the sea of faces, I knew the Holy Spirit wanted me to speak from my heart.

"Last night I had a strange dream," I began. "I saw the faceless people of Benin, who were born with nothing, who are nobodies. Thousands of them. They seem to be people without a future, and yet some of them are carrying the future of their nation. Those are the people we have come to serve. Those people are the future of Benin; they are the wealth of the nation. That's why we're here.

We're here to serve the faceless people of Benin. Whatever we're doing, if it doesn't reach

them, then what we're doing is in vain.

They are loved by God and they're precious to Him."

And so the Lord helped me to deliver a message and by His grace, I was able to give that opening speech. The following day, I met with the President again.

"That's the first time in my life that I've ever seen someone deliver a twenty-five-minute speech without notes in an official function!" he remarked.

"Well, sir," I laughed, "you could have told me I was speaking! I didn't even know I was one of the speakers until a few minutes before the opening ceremony."

"What?" he asked, incredulously.

I then explained how God had helped me and given me that dream of serving the faceless people of Benin, the nobodies of the world who are so important to Him. The Bible says: "The first shall be last and the last shall be first." We should never despise the small people; we need to serve them as much as we serve the heads of state.

There in Benin, I was again glimpsing that vital principle – that as we are faithful in the small things, God gives us bigger projects.

Everything we do is to the glory of His name to accomplish His Kingdom on earth.

Whatever happens, it's through the love and grace of God rather than anything we can do ourselves. Without Him, I am nothing. I am like one of the faceless people of my dream. Everything I do, I do because of the Lord, and my time in Benin was one of those occasions. It began when I had the responsibility of serving as a leader for the Business Executives Consultation, which was part of a major conference in Pretoria, South Africa, with 4,000 leaders from 132 nations. Over 600 business professionals assembled from all over the world, with one aim – to fulfil the Great Commission using our skills as professionals to reach the unreached people groups of the world.

The Lord has given us the wonderful opportunity of serving several nations, even heads of state, as He has taught us how to embrace a nation with His love. In Benin, I was representing the International Christian Chamber of Commerce and had the privilege of meeting with Mathieu Kerekou, the head of that nation. Formerly a Stalinist-Leninist dictator, this man had been led to Christ through a young pastor, the Reverend Romain Zannou. The latter had visited the ICCC Conference in Washington in 1996, and he came with a personal message from the President of Benin asking us when we would go and help them.

Later, when my family and I met with the Reverend Zannou, he again asked us when we would go and serve the people of Benin.

As we sat together, I realized that the Lord was asking us to embrace an entire nation through the invitation of its President.

At the Pretoria Conference, I met with President Kerekou of Benin who officially invited us as professionals into his country. His invitation concerned an official conference in Benin hosted by the government and the United Nations. The President attended the Pretoria Conference and publicly invited us to serve his nation.

As a result, 150 people responded and laid down their lives seeking to serve that tiny nation in various ways. I was privileged to be appointed as the President's special advisor and that was when I shared the dream the Lord had given me.

In Benin I shared a dream. The Lord had given me dreams before and sometimes He had awakened me in the middle of the night to speak to me. Just before the New Year in 1986, I found myself sitting wide-awake at 1:30 a.m. By now, I understood when God wanted my attention in this way, so I quietly crept downstairs in my robe.

"Lord, what do You want to say?" I whispered.

As I prayed, I asked: "Is it in Europe? Asia? America?" But no answer satisfied the overwhelming sense of urgency I had in my spirit.

"Is it Africa, Lord?" And suddenly the presence of the Holy Spirit increased. I began listing the African nations. "Is it Kenya? Uganda? Nigeria?" Finally, I came to Ghana and instantly, something extraordinary happened. I was lifted up into the heavenlies in the Spirit and experienced an overwhelming joy. This lasted until about 5:30 a.m. Afterwards, eager to find out more about Ghana, I searched through an encyclopedia and atlas, reading everything I could find about this former Gold Coast country.

Ghana was totally dependent on its cocoa export, and as I read, I realized that it would now be experiencing severe economic difficulties as a result of the oil crisis in the early '70s. The cost of vital commodities, which the nation needed to import, had tripled in price. How would Ghana survive this? Immediately, I somehow saw the answer was in cocoa! Ideas poured into my head, so I scribbled down an outline and continued to write. When it was finished, I went back to bed for an hour's sleep.

What was that all about? I was still pondering over Ghana and the cocoa the following day when the doorbell rang, and an express letter was delivered by courier. A letter from Ghana!

We were sitting having breakfast and my wife, Asther, and the children listened as I read aloud seven handwritten pages. The writer was George Onwona Agyeman, an evangelist in Ghana. He had been called by God to go to the interior to preach the gospel. He obeyed but because he had no sponsorship he was finding it increasingly difficult to support his family. Finally, in desperation, he walked deep into the Savannah Desert where he fasted and prayed for two weeks. At the end of this time, the Lord Himself appeared and said: "George, when you are working for Me in My kingdom, you should make your needs known to My financial managers. I have financial managers in My kingdom."

However, George didn't know any financial managers, so he decided to wait upon the Lord for further guidance. He had waited one whole year. Then, one day while he was travelling through the country, the public transport system broke down and he had to stay overnight in a village. He went to a Christian friend's home. There, he had found the Full Gospel Business Men's Magazine, "Voice," containing testimonies of Christians in business. There was a list of international directors, a long list with 185 names. Among those names was my name. As he read, he heard the Lord speak to him. "Here are some of them."

But there were so many he did not know what to do but he got an immediate answer:

"Pick one for every need you have," the Lord told him.

"Mr. Olson," he wrote, "you are one of those financial managers."

Then he described his situation. He needed a portable electric generator, so that he could turn on the light when he preached his message. If he could have light, then the people would come, so he boldly continued, "and when you give me this machine, this will be your door to Africa!"

As we read his letter, we all felt George had the machine already. He had received it in his spirit! It would be a privilege to give it to him. At that moment our telephone rang. It was a car dealer from southern Sweden. I asked him where I could find a portable electric generator.

"Well, I have a friend who has a store where I think they sell that kind of equipment. Shall I call him?" "Yes please. It's quite urgent as I need to send the machine to Africa."

I briefly mentioned George's letter and explained what had happened, and my friend called the owner right away. He was told that they had just sold their entire inventory and dropped the product line. But then he heard something interesting:

"It's strange you should ask today. The customer who bought the last machine has just

been in here and he said he was willing to sell his machine very cheaply. He asked if we knew anyone who wanted one. He has never even used it. Why don't you call him?

When my friend called the man, he immediately asked if the generator was needed for missions work and as soon as this was confirmed, he offered it as a gift!

The chain of events that followed were a blessing to us all, so I wrote back to George Onwona Agyeman and told him what a wonderful blessing he had been to us. I shared with him how God had prepared me for his letter and mentioned the importance of the nation's cocoa exports. Then I sent the letter and the machine by air to Ghana.

George was so delighted to receive both my letter and the machine, that he made 3,000 copies of my letter! Everywhere he was preaching he told his audience of God's love for Ghana and as proof, he shared my reply. From then on, we received at least ten letters a day from Ghana. All kinds of needs were shared, anything from a pencil so that a student could go to school and sometimes far greater things. Finally, I received a letter from the Ministry of Finance in Ghana. The Deputy Minister of Finance cordially invited me to visit his nation anytime I was visiting Africa. A couple of months later I was in Ghana. The door to Africa had opened!

My meeting with the Deputy Minister of Finance was not to be the personal meeting that I imagined, as he had invited twenty other people. After exchanging diplomatic greetings, he turned to me and said: "Now Mr. Olson, it would be wonderful to hear what the Holy Spirit has to say about our cocoa trade."

And so I found myself having the privilege to share those things that the Lord had impressed upon me that night when He woke me to speak to me about Ghana. God's grace is so much greater than we can imagine. Through that experience, the door to Africa opened wide and our first African International Christian Chamber of Commerce was established in Ghana.

The International Christian Chamber of Commerce operates in over 80 countries. It began as a dream and since then, my own life has taken on a dreamlike quality.

Chapter 2

Driven by despair

He was found hanging from the rafters of the old barn by Sofie. She was the mother of his five children and now his widow. "Ingemar!" she called, fighting to hold back the tears, as she ran across the yard into the farmhouse kitchen.

Six-year-old Ingemar was waiting sleepily at the wooden table for his father to appear and give him the usual jobs for the day. Not yet at school, Ingemar was the eldest, and the first morning hours were spent working with his father while his younger brothers and baby sister lay asleep in their beds. Today, papa was late. Where was he?

His mother's hurried footsteps clattered across the yard. He jumped as she burst through the door, her face pale, troubled.

"Ingemar! Go quickly to our neighbours! Tell them…." The words remained unspoken, but the child had seen her tears. "Tell them to come quickly! Go!"

His heart pounding, the small boy leapt off the stool, pulled on his boots and raced off into the gloomy yard, through the forest, and into the dark country road. Where was Papa? Why couldn't he help? Confused and frightened, he reached the farm, repeating his mother's words, gasping for breath, crying for help.

Karl-Erik was a gentle and sensitive father. This very sensitivity was the reason he had slipped out of bed, leaving his wife and children warm and sleeping. He shivered as his bare feet touched the rough wooden floor. As usual his night had been tormented and he was racked with pain. A deep ache filled his spine and twisted his body in torment if he dared lie flat on his bed. Over the years he had learned to contain his frustration and the constant tiredness, but this time it was different. His head throbbed. He was exhausted, but his heart ached more than his body.

Strong and muscular, he worked with his hands to put bread on the table, to feed his growing family. He had to work. Minutes, hours, days, weeks multiplied before him as the daily toil altered with each season, with each change of the moon. There was a routine monotony to his labour. Like the dull beasts, which lumbered past him, he felt imprisoned. Trapped. Not by the responsibility of the family and the farm but by his body and the sharp pain which had intensified. Every nerve in his body jammed rigid, responding to the signals from his spine. His fight was against his own body, which would lock, refusing to move. Then, as he furiously twisted and writhed, burning pain would prevent him from continuing. Long, hard days in the fields sapped any little remaining energy. As night fell, he would long for sleep. It was always denied him. He was increasingly driven, always battling against the pain in his spine. Each season brought new demands on the farm. Five children to feed forced him to fight against the pain, but he knew he could never win.

Now, he thought only of his growing family and his Maker. God had given him a wonderful woman. He loved Sofie and the children dearly, especially little Astrid who was only three months old. He longed to be able to provide for the family, as a man should. But what more could he do? His crippling condition robbed him and he felt an utter failure.

February was the harshest month on the farm, and the bleak weather affected them all, even his wife. Ice would glisten on the compressed snow and the farmers would watch the clouds gathering across the barren fields. Snow everywhere. Then in late May, the white shroud would slowly disintegrate, melting with the midmorning sun. Tiny blades would push through the hard, cold surface and crocuses, daffodils, and

eventually, fragile lilies of the valley would carpet the fresh grass. Spring always surprised them like an unexpected welcome visitor, filling them with new hope as the sun warmed their winter-washed skin. But this year was different. Winter persisted and Karl-Erik knew he would not see the buds on the silver birch.

Engulfed by despair, he searched helplessly for rest that never came. What use was he? He felt worthless. Time had become his enemy. Day and night merged together as he lived in a twilight world peopled by rejection, submitting to his deep fear of failure. He was a father, but a failure. He could no longer carry the pain.

Suicide brings shame and guilt. In the little farming community people did not know how to react, especially when the family was placed under guardianship. But if neighbours hesitated and remained silent, the state Lutheran Church loudly voiced its opinions. After all, suicide was a mortal sin. Consequently, the funeral procession from the small Baptist Church, where Ingemar's father had belonged, was not allowed to go through the gates to the graveyard next to the church. Instead, the coffin had to be manhandled over the rough stone wall. No bells were permitted but the village blacksmith boldly responded, bringing out his sledgehammer and anvil. His fierce, hard steel defiantly rang out a tribute to the mourning widow and her children.

And so, although he had only just started school, Ingemar had to support his mother, three brothers, and baby sister. During the day, he attended school, but early in the morning and late in the afternoon he worked as a farmhand. Finally he reached manhood. He was thirteen when he left the small village classroom. Forever.

Sorrow and hardship forged strong ties between mother and son. Denied formal education, Ingemar grew with a wisdom that came regardless of books and learning. He understood the inner meaning of relationship and responsibility, developing a capacity to see the truth, which came from his spirit. Through this, he learned to see light in dark places, hope in tragedy. He was a simple farm worker but a great man. He was my father.

The reasons for my grandfather's suicide remain his. I knew only my father, not my grandfather.

And it was my father who gave me the most precious gift he could – unconditional love. His love saved me from myself. Had he not shown me such love, my life would have been a disaster. I was twenty years old and living dangerously close to the edge. I was willful and reckless, running wild, hungry to experience life. However, I was also desperately trying to cover up a deep rejection. Some years earlier, I had fallen in love with a beautiful young woman called Asther. She had the most amazing shining eyes I had ever seen. When she looked at me with those fascinating eyes, I felt she was searching my very being. There was perfection in her beauty that I saw in nothing else. As she frequently visited our home, we were often thrown together and I adored her. However, I dared not share my feelings because she was older and much more sophisticated. I was a mere boy, and I knew it.

Yet I ached for her. As the months went by, my love for her grew. However, she remained totally unaware of the emotions stirring within me until one evening in 1955. At that time, I was posted with the fire brigade in my hometown, and that night I finally mustered up the courage to ask her out. To my delight, she accepted, and we went to a concert in town. It was a clear, starry night, and as I walked her home I was overwhelmed by my feelings for her. I seized the moment; afraid it might never happen again.

I told her I loved her.

She laughed.

I was nineteen years old, and Asther was twenty-seven.

The rejection I experienced at that moment went so deeply into my soul I thought I would never recover. As I stumbled back to my base at the fire station, a car pulled up

and a girl stared at me. She slowly wound down the window and invited me to jump in. Why she asked me I don't know. She didn't know me and I'd never seen her before. It didn't matter. Life wasn't worth living anyway. And so that night was decisive in pushing me into a selfish, reckless lifestyle, which I can only refer to as a dark period in my life.

Looking back, I realize that in times of disappointment, temptation is always knocking at the door. If we fall into that trap of the enemy, we can create huge problems for ourselves. But I lacked wisdom and plunged headlong into the depths.

Of course, my father recognized I was getting into trouble, but he remained constant, loving me when I least deserved it. One night during this difficult time when I was dating girls and spiraling out of control, he came into my bedroom just as I was drifting off to sleep. His figure was silhouetted in the doorway, and I wondered why he had suddenly appeared. He stood there for a moment. Then he looked straight at me and said quietly:

"Gunnar, I really want you to know that I trust you."

That was all he needed to say. His words broke my heart, and I instantly recognized what I had known all along. I was fooling only myself. With every new adventure, every conquest, I was simply trying to compensate for the loss of Asther. My heart still ached for her no matter what I did. My lifestyle was destroying me, and I felt powerless to alter it.

Chapter 3

New beginnings

During those dark, desperate years I must have been the black sheep of the family. My life was out of order; my parents' lifestyle was solid and firm. My father and mother were Christians, my grandfather and great-grandfather had also been Christians, so it was inevitable that I was affected by their faith.

Before 1850, the Lutheran Church had dominated the country. Consequently, all other forms of Christian meetings were forbidden until 1858 when a new law created congregational freedom. Times had been hard for this predominantly farming nation, and in desperation many had resorted to drink as their only means of escape. Aware of the severe social problem, small Christian groups started to meet, ostensibly setting themselves up as anti-liquor groups. The gospel was preached amongst these gatherings, as anointed men spoke the Word of God. The "Free Church" movement had begun in Sweden.

By the turn of the twentieth century, events in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, affected many nations. The Pentecostal Revival swept through Norway to Sweden where Levi Petrus was to build the largest church in Europe.

Already in 1843 and 1847, the Holy Spirit's power had impacted lives in communities in Hjalmseryd, south of Jonkoping and in Kvistbro, just outside Orebro. In the latter, with a population of below 15,000, crowds of 3,000 travelled by foot to hear the Word of God. It was hardly surprising then that the Pentecostal Revival of 1907 took root in this well-prepared soil around Jonkoping and Orebro as it swept through the country.

Brought up in a Baptist family, I had a deep soaking in the waters of the local church before I was a teenager. I was eleven when I was baptised. Now I was twenty-one and far from God.

Meanwhile, Asther remained quietly in the background, learning of my struggle through family and mutual friends. My lifestyle troubled her but as a Christian, she understood the power of prayer. She would wake in the early hours of the morning, recognizing the heavy burden, and then she would cry out to God to bring me into the fullness of His calling for my life. She fervently prayed while I fervently explored life.

In my early childhood I had been taught the importance of prayer. Every Saturday, each member of the family would kneel down in our living room for prayer. My father would begin and then my mother, followed by my older brother Henry, my sister Vera, then myself, and finally my little brother, Ake.

Similarly I attended church and listened every Sunday to loud preaching from the pulpit about God's omnipotence: "God can do anything." I heard it hundreds of times but I never saw God do anything. Disappointment drove me -disappointment with Asther, and disappointment with God. Finally, one Sunday after hearing yet another hour of seemingly empty words, I slammed my fist on the dinner table, shaking the plates and scattering cutlery.

"I've had enough!"

My scream was loud and somehow I knew that God had heard. He had a hold on my life, and although I was trying to run away from everything and everyone, I couldn't run away from Him.

Early one evening as I was strolling out, I found myself drawn to the town square where there was a group of young people. They were from the local Pentecostal Church,

and as they shared their experiences of God, in spite of myself, I was fascinated. They had a joy and vitality which seemed real compared with my shallow, pleasure-seeking existence.

Curiosity took me to their meeting that evening. I had not been in a church for a long time, and as I sat there I was suddenly overwhelmed with anger. I felt I had been tricked. Surely these people could not possibly be genuine? Without caring what anyone thought, I stood up, glared at the folk sitting near me, and said angrily, "I know there's nothing in any of this." And with that, I marched out of the building, determined never to set foot in a church again.

Yet God had another plan. Somehow, I met those young Christians again and a friendship began which was to destroy my unbelief forever. I enjoyed their company, so when they invited me to Stockholm for a weekend, I did not hesitate. This was such an opportunity for a country boy, living in the backwaters of sleepy Orebro! My home was a quiet farming community, and the bustling streets and pavement cafes of Stockholm were another world. But there was something else which was even more attractive than the city. These people were so different to my usual set of friends, and I wanted to know why. Whatever they had, I wanted it. By now I was longing to know more about the reason for their infectious joy and quiet peace. My friendship with them was leading me to Jesus Christ, the God I had been trying to run away from for years, fueled by hurt, disappointment, rejection, and anger.

We went to Stockholm and to my surprise, they did not get out their Bibles and start praying. Instead, they took me to the cinema and then a restaurant. By the time we prayed I was totally unprepared for the experience which followed. Laughter bubbled up from deep within my being. The joy of the Lord was bubbling out of my belly like a stream of fresh water as the Lord filled me to overflowing with His love. This was my first real encounter with the living God. He had been pursuing me all through my life and now I had stopped running. I knew I was forgiven and loved by God. I had come home at last. Such was the power of prayer – the prayers of my family and of Asther.

Overnight, there was a radical change in my life. I joined the Pentecostal Church and spent time with my new Christian friends. They were burning with the knowledge that God was real and that He had given His Son, Jesus Christ, to transform lives. If they were burning, I was on fire! This was a time of great joy and inspiration. Life was meaningful.

This youth group prayed and as a result, the youth choir had its own radio programme led by Larseric and his wife, Daga. This couple impacted our young lives and provided wonderful role models. Soon, I found myself on the leadership team, and as I joined Sten, Elwer, Ingemar, Rune, and Henry, the power of the Holy Spirit was unleashed on Orebro. We experienced a major breakthrough in Orebro. People began lining up to get into the church. There was a queue of folk all the way up to the main street. A youth revival broke out in the Elim Pentecostal Church, which had the largest congregation in the city with over 1,200 members. Hundreds of people experienced the power of the Holy Spirit and entered into a new walk with the Lord. We heard incredible testimonies from people who had travelled by train and passed through Orebro. As they passed through the city limits, the conviction of the Holy Spirit came on them in such a way that they gave their lives to the Lord. Others testified of physical releases and healings as they passed through the city.

Eventually, the youth night, which went out live on radio, was given television time and for several years, these programs impacted the whole nation while the national press carried reports of the meetings and testimonies. Our prayer life was intensive. Many of the young students came each day straight from school to church for prayer. Prayer and worship was the foundation of all we did and often we would spend whole nights in prayer, waiting on the Lord.

Twice a year, the team visited a wonderful Lutheran priest, Karl-Erik Norberg, in one of the country churches outside Orebro. He was full of the love of the Lord and had a real heart for young people. We would begin in the church where Karl-Erik, dressed in his robes, would preach exclusively for us. Then, after ministering Holy Communion and praying for each of us, he came outside the altar rails and knelt with us while we ministered to him in prayer. The evening often continued into the early morning with prayer and worship in his large home.

Such was the new path that was opening before me. God was changing me and using situations and circumstances to teach me more about the Holy Spirit. Life was good; my adventure with God had begun.

As I became consumed with the things of God, Asther and I met again. My love for her had never died, although I had tried to pretend and cover up my hurt. She was as beautiful as ever but for me she would always be unattainable. When I saw her, years later, our circumstances were different. This time, Asther was feeling low and she was in quite a vulnerable situation. She needed someone to talk to and I was prepared to listen. As she gradually opened her heart to me sharing her fears and hurts, a new emotion welled up in me and I became aware of a longing to protect her. I still loved her, but I loved her as a man not as a boy.

We were married in 1959. I was twenty-two years old and Asther was thirty.

Shortly after our marriage we moved to Stockholm where the bustling capital with its vibrant sights and sounds was exciting for us both. I took a sales job in the city, marketing interior decorations for hotels, restaurants, and shops. My salary was modest, but it was sufficient for us to rent a small flat overlooking the city, and there we began our married life.

Marketing was a vital part of my career plan. Like my father, I was not a highly educated man and left school when I was fourteen to find my first job as an errand boy for a large paper manufacturing company. Even at that early age, God had His hand on me and showed me what I should do.

Like most young boys, I was drifting along in life and not really thinking seriously about a career. As long as I was earning money, I was happy. Then, something unexpected happened which altered my outlook forever. One morning, as I walked into the office building, ready for the next errand, I was stopped in my tracks. In front of me stood a businessman. He was immaculate and impressive and for some reason this man affected me even though he never said anything to me. As I looked up at him, I instantly knew what I wanted to be.

“I shall be a businessman,” I decided in a few seconds.

This stranger epitomised everything I dreamed of. Whatever it took, I would become a successful businessman. And I set myself a goal: “By the time I’m thirty I have to be the general manager of a company. If I don’t make it by then, it will be too late.”

My ambition was achieved one year earlier as I went on to manage a company in Stockholm and worked with a member of the Swedish royal family. But at the time I was only fourteen. I had to learn a great deal and it was to take many years and much heartache.

By the time I was married and living in Stockholm I had a very demanding job with a sales “patch” covering the capital and the north of Sweden. Five architects worked for me and I had to visit various commercial properties and promote our products. The budget was high and so was the responsibility. Furthermore, I was totally unsuited to the task. Timid and shy, fear would overwhelm me at the mere thought of visiting strangers, and when I arrived at the first customer, I had to walk away seven times before I had the courage to face the man! Such a weakness in my personality constantly hindered me.

Consequently, when I travelled to the north of Sweden on my first sales tour of the region, the same fear and panic crippled me once more. I knew that in order to achieve my ambition of becoming a businessman I would first have to overcome this weakness.

Determined to sort out the problem, I enrolled in evening classes. The subject was "Public Speaking." It was something I had never done, and it terrified me. But I had to conquer my fear. Somehow, I remained on the course and amazingly, I was selected from five hundred people to illustrate my achievements to others. A major obstacle had at last been overcome!

However, there were still more lessons to learn, and I became increasingly aware of a supernatural intervention in my life which began when I stopped running from God and accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. If I were to become a businessman, it would be to fulfil God's plans for my life – something I was unaware of at this early stage.

As a Christian, I had made contacts with other Christian businessmen, and this led to my involvement in the film industry. For three years I worked selling educational films for '"Svensk Tonfilm"and this led to contacts with America. When a Christian film producer from America came over to Sweden to use the company's studio, he invited me to join him in the USA. There were strong ties between the two countries and so, like thousands of Swedes before us, Asther and I set off for the States in 1964.

The small details in life are often overlooked and we need to see the pattern that is being intricately woven when we give ourselves to our Maker and allow Him to become Lord of our lives. I had met a refugee from the Far East, and we had only been able to communicate in broken English. However, this friendship forced me to learn English, so when I finally left Stockholm with Asther, my command of the language was sufficient to enable me to get by in the new country. I had not only overcome my timidity of public speaking, but God was making sure I learned English, even American English!

On September 1, 1964, Asther and I were living on Wynona Lake, Indiana, and I was working in a Christian film business, touring churches in the area promoting our films. The major project was centered in Brazil where we were filming "The Carnival of Pretence," a low budget movie, sponsored by the Southern Baptists. As the title implied, some of the shots had to take place in Rio de Janeiro and so I spent four months there.

It was in Brazil that I had my first encounter with God's supernatural intervention in the affairs of men. I was driving around the city with two of the actors in the back of the car, a man, and a woman. As we went along, an argument broke out between them and I was aware of the tension and heated moment. Strangely, although I did not speak their language, I understood them. Without thinking, I turned around and spoke to them in Portuguese, having never spoken a word of it before! Whatever I said made sense as they immediately stopped bickering and we drove on. They no longer argued, and I now spoke in Portuguese and continued to do so for several months! I preached in churches, spoke on television, and used the wonderful new language God had suddenly given me. Fifteen years later, I returned to Brazil and found I could not even count to ten in Portuguese. Sometimes, the gifts God gives us are for a season. My ability to speak Portuguese was certainly a gift as I was barely speaking English at that time.

However, by the summer I knew it was time to move on for several reasons. We both felt restricted in "The Land of the Free." Our home was in a sleepy backwater and spiritually, we felt repressed. The local Methodist Church was extremely rigid and carefully controlled its congregation. Hence, it was not acceptable to wear shorts or go swimming on Sundays. Legalism and Christianity don't mix well, and they certainly didn't with Gunnar Olson!

In our search for freedom, I resigned. We packed everything we had, stacked our belongings into the car and drove to Chicago. As we came to the skyway I stopped the car and stared at the impressive tall buildings in the distance. Overwhelmed, I shouted

to Asther:

"Darling, now, we're coming home!"

Our home that night was a motel and the next day I searched the local papers and went looking for work. One of the interviews I had was with an oil company. It was extremely high-powered, and I was clearly unsuitable. Throughout my interview a man had been sitting silently in the corner of the room. As I left the office he followed.

"Are you looking for a job?" he asked as he caught up with me. "Yes," I replied.

"Fine. I can give you a job. I'm the local manager of Victor Comptometer Corporation. We're based in downtown Chicago. But you'll have to start at the bottom."

And so I began my first job in Chicago, working as a salesman at the lowest level of the career ladder. I was new to the company and had to prove myself. Somehow, by July of that year I managed to win the company's 50th Anniversary national sales competition. This involved not just Chicago but the whole of the USA, and there were sixty salesmen alone in the Chicago office. Suddenly, I was no longer just a nobody, and I was offered a promotion and a good position in the corporate export department. After a year of training in San Francisco, we would move to Japan, and from the Tokyo office I would promote the company's export business to the Far East. The news astounded me as I had only just joined the company. My dreams were coming true at last! I couldn't wait to tell Asther when I got home that night.

As soon as I stepped through the door I realized something was different. The table was laid, and Asther had prepared a romantic candlelit supper. I quickly wondered whether I had forgotten a special occasion. Was it her birthday? No. Our wedding anniversary? No. What, then? I was soon to find out.

Always beautiful, Asther looked especially so, as we sat down to eat. I could hardly wait to tell her about my promotion and the plan to go to Japan and then – who knows? The world would be at our feet! We had often spoken about this, and I knew she would be delighted as well as surprised. We loved travelling, and I knew she would be as excited as I was with the news.

I looked at her across the table choosing my moment carefully, but before I was able to open my mouth, Asther shared her news. "I'm pregnant!"

"What?"

"We're going to have a baby!"

I swallowed hard. The news was incredible. Difficult to take in at first. Asther was pregnant. She looked just the same, but she was smiling and radiant, different somehow. I was stunned into silence.

"Well?" she finally said.

I hardly knew how to reply. What could I say? I was to be a father. Me, a father! It was something we had dreamed of for so long and then we had given up. Having tried for years to conceive a child, we had attended several clinics only to be told that it was impossible for us and we should forget about children completely. Saddened, we had consoled ourselves with the idea that we should concentrate on a spiritual family and see to it that we had spiritual children. We were still young, and with no ties, we could "goof" around the world together. That had been our plan and that remained our plan when we came to the USA. We would simply travel around the world enjoying ourselves. No ties, no family, just the two of us.

Suddenly everything had altered, and I was shocked.

"What did you say?" I asked, playing for time, as my mind madly somersaulted. "I'm pregnant. You're going to be a father."

The look in her eyes was incredible. We had both given up the idea of children and focused our attention on simply enjoying life together. Now suddenly, everything had changed. What was I to do? Should I tell her about the promotion?

I swallowed hard and explained about winning the sales competition and the subsequent promotion, which I had just accepted.

She stared at me with the same disbelief as I had when she shared her news that evening.

What were we to do now? If I took the job it would be difficult for her to be alone in Tokyo with the new baby. I told her about the offer and the opportunities that could come. Yet I knew that it would not be right to leave her in Japan while I travelled around the world.

What should we do? Nothing had prepared us for this.

As we deliberated over our situation a telegram arrived unexpectedly. I had been offered a job as Vice President of a company back in Stockholm. And the company offering this position was chaired by Count Sigvard Bernadotte, son of King Gustav VI Adolf, the Swedish king.

We sat and talked and talked. Into the early hours of the morning we shared together. Finally, exhausted, we went to bed.

God had intervened in our lives once more. And so instead of accepting the promotion, the next day I resigned and accepted the new position in Stockholm. On September 15, 1965, we left America and flew back to Sweden. Fortunately, we had kept our apartment in Stockholm so at least we had a home there.

Chapter 4

In search of reality

As a young boy I had dreamed of becoming a successful businessman. before I was thirty. Now that dream had become a reality. In 1966 I was twenty-nine and general manager of the company. My dreams as a fourteen-year-old errand boy had at last materialized.

The company had quite a high profile; the board members were highly respected people from various parts of Sweden, and the chairman was a member of the royal family. It was a privilege to work there for seven years.

God was blessing me, and I was aware of His presence in my life. Not only had I achieved my career goal, but Asther and I were miraculously able to have children. In February 1966 I had become the proud father of Mats, and in October 1968 our daughter, Git, was born. Yet in spite of all this, I was dissatisfied. I knew that there was more to life. Sure, I was a Christian and I knew God was looking after me and blessing my work and my family, but I sensed that there was something missing. But what?

I found out three years later, when I was given a book to read – Realities by Mother Basilea Schlink. The book recorded the extraordinary story of the Maria Sisters, who lived by the Word of God and took the Scriptures literally. They had prayed for guidance and every brick in their building was given through the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Their story was an extraordinary account of God touching the ordinariness of our daily lives. It was the testimony of God's glory invading earth. This was the reality I was longing for. However, as I read the pages, something happened to me. I was simultaneously inspired and utterly destroyed. My whole Christian worldview was shattered. My fleshly comfort zones were challenged as I now knew that there was a reality beyond my experience. There was a reality, which came through daily living in the Kingdom of God, which could affect our lives in a way I had never imagined. The glory of God could become tangible on earth, and this was what I had been searching for!

Yes, I was a believer. I was a fourth generation Christian, baptized at the age of eleven, reading my Bible, following the Lord, but it just seemed religious. Nothing more. My life lacked the dynamism that had impacted these sisters in such a wonderful way through their simple trust in God. At last I knew what was missing. I needed the reality of God to affect my whole life. I wanted a supernatural invasion of God's glory into the ordinariness of my existence. What's more I knew God wanted that too!

As I read about the Maria Sisters and the way they prayed for their daily provisions, I felt miserable. I had thought I was successful because I had achieved everything that I wanted in the business realm. But now I knew I was poor. And in my desperation, I cried out to God:

"Lord, let me know the reality of Your presence in my life like these sisters have experienced!"

I longed to experience the reality of His presence in my life as those poor nuns had. Nothing else was worth living for. There were also areas of my life which I had buried and tried to forget; things I could not bring myself to confess to anyone. But now, they were burdening me so much that I felt guilty and rejected by God. They seemed to hinder me from entering into the fullness of God. I felt I could never enter this realm of His presence because of my sins. In desperation I prayed but no release came. My burden increased and I believed that I could never please God. The more I cried to God, the more the enemy of my soul tried to hinder me. Insomnia plagued my nights as I paced the living room floor

crying to the Lord for help. Eventually, in the early hours of the morning I would fall into an exhausted sleep, and my dreams were always recurring nightmares. In one of the dreams I was walking on a road in the wilderness, and it was covered by hundreds of poisonous snakes. I had to hop and jump to avoid being bitten by them, and it was terrifying because there was no escape. In the other dream I was in a dark room in the basement of a building. The door was locked, and no matter how I screamed no one heard me. Through a narrow path I could see light in the far distance. But as I walked towards the light the path became narrower and narrower. Finally, it was so small that I could not even stick my head through it. The dream always ended with a rational decision that there was nothing else to do but to sit down and await the release of death.

I had nowhere to turn for counselling and so I kept the problem to myself. Only once did I dare to speak about my deep longing for the reality of God to be manifest in my life. However, the response just made the situation worse: "Surely you understand that you are no Apostle Paul?" After that I clammed up and never shared my feelings with anyone.

My friends would have been surprised if I had shared how I felt, because to the outside world everything looked fine. However, inside, I was wounded and hurt due to issues in my life that had never been resolved. I felt I was always on the outside, looking in, trapped in my own worldview. I could see the freedom and reality of God but as if I was looking through a thick pane of glass. It seemed I could never get through. The glorious aspects of the Christian life with its freedom and miraculous provision were for others, not for me.

And so, although much had been achieved, much was lacking in my life. Although I was now general manager, the position I had always wanted, my job was extremely demanding. Exhaustion and depression caused insomnia, and as I tried to carry on, I simply grew worse. Lack of sleep created other problems and I spiraled downwards. I was a wreck. Utterly exhausted.

Eventually, I succumbed to the despair gnawing away inside me and the inevitable happened. I contemplated suicide. My marriage was happy, I loved Asther and the children, but I was so desperate that I wanted to take my life. At this point, my grandfather's fate hung heavily over me. In the early hours of the morning I slipped out of bed and went into the small guest room. Weeping uncontrollably, I knelt down and prayed:

"Let me come home, God. I can't take any more!"

At the darkest time in my life, the whole room was suddenly flooded with a warm presence. Love was surrounding me and it was almost tangible. I was in the presence of Almighty God. I can barely find words to describe exactly what happened, but as I opened my mouth to express my gratitude, a strange language welled up from deep within. Unknown words just flowed out of my mouth as I expressed my thanks and praise to God. At last, I knew I was loved by God. A few minutes passed before I suddenly realized that I was "speaking in tongues".

I remained totally immersed in the love of God. Now I was certain – I knew that God loved me. It was not something I believed and accepted because I was a Christian. No! I knew that God really loved me because I had felt it! It was as if the Father had come down from heaven to give me a huge embrace. That was the degree of love and intimacy that flowed in that room. God had restored me and released me. He had given me the reality I so longed for.

Now, the Bible became alive to me, and its words impacted my spirit. I discovered God had given me everything in Jesus. Now I wanted to receive the rest of my life from His hands through faith, rather than strive to achieve it in my own strength. This was a totally new dimension to life. As I considered how Jesus walked on earth I was baffled. Here was a man who had nothing, yet He had everything because He understood His spiritual inheritance. The dichotomy of His life spoke like a love story to me, personally. I realized my inheritance was in Christ and all things the Father had for me were mine through Christ!

For the first time I realized that God wanted us to walk exactly like Jesus Christ had walked on earth, receiving from His heavenly Father. And we could do this because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Through faith, God's Kingdom could come on earth individually and corporately as we simply acknowledged this glorious aspect of our lives in and through Christ.

With this new life and new hope, came a longing to glorify God in everything including my professional life. As CEO, I had to follow the guidelines and decisions made by the Board of Directors, so I did not have total freedom to follow the Lord in decisions concerning the company. Yet I knew I needed to experience God's presence in my daily business affairs, but how? The only solution was to have my own business, and I was so aware of the responsibility this would involve that I carefully wrote out a prayer:

"Lord, give me a company for the purposes of the Kingdom of God so that I, in my life and work, may honour You."

That moment altered my life irrevocably. As I wrote those words down, the presence of the Lord filled the room and I realized how awesome it was to be in God's presence. My life was His and my vision was now on the invisible reality of His Kingdom. From that moment on I experienced a deep relationship of love and intimacy with God Himself.

During this time I had a friend who was an industrialist. He was prone to bouts of depression and when I heard his company was going bankrupt, I realized how he must be feeling. Immediately, I drove to his home to comfort him. It took two and a half hours to get there.

As I pulled up in the drive, he was walking out into the forest. He was so absorbed in his thoughts he never even saw me. He was obviously in a bad way and I was very concerned for him. Without even having the opportunity of saying hello, I returned home.

I heard nothing from him until two weeks later when he phoned with some incredible news. "I'm free!" he yelled down the phone.

He then explained what had happened. Aware of his desperate situation, a doctor had referred him to a Christian clinic for rest. While there, he met with a counsellor. She was very sensitive, moving in the gifts of the Holy Spirit as she counselled people. Although she was sensitive, she was also direct. She had immediately told him he was under demonic oppression. He got the shock of his life. How could that be possible when he was a Spirit-filled Pentecostal? In panic he had left, never wanting to see the woman again. However, he had eventually plucked up courage to return and as a result, experienced real deliverance from his depression. He certainly sounded different as he described what had happened.

"I actually saw something like my shadow leave my body, Gunnar," he remarked.

"How bizarre!" I thought. In fact, I didn't know what to think but he certainly sounded happy.

While sharing his happiness I recognized that a similar shadow was dogging me. Depression was not my problem but some weaknesses I had fought for years were returning. I should not be like this, especially after my remarkable experience of the love of God. I knew that there was still more, and if my friend had been delivered in such a remarkable way, then why couldn't I? Seizing the opportunity, I asked where this woman lived. If she had helped my friend, then perhaps she could help me.

It was a three and a half hour drive from Stockholm but I was determined to see this mysterious woman. Curiosity alone did not drive me there. I longed to be free. Upon eventually arriving at the woman's house, she came out to meet me. Nothing had prepared me for this.

"The Lord has spoken to me about you," she began.

There were no formalities. No polite small talk even though this was the first time I met

her. Her blunt manner shocked me and

I wondered whether I had made a mistake.

"You have problems in three areas," she continued.

Extraordinary. How did she know that? I knew I had problems in three areas but had decided to share only two of the three issues because the third was so intensely private and personal I couldn't mention it. But God had got there ahead of me! I was forced to be open from the start. As she prayed it felt as if someone had drawn a curtain from in front of me and I stood totally exposed in the light. She looked into my face, and I realized she had the gift of discernment.

"You and I are in this room," she said, "and the Lord is here, but the accuser is also here. Gunnar, if you want to be free, you must speak the truth about yourself."

She was extremely sensitive to the battle over my life in certain areas, but for her, the situation was simple. There was no compromise; everything was black or white. As I confessed all the things that had burdened my conscience since childhood, she quietly made notes. Sometimes she stopped to explain why certain experiences had given the enemy a foothold on my life. We prayed for issue after issue, and in the name of Jesus she delivered me from the enemy strongholds in my life. The whole process took about four hours.

Eventually, she turned to me and said, "Now you can rejoice!"

But I knew already. An incredible lightness filled my body as if heavy burdens had been lifted from my shoulders. I felt clean

from within and it was a wonderful experience like being under Niagara Falls! Everything was different.

Somehow I knew that this was the next stage. I had needed to admit to some of my past sins and confess them to be released into all God had for me. Yet this was more than a spiritual cleansing or deliverance because there was an effect in my physical body, too. A recurring pressure in my head, which had bothered me since childhood, immediately disappeared. A stomach ulcer that had been caused by the stress and pressures of work completely disappeared. I had total freedom – in my body as well as my soul! Now, I understood that freedom wasn't something we could only expect in heaven. "If the Son makes you free you are free indeed!" Freedom is a reality and it's experienced in the natural, even in our physical bodies. We can taste and see that the Lord is good! This is part of His glory dimension! Through this, I learned a very important lesson: Freedom must be established in our spirits before we can experience it in the natural. I had stepped into the glory dimension on earth, and it was to remain with me in the most powerful way.

As my wife, Asther was the first to notice the change in me, and later she received her release when the same woman prayed for her. Now we were ready to begin our adventure with God! Over the next months we entered into a spiritual freedom we'd never imagined possible. We didn't know where God would lead us but we were ready.

Our home became the centre for a flourishing prayer group. We saw healings and miracles as well as remarkable answers to prayer. The nucleus for the group began when we gate-crashed a house meeting in Sollentuna. Having heard that the woman whose ministry had so impacted us would be there, we went along uninvited. When we arrived we found we weren't the only gate- crashers. Another couple had done exactly the same thing. This was one of those seemingly chance coincidences which is fixed by the Holy Spirit. From the eight people in the room that night, a prayer group was birthed, and as we met and prayed, the word got around and more and more people came. Many experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit and lives changed radically. We hadn't heard of the charismatic revival, but we were part of it.

In spite of our low profile, people continued to fill our home. We were not a house

church, simply a prayer group, and people came from many different churches in the area. As we flowed in prayer, God healed the sick and wonderful miracles took place and we saw cancers totally disappear. Throughout this time, God's glorious presence filled the room as we met together. And as we grew aware of God's presence in our lives, releasing us into such liberty, my desire to own a company increased. However, I didn't realize how God would answer that longing in my heart. Daily, I prayed, "God, give me a company."

One day, a businessman approached me and said, "I hear you're meeting for prayer. Is it going well?" "Fine," I replied.

He was an elder in a local Pentecostal Church, and I deliberately played it down because I didn't particularly want to invite him along. I didn't say much and hoped he would forget about it. However, the next Sunday I saw him again and once more, he mentioned the meetings we had. I decided to invite him out for lunch and chat with him. As we were sitting in the restaurant, he suddenly said, "I have a problem. Can I share it with you?"

I wondered what he was going to say next, but he continued: "As soon as I start to pray, I begin to stutter. I can't help it and it's very awkward in church. I have never been able to pray out loud, not even in my own home."

He had hardly finished speaking when the power of God came over me in the middle of the restaurant and the Holy Spirit gave me words for this man. Without thinking, I found myself opening my mouth and boldly saying: "You will stand in the middle of the church and proclaim the Word of God!"

"No, no! It's impossible," he replied, shocked.

He explained that when a new pastor had come to the church he was so troubled by his speech defect that he had gone to the pastor's house and explained the situation to him. He had told the pastor that although he loved the Lord, he should never ask him to pray publicly. His stammering was such an enormous problem.

Nothing happened after that, and I wondered why I had dared be so outspoken. We went our separate ways, but the following Friday he appeared at our prayer meeting. During the evening I felt led to read out a passage from Acts, chapter 1:

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

As I read these words, the Holy Spirit fell with such force that the man jumped up and began speaking in tongues at the top of his voice. He was so loud and fast he sounded just like a machine gun going off! This was the beginning of the most tremendous transformation because not only was he totally delivered of his stammer, but he also became an anointed man of prayer. God was true to His word.

The prayer movement swept through our local church and soon it was impossible to get a seat, even during the weekday meetings. The power of God was manifest and His Word was preached in the local Pentecostal Church with signs and wonders following. One Sunday, the pastor turned to the packed congregation and announced, "I know you're expecting me to deliver a message this morning, but the Lord has told me that someone else has to speak today, so I'm asking the person who has received the word to come forward."

Without hesitation, the man who had once had such a problem with stammering, stood up and walked to the platform. He looked around for a moment and then said: "He whom the Son sets free is free indeed!"

It was the shortest sermon I had ever heard, but the power of God was immediately released, and many were healed that morning.

That man is still used in the Kingdom of God today.

Our early meeting was part of God's plan for my life because this same man invited me to partner with him in a joint business venture that would totally alter my life. Hardworking

and ambitious, I was general manager for the Stockholm based company mentioned earlier. My position was secure, and I was enjoying working under the former prince of Sweden. There was no reason for me to consider moving. However, I had asked the Lord to provide me with a company that would glorify Him, and He had not forgotten.

"Why don't you join me?" my friend suggested. "Let's do something together."

I hesitated. There was no clear business plan, and everything was far too vague. But he persisted and I began to listen.

We hired a boat one weekend, toured the archipelago of islands around Stockholm, discussed our ideas and prayed. Then we travelled north to share our plans with the woman who had been so instrumental in my life. As we prayed, I realized God was in this unlikely situation. And I knew I had to resign from my job.

Chapter 5

Poverty and prophecy

It was not easy. The future was very uncertain and of course, my decision affected Asther and our two children. Aware of these responsibilities, it was not something I did lightly. Yet as we prayed, Asther and I had total unity, and we experienced a deep peace – a sure sign we were moving in God's will.

When the Israelite slaves were leaving Egypt, they were chased by the Egyptian army. The Israelites had already heard of the Promised Land, through Moses and Aaron, and they had seen God demonstrate His love and power. Yet who knows if they would have simply wandered around the Red Sea rather than cross it if their enemies had not been so close behind? If I needed a push from behind, it came when the company entered a severe crisis. Recent developments had been difficult, and this was another reason I knew it was time to go.

I was simply pursuing my dream. I had prayed and asked God for my own company and knew it was part of His will for my life. So now I began thanking Him for leading me out, knowing it was time to step into the unknown. God's timing is vital. So often we know that we have to do something, but we don't know when we should act. Too often, we have such strong desires, but we miss His timing and move in our own strength. Too often we try and help God.

One of my friends came to understand this when he received a calling on his life to go to Peru as a missionary. In his enthusiasm, he persuaded his wife to sell most of their furniture and put the rest in a huge container ready for shipment for Peru. Twenty-two years later, they left!

On September 30, 1972, I delivered my letter of resignation to the chairman of the board. Straight away I began to get doubts. As I drove back to the office my mind was bombarded with questions: Had I really understood God's timing? Was I pushing things through in my own strength? With such thoughts racing round my head I began sorting through the morning's post.

None of my staff knew of my decision and so the events of that morning were especially strange. The office manager had remained in the room.

"Is there anything else you want?" I asked.

"Well, we've received this," he replied. "There's no name but I guess it must be for you."

I looked at the envelope. There was no name, just the post-box and the city: "Box 315, Sundbyberg, Sweden." The postmark was Norway, and the writing was Norwegian not Swedish. I wasn't expecting anything, but I opened the letter and received the shock of my life! Inside was a piece of paper with a passage from Isaiah 60:20:

"Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the Lord will be your everlasting light, and all your days of sorrow will end."

Underneath was written: "Dare to stand like Daniel. Await all your help from heaven."

Who had sent this? How could they possibly know what I was doing? I could not think of anyone who could have known my situation. Even today, I don't know who sent that letter, but the timing was incredible. Now, I knew that I was hearing God and that He was taking care of the next step in my life even though I had no job and no company. Overwhelmed, I raced home to Asther.

"Darling, look what the Lord is saying in all this!"

She was as astounded as I was. Together we wept for joy before the Lord and rededicated our lives to him. What a loving Father He was! This was a rhema word from God, especially delivered to us when we were at our most vulnerable in obedience to Him. Now, years later, I realize that God was giving me such clear encouragement because I needed reassurance that this was His will. I needed to know that my resignation was somehow part of His plan for my life, just as the Israelites needed the cloud and the pillar of fire to guide them on their way to the Promised Land. There would be many obstacles and difficulties to come, and I needed the deep security of knowing that I was in the hands of the Lord.

That evening, a stranger came to our home, and we took him in. We had many new people passing through our home and so I did not see anything unusual in this. Usually, our visitors wanted counselling and prayer and so I invited him in. However, as the evening wore on, we talked and talked, and I could not figure out why he had come. Eventually, he stood up to leave and to be honest, I was relieved. Our conversation had been going nowhere.

"I'd better go," he said at last.

"Sure, it's late," I replied, wondering why he had come to us at all! Then, as he turned to go, he looked at me and said quietly:

"I've come to you because I'm unemployed and broke."

He went on to ask me for a large sum of money. I was totally bewildered. Nobody had ever done this to me before. In Sweden, few people are put in such a position because the state usually provides for them. How could he have the nerve to come to our home and ask for money? Something must be wrong.

"Please sit down," I suggested, stalling for time. Then I went into our spare room while the man awaited my decision. "What should I do, Lord?" I asked.

The reply came quickly: "Give him what he's asking. Bless him and let him go."

So that's exactly what I did. I don't know who was more surprised, the visitor or me! "I'll never be able to repay you," he said after thanking me.

"Don't think of it," I replied and that was that. But I was thinking of it. God was starting to teach me another kingdom principle:

"Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap" (Luke 6:38).

This was the first person I gave to that month, and as I continued to learn about the principle of giving, the Lord showed me more. Asther and I had read that remarkable book by Mother Basilea Schlink and seen that there was a kingdom dimension to economics which we had never experienced. We had asked the Lord to lead us into this and He was just beginning.

Throughout the following weeks, everyone I met had financial problems and each time I asked the Lord what to do, He told me to give. At first, I felt good. Generosity is a lovely feeling and I enjoyed being able to help. However, after a while, I had to withdraw substantial funds from the bank to supply the needs that were coming my way, and I began to feel rather unsure.

Yet I had much to learn. Perhaps the most remarkable experience came at a prayer meeting one night. There were about a hundred people packed into the large living room of a friend's house. I had found a corner where I could pray alone. Quietly kneeling, I had what can only be described as an open vision. I saw a family in front of me as if they were on a cinema screen. I saw everything about them: their names, their address, and also their horrendous financial problems. By now, I was conditioned to give and so I asked the Lord what I should

give them. To this day, I don't know whether I heard the reply with my ears or my heart.

"Give them everything you have."

I became frozen by those words. I had not expected that! Slowly, I got up and walked out of the room. Now I was scared. I had obviously become fanatical. Something was seriously wrong. Asther had been looking after the children, and when I arrived home I told her what had happened. In a few weeks we were about to start a new business and I needed the capital. This was not the time to throw all our money away!

Asther looked at me, clearly shaken. However, she reminded me of our desire to enter into a new financial dimension, which was not only dependent on our ability and skill to make money but was rooted in obedience to His Word.

"Remember how we've been learning that the level of blessing we receive from God is not dependent on our own efforts?

Perhaps this is the way. Blessing always comes through obedience. I'll fast and pray for a week."

And that's exactly what she did. Asther is a woman of prayer, so when the week was up, she, came to me, eyes shining and announced: "Okay. Let's do it!"

So we did. The next day we withdrew all our assets from the bank, took all available cash for food, our pocket money, and the savings in the children's piggy banks and drove to the address I had "seen" in the prayer time. As I pulled up outside the house I wondered how I was going to explain my visit, but the words just tumbled out as soon as the door opened, and I stood looking at the same family I had "seen" in my vision.

"Hello," I began, "I've come to bring greetings from a friend. He wants you to know that He loves you and that you are not alone.

He knows how you've been feeling lately."

Then I handed over the money in the large envelope, said good bye, and left.

Of course they were amazed, but the Lord knew what He was doing. I obeyed and they were blessed. That moment was a turning point for that family. It was a turning point for us, too. Everything had suddenly changed. Our savings had vanished along with our comfort zone. Our lives had been inextricably altered, and I had to discuss this with the family; so on Monday morning we sat around the breakfast table, Asther, myself, and our two children, Mats aged seven and Git aged five. I tried to explain the new situation to the children: "You know that when you are hungry you come to Mum and Dad and we give you food. You never have to beg from us because we love you."

"Yes," they said looking at us with warm, trusting eyes.

"You have everything you need because of this love relationship. Well, it's exactly the same with our Father in heaven." I then explained what we had done.

"So now we're going to talk to our Father in heaven and out of His love we will receive what we need for today."

We asked God for everything including half a kilogram of butter, half a kilogram of coffee, two loaves of bread, and four litres of milk and thanked Him that He had already provided for all our needs in Jesus. A couple of hours later, a neighbour appeared at the door.

"This is probably going to sound stupid," she began, "but I was in the city centre, and they were selling loaves of bread so cheaply that I bought ten of them. It's far too much for us, and I wondered if I could give you four?"

No one had ever done this before. And it was all the more remarkable because Asther and I had not told anyone what we had done. I would have looked totally stupid especially as I was just about to start my own business. We were living in a respectable part of the city,

and no one would understand. Who could guess that we had nothing at all? We had been so fervent in our desire to obey God that we had literally given everything – even the last coins in my pocket had gone!

By the end of the day everything we had asked for had been supernaturally provided. Jesus was real and He was alive! What a difference from only hearing about Him through religion! He was not a theological idea or an historical figure. No! He was real and the reality of His existence impacted our lives that day as we stood back and watched as each little thing that we needed came into our home. The glory of God had invaded our earthly existence, and I knew I would never be the same again. I was learning how to rely totally on my heavenly Father for my daily needs and not on my own ability.

This was new territory for me because until now, I had relied on my own ability and not understood how to receive from God. And this was the basis on which I received my first company from God. I had to learn to humble myself before I could receive from the Lord.

On January 1, 1973, I had one Swedish krona in my pocket (about ten cents). That was the sum total of my wealth, yet it was on this basis that God gave me my first company. And from these small beginnings, the Lord did something wonderful, far more than I could ever have imagined.

With nothing whatsoever in my pocket, I went to work with my friend. He provided an office and an open legal framework for what would become my own company. His small business was quite profitable, and I helped as best I could. The shares were deliberately in his name so I could secure a small bank loan to set up my own company. I knew God wanted me to have this, but I had no idea how it would work out, so I prayed.

"Lord I'll do anything just show me what you want, but please, nothing to do with pots and pans!"

My past experiences in this industry were so bad that I had vowed never to touch kitchen equipment again. It was a limited market, difficult to break into, and certainly not a good business proposition.

"And not Orebro," I added.

Orebro was my hometown, a small city, and I felt I'd outgrown it. Asther and I were enjoying Stockholm with its beautiful archipelago of tiny islands in the Baltic Sea. During the summer, we used to hire a boat and explore this dreamlike setting. We loved our home with its wonderful lakeside view, and we even had our own floating dock and small boat. It was a wonderful place and totally unlike Orebro.

Of course I had given my life to the Lord and here I was trying to spell out certain conditions. I might have forgotten but God had not. Shortly afterwards, my ex-boss asked to see me to discuss a design project for pressure cookers. I had asked God for anything but not pots and pans. Now I was being offered exactly that!

At first I did not even want to consider the offer, but as I shared it with my business colleague, he was more positive and suggested we pray about it. As we did, I heard the Lord clearly speak to me just like He spoke to Peter in Joppa. "Stand up, slaughter, and eat."

The words broke me. Who was I to say that certain things were not acceptable? The project was God's gift and I had to ask His forgiveness for my poor attitude towards His provision. I began to realize that when God answers our prayers, there is sometimes a twist to His answer. His purpose for our lives is to bring us into His glory so that we might reveal something of His nature to the world in which we live. As Christians we are called to manifest the life of Jesus Christ in everything. I needed to understand this and accept God's purpose. He wanted to impact my character so that I could produce the fruit of His Holy Spirit in my life rather than allowing myself to be controlled by my own ideas and prejudices, even if it was only a prejudice about pots and pans!

As I had given Him my whole life, I was no longer in charge. It was a risk I'd never taken before. God was in control, not me.

Galatians chapter 5, verse 22 describes the fruit of the Holy Spirit, *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."* I realized that all these qualities were in Jesus, but they also had to be in me. As the Lord took over, He used my circumstances to change me, to empty me of my old character traits and pour in His qualities. It was a lesson that would take a lifetime. God would use situations and painful circumstances to create this new character within me. And first, I had to learn how to humbly receive from the Lord.

When I stepped out on my own and entered this first year of business, I was constantly aware of the problems, particularly the financial restraints. Initially, we could not afford to run a car, and so I wondered how I would ever go out on sales trips to promote the product. The Lord had not allowed me to tell anyone of our situation. No one knew that we had given away our savings and so people presumed we enjoyed the same comfortable standard of living as we had always done. How mistaken they were! Even my business colleague, who was allowing me to use part of his premises for my new venture, knew nothing. Like everyone else, he thought we were okay financially.

One day, he invited me to join him on a sales trip in the north. Grateful for the opportunity to visit my customers, I accepted his offer. While he visited his contacts, I trudged along to a few places by foot. It was a long day. A terrible day. Several clients were irritated over the previous service of the product, and it was awful. My feet ached, my head ached, and my stomach ached because I could not afford a meal during the day. I was constantly plagued by feelings of failure. Words floated up into my head:

"Why don't you just give up? This is no good and you know it. You'll never make it."

These thoughts nagged me throughout the day as the devil tried to discourage me, and he almost succeeded. By the end of that day I was exhausted. My sales total was a paltry 700 kronor ($70 USD). No wonder I felt I would never make it!

However, my friend had one of the best days ever for his business in that area. He felt like celebrating and invited me to join him in a hotel restaurant that evening. I refused. I had to because I had no money. Undeterred, he urged me to join him, telling me he wanted to treat me. Still, I refused but he insisted. His mood of exhilaration was such a contrast to my black despair and despondency. While we were eating, tears of self-pity welled up within me.

"You know this will never work. This business is doomed!" I burst out.

Right then the Lord cut across my thoughts. From deep within I heard His voice saying:

"What I have declared clean you shall not declare unclean."

Tears began to flow and back in my room I threw myself onto my knees and cried out to the Lord. I was still learning. Who was I to refuse His offer and purpose for my life? Was it my pride that prevented me from accepting? Asking forgiveness for my hard attitude, I knew I had to accept. Again, God was asking me to humble myself before Him and as I did, the despair lifted, and joy and hope filled my heart again.

Sometimes, in the tiniest, insignificant details of our lives, we find spiritual truth. But we have to be humble and receptive. I had to learn both. And so I continued learning and the Lord continued teaching me, often using my circumstances to demonstrate a spiritual truth. He even used my clothes.

Without spare cash, my clothes gradually began to wear out, and eventually I had only one good suit left. It was wearing thin, but I did not realize how threadbare it was. One day as I left a business meeting, I opened the car door and kneeling slightly, reached across to

put my briefcase on the passenger seat. There was a horrible tearing sound as the right trouser leg ripped apart along the front crease. There was a huge gap. This was not some tiny tear that Asther could fix. And that was the end of my only suit.

I felt so miserable. For me, it was not only the end of my suit but the end of everything. I was a failure! What was I doing? I was deceiving myself and everyone else. How could I expect to be a success running my own company when I did not even have a suit? Self-pity welled up and I sat in the car, staring at the expanse of pale flesh visible along the trouser leg.

Then, I realized that this was not the right way to react to the situation. Why was I crying over torn trousers? Quickly, I grasped the tattered pieces of cloth in my hand and ignoring everything around me, I began to talk to my heavenly Father.

"Thank You for allowing me to have this experience. I know that You care for me. From now on I'll never talk to You again about clothes. I know You'll dress me just like You dress the lilies of the field in a way that Solomon himself would envy. Thank You for Your provision of a new suit in the wonderful name of Jesus Christ! Amen."

The next day, I had arranged to visit the elderly woman in the north who had already so wonderfully influenced my life. She did not have a fixed income, but occasionally received love-gifts from those she counselled. This time I was concerned because I had nothing to give her. When I arrived at her home, she came out to meet me. She was always direct and wasted no time.

"The Lord has spoken and said that His servant needs a suit. How much is a new suit Gunnar?" "Well, normally about seven hundred kronor, if you have them made to measure like I do."

"Then the Lord says you should have seven hundred kronor because He's instructed me to give you the money for a suit."

For the first time in my life, I was able to find not one, but two suits, for seven hundred kronor. The Lord had given me a double blessing!

Chapter 6

Firstfruits

My life continued like this throughout that first year, and as December approached, God particularly spoke to me through the book of Deuteronomy. When I read chapter 11, I was struck by the following:

"But the land which you enter to possess is a land of hills, and valleys which drink water of the rain of heaven" (Deuteronomy 11:10).

In the Swedish Bible the phrase refers to "pumping up" water for seed. I realized that there was a tremendous difference between pumping water up and receiving rain from heaven. Man pumps water but God waters by allowing the rain to fall. What freedom! He'll give us liberty in the Holy Spirit as we allow Him to work in our lives. As long as the Children of Israel walked in unity with the Lord and with one other, and exercised their faith, God allowed the rain to fall. There was such revelation in this one passage! The mountains represented the promises of God, and the valleys were the testing places where they would have to exercise their faith. As we walk by faith, we cause a spiritual turbulence just like the rain clouds, which form in the natural world through physical turbulence. If we walk by faith trusting in the Lord, then He will send the rain! I began to learn much more about God's supernatural provision in our lives and saw that this is the element which brings glory to Him.

At the same time, I read about first fruits:

"Then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His Name (and His Presence) to dwell there: to it you shall bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes and what the hand presents (as a first gift from all the fruits of the ground), and all your choicest offerings which you vow to the Lord" (Deuteronomy 12:11, Amplified Bible).

I knew I had to obey and bring the Lord the firstfruits of our company. In this first year, I only had a meagre income of 37,000 kronor. Finances were stretched because the house we lived in cost 42,000 kronor per annum, and we needed to provide for our two children. However, our provision was constant and always miraculous. God had supplied the company and I felt I was in the "Promised Land" that the Lord had provided for us. In obedience, we gathered together as a family on New Year's Eve 1973 and set aside our firstfruits as an offering to the Lord. We gave it to a woman who had faithfully supported us in prayer over the years. We did not have much, but the little we had we gave because I knew that we needed to do things God's way.

The Lord honoured our obedience. As we gave the firstfruit of the company profit, He blessed us in an amazing way, and we began to learn the importance of following His instructions and obeying Him. Shortly after we had given this money, we were bombarded with phone calls and orders started pouring in. Business was booming! The oil crisis was affecting Sweden, and as a result, energy saving devices suddenly became popular. Pressure cookers were now top of everyone's list, and the demand was incredible.

In January 1974 we sold twice the annual turnover of the previous year. It was as if the Lord had opened the windows of heaven over us. God had known that the oil crisis would be useful and that was why He had given us the pressure cooker project. And so it continued – so much that we were unable to keep up with the demand. The company was operating on an extremely small scale. I employed one person who assembled the cookers, and we had an 11,000 square feet warehouse in Mantorp, which was a two and a half hour journey by car. The warehouse had been offered without any charge for the first year and so we had accepted. But now I was faced with a huge demand for our products, and I did

not know what to do.

On February 1, still pondering the challenge, I received an even greater problem. A letter that morning left me feeling more troubled. The local commune, which owned the warehouse, was now asking me to leave as they had found a tenant. I had taken the premises on the condition that we would vacate the building with one month's notice. It seemed ridiculous that just as we were faced with extra orders we were forced to leave the warehouse! Premises in that locality were extremely difficult to find, and I could not understand why this was happening now. Surely if God had provided the orders He would provide a place to work? Right now, I had nothing, and I did my utmost to solve the problem.

However, each time I found somewhere and got ready to sign the contract, someone would snatch it away before I could clinch the deal. My faith was being tested and it was painful. Finally, I said to Asther, "I'm sure the Lord is testing our trust in Him. We might not get our new premises until the very last minute."

And that was exactly what happened.

On February 28, I had ordered two big trucks with huge trailers to take our goods to the new place. But I hadn't got a clue as to where it was! The trucks pulled up outside my office and the drivers asked me for our new address. I didn't have one.

Stalling for time, I told them to start loading, and we worked together for some hours. My stomach was in knots as I had no idea what I should say to them. The minutes ticked away and soon it was lunch time. For me it was crunch time!

"Tell us where we're supposed to deliver this stuff," they announced.

Without thinking, I replied, "He who is within me is greater than he who is in the world. It is time for lunch. Let's take a break now."

They stared at me. They weren't Christians so I must have sounded a complete idiot. Hastily, I left and rushed off to my sister's home nearby where I almost collapsed in desperation.

"God what should I do?" I cried. "You know I've never been in this situation before!"

I was shaking and felt sick. There was only a small load left in the old warehouse and then the drivers would be ready to go – but where? What could I tell them?

When I returned to the office, the telephone was ringing. It was the local commune.

"We're phoning to let you know that we have another building that you might be interested in. It's fifteen kilometres away."

"Great! I'll take it!" I almost shouted down the phone.

Now I knew the Lord was answering my prayers! As I walked out of the office to give the drivers the new address, one of them turned to me and grinned.

"This came from heaven, didn't it?" "You bet!" I replied.

When God gives a gift, it is perfect, and when we arrived at the new place, we found that it was tailor-made for our requirements.

All our interior fittings were correct to a millimetre and the place was so cheap it was almost free!

The next morning as I drove to our new premises, the power of God came all over me so strongly that I almost drove off the road.

Stopping the car, I rested in His glorious presence.

"You have trusted Me," I felt God say to me, "and because you have trusted Me.." And then the Lord spoke about the future of the company. He said things that only my family

know about. It was so incredible I could hardly believe it.

"Lord, I haven't asked for this," I replied. "Lord, give me a professional people who will manifest your glory in the world of industry, finance, and commerce."

The words welled up from deep within and tumbled out of my mouth. I saw a whole army of business professionals who would glorify God. In the natural I could not see this. All the businessmen I knew, even Christians, were working like dogs. They were going to church on Sunday and talking about spiritual matters and then returning to their work. They were literally living by the sweat of their brow, yet I knew that there was something more, something which could be manifest in the business realm through the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. He inspired such ideas, and this was the beginning of the dream God gave me. Years later, it would lead to the International Christian Chamber of Commerce. God was about to do some incredible things in my life.

A few days later, I was in that new building, waiting to receive delivery of a new machine representing a significant investment. It was a drilling machine which would increase our productivity. We were still only a small business, and so this was a major moment for me. When the machine arrived, I again sensed the power of God, and I was so sharpened spiritually that for three days and nights I did not leave the machine. I was deeply aware of the Holy Spirit's presence bathing me in His love.

During this time, I "saw" in the spirit a whole factory with machines making thousands of casserole pans. Such was the intensity of the experience that I was praising the Lord for things unseen, as we only had one machine! However, although we had the machine to increase productivity, it wasn't enough. Our products were still in high demand, and this created further problems because we couldn't keep up with the demand. It almost reached crisis point. We didn't want to lose our customers, but we couldn't satisfy their needs. What could we do?

One dull, grey autumn morning, I took a walk by the lake. It was drizzling and not particularly pleasant, but I needed to be alone to pray. There, by the side of the lake, I knelt down on the gravel path. I was so desperate. How could we keep our customers if we had no means of supplying them?

"Lord, if I've found grace with You, please give me a factory so I can supply my customers," I cried out.

Although the business was solvent, we were still living very modestly. Whenever I had sales trips I would find the most inexpensive way to do the work. Once, I wanted to take the family along to the north of Sweden. The idea was to give Asther and the children a mini holiday while I was working. We could not afford hotels and so we hired a trailer to tow along. Our diet was simple. We had cornflakes, milk, and yogurt almost every day! On our return home I wanted to treat them to a decent meal and so we stopped at a steak house. I had phoned the office earlier that day and knew that someone was trying to reach me. While we sat enjoying our food, a phone call came through to the restaurant and I received a wonderful answer to my lakeside prayer. The person at the other end of the phone was offering me a factory for the manufacture of casserole pans. The location? Orebro!

At first, I hesitated wondering if this was some temptation from the enemy. However, when I went over to see the factory I knew that this was from God. The factory was virtually given to me, and its output was excellent. Three thousand aluminium casseroles were produced each day. This would fulfil all my customers' needs. The former manager and owner of the factory agreed to remain there as my technical manager for two years, and he agreed to produce our full range of items as well as the aluminium casseroles. I would oversee sales and marketing, and I was delighted with this arrangement. Since the factory was in Orebro and we were settled in Stockholm, we agreed that I would travel to Orebro in the week returning home for weekends. This was the most convenient way to manage the change, and it worked well for everyone.

At last I could begin to relax as everything ran smoothly for a few months. However, one day the former owner came to see me and asked me to release him from his contract. He wanted to go to Peru as a missionary! I was furious! How dare he do this? Hadn't we made an agreement? Anger welled up inside me. I felt I'd been cheated. I knew that I couldn't run the factory, and if I'd known this was going to happen I would never have accepted the deal. Somehow, in the midst of this anger and disappointment I heard the voice of the Lord.

"Bless him and let him go."

The Lord repeated the words: "Bless him and let him go."

I knew I had to obey. So I did just that. Now what was I to do?

When the time came for this man to leave we had just experienced a real breakthrough. An important client had placed a huge order with us. We were about to manufacture a complete machine, a welding smoke evacuator. It was a complex product requiring new tools and advanced calculations. Output had increased and I was overwhelmed by the sense of responsibility. I had the factory, the production capacity, but now I was lost. I was totally on my own.

I had to find an answer. Otherwise it would be the end of everything. So I stayed at the factory long after everyone had gone home. I knew I had to pray and so I closed the doors and walked around. I praised the Lord because I knew that He had the solution although I hadn't. Eventually I began praying in tongues, often very loudly, and this continued for some time as I flowed with whatever I felt the Holy Spirit instructing me to do.

Suddenly, I heard voices outside. Walking over to my office, I saw three men standing there.

"Can I help you?" I asked.

"Yes. We heard there was someone still here."

How could they have failed to hear? I had been behaving like a lunatic as I had flowed in the spirit and prayed to God in what I thought was my privacy! I had been laughing, crying, and weeping. You name it I had done it! Now what?

"We're studying for an MBA at the university, and we need to find a company for our practical assessment project. We want to make a thorough study of the business, covering all areas, product calculations, budget, and finance. We'd like to have the opportunity to use your company for this."

I could hardly believe it! These men wanted to study the very area I knew nothing about! What was more, they knew what they were doing.

"Listen, you've been sent by God," I began enthusiastically. And then I stopped as I saw the look on their faces. "Sorry, we don't understand but can you help us?"

So I helped them, and they helped me to run a factory. It was a wonderful mutual agreement. God had sent them to teach me every practical detail I needed to know if I was to run a company for Him. The students were methodical down to the tiniest detail, recording everything and producing massive files containing all the information they had gathered. They had done everything I could possibly need and more. God's provision far exceeded anything I could have imagined or hoped for!

And so I learned how to make a non-profitable company profitable. God had given me everything. Production soared and profits grew. Life was pleasant, and I thought that this was how it would remain. But God had other plans for my life, which I would soon find out.

Chapter 7

Crisis and covenant

Everything continued to prosper, and two years later we moved to my hometown. I was settled and happy in spite of the fact that we now lived in Orebro, the place I did not want to live in. My happiness was found in the joy I had over the factory.

The noise of the machines was music to my ears, and I identified so closely with the company that when we had success I was elated and when we had difficulties I was depressed. Like a yo-yo Christian, I went up and down. Everything had become so spiritual, and this caused another problem. When sales were slow I would fast and pray, trying to find what could have gone wrong. Once, I even began a fourteen-day fast, crying out to the Lord for His word for the situation. On the last day, a phone call came from an intercessor whom I highly respected. She told me she had a word from the Lord, and I thought this was wonderful because I'd be receiving the answer to my problems.

"Get out there and sell!" she announced. "Gunnar, you need to do your part too!"

It was practical and it was a word from God. I'd become so super spiritual I was no earthly good.

Then after three years, God clearly spoke again to me. At first, I didn't understand at all. It seemed He was saying He wanted to enter into a covenant with me. The idea just would not go away, so I began reading everything I could find in the Bible about covenants. As I studied I saw that a covenant was like a contract, but still I didn't know why God had spoken about it. During the autumn, I decided to set aside two weeks every month for fasting and praying. The issue intensified. God was speaking to me, and He wanted a response.

Finally, one Friday afternoon, I sat down and drafted a covenant between myself, my family, and the Lord. Everything was written in the strictest legal language because this was a contract with Almighty God. I turned all that I was, and all that I had, over to the Lord, all the members of my family, all our abilities and assets, as well as our weaknesses and shortcomings. In exchange, the contract stipulated that we would receive all that God had bestowed on us in Jesus. The judgement of our lives would be on the basis of His blood, shed for us.

As I entered a paragraph concerning all my past and all my future, the enormity of it shook me. Suddenly I realized that even my time was no longer my own. I was giving everything over to God. Everything. As the fear of the Lord came over me, I entered into the legal text a clause stating that the contract would be null and void if it was not confirmed by two independent witnesses. With that, I left the office and went home to Asther.

At supper I told her what I'd done. She alone knew what I was planning, and we agreed not to share this with anyone. Later that same evening we went to our prayer group, which was now meeting at a friend's house. There was a surprise visitor, a missionary who was returning home from Brazil. We'd never met her before. As we sat around the room before prayer began, she suddenly looked at me and announced:

"I don't know who you are or what you're doing, but the Lord says every dot and every letter is known to Him. And by the way, why haven't you said, 'yes' to Bombay?"

I glanced at Asther totally shocked. She gave me a knowing look but neither of us said anything. This contract was from God. He knew! However, not only was the woman referring to the contract, but she was also referring to another issue concerning a business invitation to Bombay. This was serious.

We returned home quietly knowing that God had only just begun, and so we waited to see when the Lord would provide the second witness. The answer came two days later when a Christian businessman called from Stockholm. I had not had contact with him for over a year and no one knew about my idea of the contract.

"Have you entered into the contract with the Lord yet?" he suddenly asked.

"What made you say that?" I asked astonished. I must have sounded quite harsh as he was quite taken aback. Clearly embarrassed, he explained that he had felt the Lord prompting him to say this. He excused himself and hung up, probably thinking he had made a mistake. But I knew that the contract was real. God had confirmed it by giving me the two witnesses. Now what?

Overwhelmed, I prayed that the Lord would allow me to delay entering into the covenant until New Year's Eve, after I had an opportunity to share it with my children. Trembling, I told the Lord that I personally was willing to enter into this covenant. This was unlike anything I'd ever done before and I couldn't take it lightly. It would involve us all – the entire family.

"Lord give me the privilege of allowing my family to understand this," I prayed.

One Sunday morning our thirteen-year-old son, Mats, came into our bedroom. We sat together and I told him about the covenant. I watched as he tried to struggle against the tears. Eventually, he began to weep quietly. As I looked at him silently sobbing, I realized that he was seeing his inheritance disappearing before his eyes. As his father, I had to teach him and explain what the covenant was. "Mats, listen to me. If we sow potatoes in the ground to provide food, we would only consider using good quality potatoes to produce a good harvest. It looks as if the potato will die, but that one potato gives life to ten other potatoes if the soil is right. It might seem that the company's disappearing, but it will produce good fruit of the same kind. A potato produces potatoes, an industry produces industries."

Mats was thoughtful. He dried his eyes, and after a while he looked up at me, smiling. "Okay Dad, let's do it!"

And so I entered into a covenant with Almighty God solemnly giving Him our company and receiving everything He had for us in Christ Jesus. Things started happening very rapidly, beginning the next day. An old friend, whom I respected as a very astute businessman, unexpectedly visited me.

"I believe the Lord's telling me to sell my company to you.

What's more," he continued, "the Lord's telling me that I must release you into your ministry. I'll sell my company to you if you allow me to be the general manager in your business and in the business I am selling to you."

"You must be joking," I stammered. "I can't afford to buy your company!"

His company was small but quite profitable. However he was adamant, so I agreed to pray about his offer. I wasn't sure that I could afford the other company, but I took the matter to God in prayer and received from Him an idea of the amount we should pay. Then the Lord spoke in my heart: "This is the place where the temple will stand."

I didn't understand what this meant, but later I discovered that the business had been built on the exact spot where revival had first come to this region. Hundreds of people had accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour on that very ground. So there was an old spiritual foundation right where the new business would be. Unaware of this at the time, I simply prayed and had complete peace about the situation. I then asked God how much I should pay, and this was exactly the amount that was asked for!

As I contemplated buying the business, I had a specific passage of Scripture, which I felt God wanted to draw to my attention:

"On that day Gad went to David and said to him, 'Go up and build an altar to the Lord on the

threshing floor of Arunah the Jebusite'" (2 Samuel 24:18).

The place where the factory was located was an old barn, quite literally a threshing floor. And so a new phase began, and God took me through other experiences, constantly teaching me. More importantly, the Lord put me on the threshing floor to get rid of the chaff in my life.

Before I could fully enter into this new phase of my life there had to be a death of the old, and this was the most painful lesson. Soon after we took on the new venture, the old business began to collapse. I watched as my first company, which was so special to me, sank lower and lower. The situation was easily explained, because our largest competitor began using government grants to lower their prices by 25 percent. Originally the money was given to restructure the industry and alleviate a crisis in the industry. However, it was being used otherwise and, as the second largest company in this field, we immediately felt the impact. Naturally, our customers expected us to lower our prices to compete with our rivals, and we tried to reorganize our production process, but it was no good. With each new shipment we were losing money.

Ironically, while the old industry plummeted into the red, the new business flourished, and profits rose. But this was no compensation for what was happening with my first company. It was special, precious, and I felt as though a child was dying in my arms. My "Isaac" was almost dead. This was the company God had given me and now I was watching it collapse. I couldn't believe it! I was so emotionally involved in its demise that I could not rejoice at the growth of Alfapac, the new business. Each day, my despair increased, until finally I could carry it no longer and I took myself into a room in our home and took desperate measures.

"I'm not coming out until God speaks to me," I told my wife and children.

I was on a complete fast with no food or water. I had to mean business with God, and I wanted an answer. What had I done?

Why was the company dying?

While I prayed in that room the Lord told me that my days of sorrow would end. He said He would release me from the burden of the business and that's exactly what happened. A man came and offered to buy my failing company. I agreed on the condition that everything was restored so that the man would not be carrying a financial burden when he took the company. Eventually, this was achieved, and the business was handed over. The new owner was a Christian, and he was going to manufacture other items as well as the original pots and pans. Right now, the company is still in business and operating in Africa! I had been released from the burden and was now free to concentrate on Alfapac, which was to be a model business, exemplifying all that the Lord was teaching me.

I thought I understood covenant, but I had forgotten about circumcision. When God spoke to Abraham, He was explicit. He spoke of great things in the future:

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you, I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:2-3).

These were the conditions of the contract. However, the seal of the covenant was circumcision. The seal was the very opposite of what we would expect. Only as Abraham was visibly and irrevocably changed in the flesh in the very area of his calling, was he able to bring forth a son according to the promise, Isaac – his son and heir, the fruit of his spirit life. Prior to that he was only able to produce an Ishmael, the fruit of his flesh.

Such is the deep wisdom of God. He wants us to know that it is not by might nor by power but by His Spirit that His promises can manifest in our lives. This is the sign of God's approval in our lives. His divine purpose cannot be fulfilled through our ability, but through His power, which is manifest in His love. This is like a death experience, but glory

to God, it leads to resurrection life! The Lord wants to take us into new dimensions as far as our faith can take us. He wants us to go beyond our abilities so that His glory can be manifest in our daily lives. This is the glory dimension, and I had scarcely grasped it at all.

I also discovered another vital principle through this experience. There are only two reasons why those who are called by the Lord will experience real difficulties. They are either in sin and disobedience to His will, or they are walking right in the centre of His will! The first route leads to death, but the second leads through death to resurrection life in Christ. What a difference!

Chapter 8

Glory in the workplace

God gave me new responsibilities teaching me how to operate a company under covenant with Him. Frequently the Lord used our circumstances to teach us to pray, and then His glory was manifest on the factory floor in the most remarkable ways!

The first example came through the pots and pans business, which I later sold. Our sales figures were automatically logged as we were linked with major department stores and received their orders as the computers logged the sales. Our daily output was approximately 3,000 casserole pans, and this was very satisfactory. However, by May there were no new orders, and so I contacted the customers asking them what was wrong. They simply reassured me that everything was fine, and orders would be coming in. But towards the end of the month we had only received $700 USD worth of sales. Virtually nothing. I was deeply troubled.

Again we phoned the customers to check, but meanwhile, the warehouse was filling up with casseroles. By the end of the month we had only secured a few sales and the situation was desperate. Our cash flow was affected as all our available cash was sunk into the stock and we had no room in the warehouse. Above all, we needed to shift the current stock, but what had happened to our customers?

As I surveyed the crowded warehouse I knew that there was nothing else I could do. Production had to be stopped. Our customers had confirmed that nothing was wrong, and yet orders were drying up. I prayed, spoke to Asther, and told her that there was nothing more we could do. The factory would have to be closed if we were to survive this crisis.

As it was a Friday night, we went along to the prayer group with heavy hearts, and that evening one of the women shared a passage of Scripture:

"Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you"(Leviticus 26:8).

As she read these words, my spirit leapt, and I knew what I had to do. Inspired by the Scriptures, I immediately shared my problem with the rest of the group.

"We have 90,000 unsold casseroles sitting in the warehouse," I said as I finished describing our dilemma.

A brief discussion followed, and we knew we had to use our unity as a group to pray and command those casseroles to move out of the warehouse. So we took authority in the name of Jesus Christ and commanded those casseroles to move out and give glory to God!

During that weekend we didn't discuss the matter, and on Monday morning the office manager met me on the stairs.

"Good news! I guess we should praise the Lord! Some of our major customers called and they've bought everything we have except the one litre and three litre casseroles. They want us to ship the order today."

Quickly, we began packing and loading and the warehouse gradually emptied. However, it soon dawned on me that this was not a total answer to prayer because we had commanded all the casseroles to move and give glory to the Lord. I called the office manager into my room and shared the situation with him. We had taken authority over the situation in the name of Jesus and commanded all the stock to go. Surely we needed to agree that the remainder went as well? So in unity, now with the office manager, we prayed once more. This time we specifically spoke to the one litre and three litre casseroles to obey the

command!

Half an hour later, the phone rang. It was one of our customers. They had an emergency and they desperately needed one and three litre casseroles. Did we have any ready to dispatch immediately? And so our entire stock left the warehouse in one day.

This whole episode taught me that one believer could accomplish so much in prayer, but far more could be achieved through a group of believers who were in unity. Since the company had been given over to God, I realized there were other forces resisting us apart from the normal market fluctuations. We had to pray as well as work, and unity was a key factor in our prayers. This was a principle I never forgot and used many times when faced with impossible situations.

One particularly busy summer we received an unexpected request for aluminium casseroles. It was a huge order for a national marketing campaign from the largest high street chain in the country. There had been a mass merger, and the smaller group, which was now being bought by the larger, was one of our existing customers and we couldn't afford to lose their business.

It was July and we had just launched a fruit juice cooker, which was marketed during the summer. We were overwhelmed by demand for the product, but unfortunately, the factory had closed for the holiday period, and we had ten thousand of these juice cookers still unpacked and unshipped. Therefore, we found ourselves working as a family throughout the holidays. From early morning until late at night we packed and shipped as much as we could. Finally, I told the family to take a break while I stayed on. My body was aching from sheer physical labour, and I went over to my office to take a rest. Just as I had sat down, the phone rang. It was the purchasing manager of this large high street group. He explained that they were launching a special campaign which would promote the new merger as the largest department store chain in Sweden.

"We've selected special products to be featured in this campaign, and we need a whole series of aluminium casseroles. We estimate this will increase our demand by another 80,000 to 90,000 casseroles above our normal sales. Can you handle it?"

The demand was extremely high. Quickly, I estimated our production capacity and raw material stock and knew it was impossible. We had neither the capacity nor the materials, and the raw material posed the greater problem because the aluminium had to be ordered from Russia and that was always unpredictable. We never knew how much we'd receive, nor when we'd receive it. However, Russia was the only supplier and so it was a constant problem.

This really put me under pressure because the company which could meet the demand for this huge order would become the sole supplier for all the high street stores. It was a great opportunity and one we couldn't afford to lose. One of our existing customers had been taken over by this group and if we lost them we'd face great difficulties. The phone call had taken me by surprise, but I had to give an immediate answer or risk losing vital business. I stalled for time.

"Could you wait a few minutes?" I asked. "I need to consult the factory manager."

He agreed. I ran to the men's room and shouted at the top of my voice, "Lord, what should I do?"

Once more, God's presence calmed me, and I felt I should accept. "The whole shipment has to be completed in week 47," (this was mid-November) the man informed me.

I agreed and then wondered what on earth I had just done. If I hadn't been so tired, I would not have sat in the office. I would then have missed the call. Now I had created more problems.

In early August the final order specifications came. The order was enormous and our

raw material suppliers informed us that they could not possibly supply the materials. What a mess!

A few days later, a big truck with a long trailer unloaded forty tons of raw material which we'd ordered in January. I was delighted but this shipment would only provide materials for our regular orders. It wasn't enough, but it was a start.

The following day, again a big truck with a long trailer started to unload its cargo. It turned out to be fifty tons of aluminium discs which we'd ordered two years ago but had never been shipped. We thought the order had been cancelled; such were the inconsistencies of the Russian system.

As I received the specification from this shipment, I noticed that each size of disc was exactly what we needed to cover our huge order. It was incredible and I knew it was God's doing.

However, according to our calculations, our production capacity remained too small to make the shipment in time. Yet we experienced something wonderful during that autumn period from August to late November. Somehow, everyone was carried, and the Holy Spirit's anointing came over the entire workforce, believers, and non-believers alike. It seemed as though the whole factory was praising the Lord and there was joy unlike anything we'd experienced at work. The staff did not walk, they ran, and they were brimming with joy! By Thursday in week 47, we had completed the final shipment. God had intervened and been glorified in a seemingly impossible situation.

It seemed that sometimes the situations were impossible in both the original company and in our new company. In Alfapac, the new company, we once had to decide whether to build a massive bag-making machine for silage bags or to buy a German machine which had been offered to us. This huge machine could heat seal three meter wide bags, and it automatically folded them as well. In order to supply market demand, we chose the more expensive solution, the German machine.

As part of the agreement, the German engineers installed the machine and trained our staff to use its complex electronic system. Everything went like clockwork. The Germans remained for a few days to oversee production and then left. The moment they left; the machine went wrong. Our workmen followed the instructions they'd been given but nothing happened and so we had to ask the engineers to return from Germany to sort out the problem.

They came back, pushed the buttons, and the machine started again. We felt absolutely stupid. They stayed on an extra day to check it was still functioning and then left. Once more, the machine stopped for no reason at all. By now our engineers were getting irritated. They tried everything they knew to get the thing working and nothing happened. Pressure was growing as we had to meet our customers' demands, and this machine would not produce anything! This time I phoned Germany and asked them to use a private aircraft and come immediately because we were so desperate.

The same thing happened all over again, and as they pushed the buttons the machine started up. "What are you complaining about?" they asked. "There's nothing wrong with this machine!"

They left and of course the machine, wouldn't work. Thirteen times they flew in to check the machine and by now it had become a sick joke. The atmosphere on the factory floor was heated to say the least.

Our foreman came to me one day and said, "Let's get the forklift and throw this piece of shit away!"

I felt like doing just that! The machine was just expensive rubbish. I felt like giving up in disgust. When I arrived home I wasted no time in sharing my feelings. Asther looked at me for a long time and didn't say anything. I hadn't expected her to. What could she say?

After a couple of hours, she commented, "Gunnar, you must stop cursing this machine." "You know very well I'm not cursing!" I responded.

"Remember what happened to the fig tree when Jesus told it, *'No one will eat from you!'* It died."

At that moment I realized she was right. I was extremely annoyed, and my thoughts weren't pleasant at all. I'd already told the Germans that the machine was totally useless and threatened to withhold the final 30 percent payment that was due. Our entire workforce was equally irritated and annoyed. That machine was just a nuisance.

Convicted, I asked the Lord to cleanse me in His blood and restore my joy. Then I suggested to Asther that we should go to the factory that weekend and cleanse the whole premises with the blood of Jesus and bless the machine in the name of Jesus.

We entered the place in fervent prayer, asking the Lord to clean the place from all the negative words which had been spoken. Then we went through every room, pleading that the blood of Jesus would wash away all sin. Finally, we went to the machine itself and laid hands on it and began to speak to it in prayer:

"We want you to know that you are welcome, and we now bless you to become a source of blessing in this factory. God bless you. We love you! In the name of Jesus, amen."

Once more, we saw the wonderful healing power of Jesus manifest, not only in my own heart but also for the machine. From then on, we had no more problems with it! It was another small thing, but vitally important in my understanding of the Kingdom. I discovered that I could so easily be irritated and saw the condition of my heart. As long as everything went along okay, my attitude was fine but when it did not, the tendency to become annoyed was still there. When God used these small circumstances to squeeze me, the irritation came out and it wasn't pleasing to Him. The serpent was there in the Garden of Eden even before Adam and Eve fell into sin, and the serpent is just waiting for the moment to cause us to fall into temptation.

Perhaps the greatest challenge came when another major piece of machinery at Alfapac continually would not function properly. It was one of the most expensive pieces of machinery in the factory. Nonetheless the blowing head of this plastic film extruder, which determined the thickness of the plastic, was not functioning correctly. We had recently bought this extruder and expected it to dramatically increase our production, but the thickness of the plastic was uneven. Approximately, sixty centimetres of a three-meter circumference was 30 percent thinner, rendering the total output useless. We had an expensive machine that could just produce scrap. The output from the machine should have been worth 10,000 kronor an hour ($1,000 USD). Hence, the problem was causing us to lose money at phenomenal rate as the hours turned to days and days turned to weeks.

We dismantled the blowing head three times and measured it to one thousandth of a millimetre. We hardened the steel surfaces and put it together again. Nothing worked.

One Friday evening, my younger brother, who was now the company's CEO, came to me and announced: "We've tried everything, and I can see only two options: we either buy a new blowing head or we pray."

A new blowing head was expensive and would cause further delays to our production. The choice was simple.

On Saturday the whole family gathered in my mother's house. It was a good opportunity to see if there was anything between us which could hinder our prayers. I had been seeking the Lord in this situation and found myself concentrated on a passage in James:

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your sins to one

another, and pray for one another that you may be healed" (James 5:14-16).

As we shared this moment we realized that there were some issues which were unresolved. They were only small things, but they were confessed and forgiven as we talked together. Once this was done, we drove to Alfapac. Everyone came, including my eighty-five-year-old mother. As we entered the factory, my younger brother whispered: "You're not going to ask me to pray are you? Please don't because I don't know what to do in this kind of situation."

"Relax," I replied, "just lay your hands on the machine when we pray. It won't take long."

Together, we laid hands on the machine and commanded it to function properly and produce plastic film to the glory of Jesus Christ. Even machines had to submit to His Lordship! Then we left.

The next day, my brother, Ake, had a prompting to check over the machine and he felt he should look inside the cooling ring of the large blowing head. To his amazement, he found a small metal plate which caused a totally uneven distribution of air. He removed it, and when the engineers came the following Monday morning, they started the machine, and it produced perfect plastic film.

It was only a small thing but that's exactly how it is in life. It's the small things that can cause big problems and hinder God's plans, and we have to get rid of them. Unity was the central issue here, and the Lord was teaching me more about Kingdom principles. If the company was the Lord's then it had to be run according to the principles that govern His Kingdom and not our preconceived ideas.

Unity is one of the vital keys to the Kingdom which the Lord constantly emphasized, and I had a similar experience before I owned Alfapac. I was working with the Christian businessman mentioned earlier, and sharing premises. Our characters were very different. He was meticulous down to the last detail whereas I was more "inspirational" or as he would have seen it – disorganized! However, the Lord knew what He was doing when He put us together at the start of my independent business career.

The other man would lock every door – even the office door, and as I did not have keys, it became a constant source of irritation. We had precious fellowship in prayer, but there were several little things that were causing friction between us. He enjoyed arriving at work early in the morning and would be in the office around 7 a.m. each day. I wasn't like this and would arrive much later at 9 a.m., working late into the night. We were like an owl and a lark – total opposites. As I was working for no one but myself, I could not see that this was a problem. Surely I was getting the work done and frequently putting in long hours? How wrong could I be!

Finally, everything came out into the open. We had decided to pray specifically for his business. He had seen the company's turnover double, and as cash reserves were tied up, he needed an increased line of credit facility. Now, he had asked me to join him in prayer for this specific matter. The entrance door to the street was locked, and as I entered the room, he rose up and locked his office door, too. Before we began to pray he looked rather uncomfortable and then he said: "I can't pray. I've got to sort this out first…" and he proceeded to tell me exactly what he thought of me. "I'm sorry but I think you're just a bum. Everyday you're late!"

I stared at him in disbelief, speechless. Anger began bubbling up inside me. He continued to tell me my faults and it wasn't very pleasant! My initial reaction was one of horror. How dare he say these things? I had been the one who had helped him spiritually. He was now free from stammering, and I was there when he had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit some years earlier! Yet now he was telling me what he thought of me. It was so unfair! Thankfully, I had sufficient wisdom to remain silent throughout his recital of the catalogue of my faults.

As I listened, it finally dawned on me that anger was not the right response in this situation. Surely, I should be thankful because here was a man who felt free enough in our friendship to share his heart with me. He had the confidence to speak the truth. His honesty was a real token of God and not of the enemy as I had first thought. The Lord was in this situation.

Eventually, taking courage, I told him how his meticulous habits affected me. I resented him as much as he had resented me it seemed. Then, we both asked forgiveness of one another before we could begin our prayer time.

"Lord, glorify Your name in this company. Please give us financial resources so we can grow to Your glory, amen."

At last, the air was clear between us. We had expressed our differences and been reconciled. And with that honesty and openness came a unity which brought an overwhelming awareness of the presence of God Almighty in that little room. Weeping, we had reached a unity in spirit and touched heaven.

Just as we finished, there was an unexpected knock at the door and a man walked in. We stood staring at him. Looking at my watch, I noticed it was now 7:30 p.m. The time had run on. Both of us stared at him, sharing the same thought. How had he appeared? The doors had been locked as usual and there was no way he could have come into the building without either of us knowing.

He was a banker, and his visit provided an immediate answer to our prayers. Our answer came swiftly but our unity was real, and God knew that. The Christian life has to have an earthly reality rather than trite religious phrases that mean nothing and come spilling out from lips where hearts are far from God. Sometimes this is painful. Sometimes it can cost us. But it's vital. Without this we will be floating in unreality, and our lives will never be free to reflect God's glory.

If we want to see our prayers answered, then we need to remember the principles Jesus gave His disciples. If we have a grudge against someone, we need to confess it and ask forgiveness first, and then come before the presence of Almighty God, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. At that point we can ask, and then we can receive His answer.

Chapter 9

Touching the power of God

When God answers our prayers He's also preparing our hearts and teaching us so that our characters are developed, and we become more like Him. He answered my prayer for a company, but little did I know what else was in store as I walked on with Him. This was to be the start of a new adventure with the Holy Spirit – which would lead to the formation of the International Christian Chamber of Commerce.

Right from the start, God made sure that I had contacts with Christian businessmen. When we married and went to live in Stockholm, I became involved with the Swedish group of the Christian Businessmen's Committee, CBMC (In Sweden it was known as KAN). It was an evangelical group, and I got to know many of the leaders. We would regularly meet together for breakfast and fellowship on Saturday mornings, and although our meetings were never large, they played an important role in the nation. There were about thirty of us, and those meetings had a deep impact on my life. Somehow, I knew my connection with the group was not just a coincidence. Even then, I knew that I belonged to the world of Christians in business. I was only twenty-three years old, but I was aware of the calling of God in this area of my life. However I didn't know where it would lead. Now, as I look back, I can see the Lord working throughout my life and leading me to places which I would never have imagined. He does so much more than we can think or dream.

My shyness caused me to remain in the background during these meetings. I would usually sit in a corner and listen, learning from these men. Many of them were dynamic personalities, the diametric opposite of my personality! I remained timid and painfully self-conscious. However, I knew I had to break free of this if I wanted a successful business career, and this was why I joined the public speaking classes.

Eventually I became Vice President of the group, and we organized meetings for two well-known evangelists, Paul Lilienberg and Bertil Paulsson. The Christian Businessmen's group supported them for many years, and their ministry changed many lives throughout the nation. Therefore, before the International Christian Chamber of Commerce was formed, there was a heritage of meetings amongst Christian businessmen. The original group diminished after several years, and the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship evolved in Sweden. Although I was interested, I had no desire to attend any of their meetings. I had heard that they were quite wild and charismatic, and I was still shy and conservative – in spite of my public speaking classes!

The Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship impacted Sweden. It was the catalyst for the charismatic revival, which swept across the religious community, breaking down barriers between denominations and churches. Many of the visiting speakers were businessmen from the USA. Henry Carlsson, from Chicago, had family roots in Sweden, and God had laid Sweden on his heart. His visits were a tremendous blessing, and Christians from all denominations came together at these meetings. Lutherans, evangelicals, and others all met to hear this man and his team. Many experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit through their ministry. Many came to the Lord, and many were healed.

One of the men who had been touched by God through this move of the Holy Spirit was one of the founders of our Friday prayer group. Perhaps that's how I became involved, although I still don't know how events unfolded as they did.

Although the Full Gospel meetings had been highly respected and had proved such a blessing, by 1973, the organization was faced with leadership difficulties. At this time, I was just embarking on the biggest adventure with God I had ever known. I had acted in

obedience and resigned my job with the former Prince and given all my capital away. Only Asther knew as she shared and encouraged me to obey the prompting of the Holy Spirit. We were penniless and wondering what to do next. We had just started a tiny, insignificant business venture, and I was feeling particularly vulnerable for many reasons, especially as I had no money and was totally dependent on God each day for our provision! I was living by grace hour by hour. The last thing I expected was to be contacted by the Full Gospel Business Men and asked to stand for leadership. But that's exactly what happened.

I was in Germany with my business associate, who had offered me office space in his premises. Asther was at home with the children, but she had become ill. In fact her body responded so poorly that pneumonia was diagnosed, and she was totally bedridden. Friends came and looked after our young children, and other people came to help while I was away. However, her situation deteriorated, and finally she had water on her lungs and an extremely high temperature. Her condition was very serious, and I had arranged for a doctor to visit her each day. I returned as quickly as possible, but I was shocked when I saw the state she was in. I had been praying for her every day while I was abroad, but now she looked far worse than I had ever imagined.

That same night I received a phone call. It was the chairman of the nomination committee of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, inviting me to consider being their President. How did they know me? I was not even a member, and I had not been to any of their meetings, so how could they ask me to do such a thing? Furthermore, how could I be considered as a businessman in my present position? Stunned, I listened to what he had to say. As I listened I began to quietly weep. The tears were totally out of my control as something was stirring deep within my spirit. I was experiencing the Holy Spirit's burden for the work amongst businessmen although I didn't fully understand what was happening to me.

"I can't accept," I said, desperately trying to control my voice. Physically, it felt as if a heavy coat had been put on my shoulders. The other man was simultaneously affected in a similar way.

Deeply burdened, I went straight to Asther who was lying in bed. Even though she was very weak, I had to share my burden with her.

"Please could you be with me in prayer?" I asked her as I told her about the phone call.

She was so frail she could barely speak, but she indicated that she would. Scooping her up in my arms, I carried her to an armchair and sat her there, covered in thick blankets. As I raised my hands to pray I couldn't speak. The only word that came from my lips was, "Asther."

I repeated my wife's name again and again. That was the cry of my heart. In my mind I wrestled with the burden of Full Gospel Business Men, but I longed for Asther to be healed and could pray only for her. Then an amazing thing happened. The power of God hit us like a thunderbolt. There was an instant manifestation of God's presence in that room and Asther was immediately healed.

She told me later that she felt a hot stream go right through her entire body. It was like an electric current filled with love. Such was the power and love of Almighty God. Her strength returned so rapidly that she stood up and told me she would cook our supper! Later that evening a friend came to see us. He knew that Asther was seriously ill, and he was amazed when she greeted him. "What's happened?" he asked totally bewildered.

"Asther's been miraculously healed," I explained and told him what had happened a few hours earlier.

Determined to test her healing, Asther went out two days later and shovelled snow off the driveway. There were no ill effects whatsoever. When God heals, He totally heals.

For me, this was more than the wonderful miracle of Asther's healing. I stood in awe of

Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and the earth. The fear of God had been impressed upon me, and with it came confirmation that I should get involved in the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship. It still took me two years to become a member of the organization, but I knew God was calling me to be involved and I had to obey.

Someone had given me a copy of Demos Shakarian's book, *The Happiest People on Earth*, which tells the story of the Full Gospel Business Men. I knew this was the right book at the right time. It was rather like my reaction when I had read Mother Basilea Schlink's book many years earlier. Demos' life story impressed me, and I felt I had to meet him. How? I would leave that up to God. I did not realize then that not only would we meet, but we would also become lifelong friends and enjoy precious fellowship.

At first, I decided that the best way to meet Demos would be to travel to the USA, and as a businessman this would be relatively easy. However my wife, who is a wise, prayerful woman, thought otherwise.

"I don't think it's the right way," she told me. "Just pray and wait for God to lead you to meet him. Do it God's way, not your way, Gunnar."

So we prayed and I remember saying, "Lord, I need to see this man, Demos Shakarian. I need to see him, to understand what You are doing. Lord God, I know you are doing something in this man's life, and I'm hungry for the same thing. Please let me meet him." Nothing happened. I waited as Asther had suggested, but a year passed and still I had not met Demos Shakarian. Then one day, a pastor in Stockholm phoned me and asked me if I would accompany him to a series of meetings and act as an interpreter for some businessmen from the USA. Although I spoke English and was quite fluent I declined.

"Sorry but I can't. I've never interpreted before in a public meeting. It would be too difficult for me. Can you try and find someone else?"

"That's a pity, Gunnar. One of them is Demos Shakarian, and we're putting him as the main speaker at the conference in Stockholm..."

"I'll do it!" I shouted down the phone.

And so that was how God made sure I met Demos just when I was about to give up ever meeting him.

The conference took place during the celebration of Pentecost in Sweden. It was a fitting time because the Holy Spirit was to fall on people with such power! The meetings were held in a large traditional Lutheran Church in the capital. We were met by the priest, and his main concern was that the meetings should be orderly. Organization was uppermost in his mind. He instructed Demos to minister the Word to the people, and then he would pray and Demos would lay hands on those who came forward. However, God was not so concerned about organization and that soon became apparent as miracles broke out and shouts of joy were heard all over the place. Unfortunately, some of the people could only hear the exuberant cries and were unable to see what was happening. I longed for every person to be touched, and I longed to see more of the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit.

When I sat in the hotel that evening with Pastor Stanley Sjoberg, who had organized the conference, I shared these thoughts. The others agreed. We were hungry and wanted more. Just then, Demos passed by our table.

"Hi! What's up?" he said, noticing we were deep in conversation. "We want more of God," someone replied.

"What do you mean?"

"We long to see more of the physical, manifest presence of God. We want everyone who comes to the meeting to say that they have seen the power of God manifest!"

"Do you want the people to fall when we pray for them? "Demos asked. "I don't know. I've never seen that happen," I said.

"Well, I don't mind as long as it's the power of God that makes them fall," Pastor Sjoberg rejoined.

So we all agreed that we would see everyone come under the power of God during the meetings. If God wanted them to fall, then that would be okay, and we would see that as a visible expression of the presence of God.

I was driving Demos to the church that evening and he asked me where he could buy some souvenirs. He especially liked china, and I suggested a shop in the city. I sat in the car thinking about the meeting, but Demos just talked about Royal Copenhagen Chinaware. I expected someone who was clearly so anointed of God to be more spiritual, yet here he was, talking about such ordinary things. I couldn't figure him out.

When we arrived, the church was packed, and people were squeezed into every available corner. News had travelled fast, and crowds had come to see what was happening. Sweden had not seen anything like this before! To my amazement just before he walked over to the platform to address the crowds, Demos whispered: "What was the name of that china again?"

"How can he do this?" I wondered. Surely he should be in the Spirit? Now I really was perplexed. Here was an anointed man of God, but he was so ordinary and definitely not the super-spiritual giant I'd expected.

As I walked to the platform for the message, we both heard a cracking sound in the air. A Methodist minister who was at the meeting had been asking God for a sign, and when we heard the noise, he told us later that he had seen a huge flame hovering above our heads. I had a strange sensation as if I was driving an enormous supertanker. When Demos spoke and I interpreted, I felt that we were somehow steering this gigantic vessel. Such was the anointing of the Holy Spirit as Demos spoke, in spite of his fascination for china!

An elderly lady came for prayer first. She was full of problems, and as she began to share each one and rambled through her long list, I wondered if we had made a serious mistake. However, Demos wasn't bothered. He suddenly cut across her complaints and told her: "Listen lady, God knows everything. You don't have to tell me all the details! He knows already!"

As he said this, he touched her, and she fell to the floor under the power of God. With this, hundreds rushed towards us as the power of God became manifest. When we had prayed for these crowds, we went down the long aisles and as we walked by, people collapsed in their seats. This was a large Lutheran Church in Stockholm, and people were falling down under the power of the Holy Spirit! I could hardly believe it was happening. People were waiting for prayer all the way to the exit door. As we reached the end of the aisle, Demos turned around and winked at me.

"Let's take another turn," he whispered.

Demos wasn't trivialising the Lord's work in any way, but he had a certain sparkle and sense of humour, which was always under the surface. So we went back down the aisles, and more people were piled on the floor by the end of our walk. The priest had asked for order, but this was God's order, not man's order.

That night has a special place in my heart. For the first time I knew that I had been part of a wonderful supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit's power and love. While I had interpreted, the anointing that was over Demos affected me and I had been flowing in that same stream. From then on, Demos and I became close friends. We shared a deep relationship on a spiritual level, keeping in close contact over the years.

When I was invited to the leadership of the FGBMFI, their membership in Sweden was approximately five hundred men. The leadership elections took place in Stockholm, and I felt that before I stood for election, I should meet the American who was overseeing the election, a man called Steven Lightle. Although I sensed God calling me to such a position, I felt quite

vulnerable and was still battling with shyness. Yet, in spite of my inadequacies, I knew that I had to be involved. However, it was impossible to meet with Steven, and unfortunately, I became aware of certain political maneuvering among some members which I found disconcerting. As soon as I realized what was happening, I immediately withdrew, and because there was only one other man standing for presidency, he was elected.

Shortly afterwards I literally bumped into Steven Lightle as he was turning a corner in the building. He looked straight at me and said loudly: "You won!"

This was my first contact with him, and we became friends as the Holy Spirit drew us together to work for the Kingdom of God.

Although I was not President of the organization, I was at last a member and became very involved in the work. One day, an invitation came to attend meetings in Seattle, and being fluent in English and able to interpret, I was invited to go.

The speaker for the first evening was Reverend Dick Mills from Los Angeles. He moved under a strong anointing of the Holy Spirit. In his early Christian life, he had got up early every day to memorize passages of the Bible. Now, he used these words like spiritual hand grenades – his ministry was explosive.

He called me up and ministered the Word of God over my life until I fell to the floor under the power of the Holy Spirit. While I lay there I again had a deep-seated awareness of a special calling from God over my life. I knew it involved working with businessmen, and this was later confirmed through a word of prophecy. The conference ended with a garden party reception for all international delegates, and that really excited me. This international dimension was vital. I suggested all the European leaders should come together for regular prayer meetings. They needed to hear what God had to say and cooperate with Him in achieving His plans and purposes for Europe.

If we want to live in the power of God, we must move in the purposes of God because that's where the power is. I already knew this from my personal experience, but now I was involving others. It was wonderful! Representatives would come together from England, France, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Sweden as well as other European nations. Unity was a key to flowing in the blessings of God and was already a principle in my own life, but now I longed for more.

And so this was how the Full Gospel Business Men's European Council was birthed. I was later appointed International Director for the whole of Scandinavia, and we had an office in Brussels where we as leaders met regularly.

It was wonderful to see what God was doing through this group of businessmen, but gradually I realized that something was missing. The heart of the organization was to win men for Christ, but having done this we would find businessmen were coming to us and asking: "How should I live now? How does my new life with Christ alter my business view?"

The standard reply was: "Just go on winning others for Christ."

This wasn't enough. And I knew it! These men needed to be taught how to live and work consistently with the Kingdom of God so that the power of our Lord Jesus Christ would be manifest in the business realm. How could this be manifest in their daily work and circumstances? How could we help them?

During this time, the FGBMFI decided to convene the European Conference at Wembley in London. Several thousand delegates were expected from all over Europe and America. Many well-known speakers had been invited, including Demos and Rose Shakarian, Arild Edvardson, Steven Lightle, and others. One day I received a telephone call which startled me. It was Steven Lightle.

"Gunnar, we'd like you to be the speaker at one of the breakfast meetings during the

conference. Can you speak on the theme, 'Christ in us our hope of glory'?"

I swallowed hard. Surely it was a mistake. I'd never spoken publicly in English! My mind was racing, and my heart was pounding. On the one hand I didn't have the courage to say yes, and on the other hand I did not dare say no. Ever since that day when the Lord had miraculously healed Asther, I had the fear of God in me.

"I'll have to pray about it," I stuttered.

We hung up. I had a whole year to think and pray about it as the conference was not scheduled until next summer. Secretly, I hoped they would forget about the whole thing. Surely he wasn't serious? Surely it was just meant to encourage me? But what if they were serious? I didn't dare think about it. Daily, I wrestled with the deep awareness of God's calling on my life and agonized over the shyness in my personality.

One day I received a letter from the organizing committee asking me to send a photo to be featured in the programme. I thought it was completely "over the top" so I never replied in spite of several reminders. Then eventually, the programme arrived. It was superbly produced in full color, featuring all the speakers, and an empty frame with my name and topic. My heart somersaulted. So it was serious after all! It was too late to cancel. The letter invited Asther to attend as well but I pleaded with her to stay at home.

"I don't want you to see me make a fool of myself," I told her.

"Okay, if that's how you feel, I'll stay here and pray for you," she responded.

That was my first speaking engagement of this kind, and I was agonizing over it. Unexpectedly, Pastor Sven Nilsson came by our home to Asther and I. He was a great man of God with one of the largest churches in Orebro. He had never visited us before, although we met occasionally. He knew about the conference and came to encourage me.

"You'll minister to three people," he said.

After he had prayed with me, he left. His visit was such a precious gift from God when I was at such a low point and desperate for encouragement. When I arrived in London and met with the organizing committee and the speakers, I felt completely out of my element. They were brimming with joy and inspiration, but I felt like the poor country cousin, totally miserable. One man in particular caught my attention. He was the President of the Full Gospel London City Chapter. Handsome and tall, he was beaming with confidence and all that a leader should be. After one of the meetings I felt the Lord give me a word for him so I took courage and told him: "The day will come when you will stand before leaders of nations and minister to them."

He looked at me, smiled, and replied, "Only God can do such things." That was the first time I spoke to Michael Fenton-Jones. Over the years I've had the privilege of getting to know him and working closely with him, first in his office as Vice President and later, as President of the International Christian Chamber of Commerce. However, when I met him at Wembley all those years ago, I had no idea what God had in store for us both.

On Saturday morning, I had to share my testimony. The hall was packed, and I was terrified. I was so glad Asther wasn't there, but I knew she was praying for me as I stood up to speak.

As I spoke something happened. The tangible presence of the Lord came over us, in spite of my stammering and broken English. When I reached the end, the presence of God remained. I didn't know what to do, so I stood silently by the microphone. Quickly, Bob Trench from Durban got on the platform and whispered, "Stay here with me."

Then he proceeded to call out three individuals. As they stood to their feet, the power of God came over them and they each had a miracle. Two were healed and the third had a financial miracle. While he was standing, someone came behind him and wrote him a blank check on his back to fill according to his need.

After the official meeting was over, hundreds remained for prayer. The breakfast meeting had begun at 8:00 a.m., but I could not return to my hotel room until 7:30 p.m. God had given me a taste of things to come, and it was a baptism of fire.

Gradually, my dream of an International Christian Chamber of Commerce grew, but I shared it with a couple of leaders within the Full Gospel Business Men's Organization. Their reaction disappointed me. Even Demos was unsure. My original idea had been to have a chamber of commerce within the FGBMFI, but this was refused. The focus of the organization was very specific, and the leaders did not want to change it. Finally, Demos expressed his view.

"Gunnar, I believe the idea is from God, but this International Christian Chamber of Commerce should be separate from the Full Gospel Business Men's Organization. God bless you and give you success!"

And so I continued to prepare for this new venture while working with Demos and others in the FGBMFI. The Lord made sure that I hung on to the idea, and there were several occasions when I felt His prompting in certain ways.

During a FGBMFI luncheon in Belgium, I met Dr. Willard Cantelon, who was the main speaker on that occasion. He was the first television evangelist and the author of several dynamic books including *The Day the Dollar Dies*, which had a great impact across the business world. I had the privilege of sitting at the head table but not near Dr. Cantelon. The man was like a walking computer. He sat there giving all kinds of insights into the financial realm, and I was impressed with the degree of detail he could provide. However, although I admired his ability to record the minutiae, I did not feel any great spiritual revelation coming from the man. His words impacted many and his knowledge of the subject was impressive, but he didn't impress me.

If his words did not impress me, neither did his manners. While I stood talking to some other delegate at the reception party, Dr. Cantelon marched up to me and barged in on our conversation. Ignoring my friend, he stood in front of me repeatedly poking his long finger in my chest!

"You're the reason I'm in Europe!" he said rather rudely.

He did not introduce himself. He had his own manners, which were abrupt to say the least. His attitude was not endearing, and I tried to slip away from his poking finger as gracefully as I could.

Half an hour later, he had found me again. This time I braced myself because I knew what to expect. He had a pile of books in his hands, about fifteen in all. He had signed them all and as he gave them to me he said: "You and I will have a lot to do with each other in the future."

And with that, he walked off.

I stood there puzzled. Dr. Cantelon was a well-known Christian leader, respected in many circles. That year, he was Chairman of the National Day of Prayer in America, appointed by the US President. He moved in social circles totally beyond my experience, but his manner shocked me, and I couldn't figure him out. However, our paths would cross, and God had prepared some amazing things.

Chapter 10

Speak out your dream!

For ten years, I had dreamed of a movement of international Christian businessmen and women that would impact industry and commerce. I dreamt of seeing God's love and power manifest in the marketplace as thousands upon thousands exercised their faith in the business realm. I dreamed of seeing the glory of God manifest through an army of Christian people. Light would shine in a dark area, and this would signal a new era because Christians would be taking a stand in enemy-controlled territory, the realm of business and finance. It would be an international movement, the International Christian Chamber of Commerce.

I held on to that dream and shared it with no one during that time. Then in 1984 an opportunity came which altered everything. There was a conference in Orebro at the end of the year, and its theme was "Big Brother or the Kingdom of God?" The entire conference would explore the dividing line between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world, examining the tensions and the key areas of conflict.

Now I believed it was becoming the time to share my dream. I was already booked as a speaker, but I hadn't realized that God wanted me there to share my vision. Initially, I submitted this to the pastors who were leading the conference. They prayed about it and confirmed it was from the Lord and agreed I should share it. And so I started to prepare. Somehow it seemed right, but I was still questioning what I was doing. The vision for a global business organization was going to be shared with a small group in a small Scandinavian country that spoke a minority language. Was I really hearing God? My insecurity made me desperate for confirmation.

"Please give me a sign that this is what you want, Lord," I asked.

God answered my prayer in a remarkable way with a phone call from an American businessman whom I had met only once before. He was calling from Paris and insisted on seeing me. He suggested we met at Arlanda airport in Stockholm, in the three hours he had between flights. As I walked over to him, his first words shocked me:

"I've come to tell you this is the time you should speak out your dream!" "What are you talking about?" I asked, amazed.

"I don't know, but this is the sign you need."

Then, opening his briefcase, he produced two thousand lapel pins with a special logo depicting the world. Instead of continents, two faces were looking at each other through the fish symbol. Little did I know that this would become the official ICCC logo.

What could I say? God was confirming everything. The experience at the airport was the first of several prophetic confirmations which led to the birth of ICCC. The Bible tells us that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good work, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Now I was experiencing the truth of those words and literally walking into my dream.

At the same time I began to understand how serious the situation had become. This was not just my dream, and it was far bigger than I could imagine. God had given me the idea, and He wanted the dream to become a reality. The problem was that I had envisioned a worldwide movement, but who was I? An absolute nobody. If this was God's idea then He would have to provide media coverage. I couldn't do it.

Then, to my astonishment, a journalist called from *Dagens Industry*, a daily newspaper

rather like the *Wall Street Journal*.

"We're doing a series of interviews with Christians in business, and we've heard about you. Would you be available for an interview?"

I declined, but she persisted: "We know you're the leader of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship in Sweden, do you have any meeting which we could attend?"

"No, not really, but I'm speaking in a small business seminar this weekend, but it's not a Full Gospel meeting," I said, hoping to close the matter.

"No problem. Can we come and bring a photographer?" Reluctantly, I gave in.

At the conference, I found myself talking about something unusual. Unusual in that it was a subject which no one mentioned. Everyone likes success but no one likes failure; it's best forgotten about. But I described the loneliness of a failing businessman. I talked about the solitary walk the man has to endure and the consequences for his family when things go wrong. No one had heard anything like it.

"We need an emergency clinic for sick companies," I said, without realizing how those words would impact everyone.

The journalists felt this was a scoop, and the next day the story appeared in front-page articles across forty main newspapers. "International Christian Chamber of Commerce opens emergency clinic for sick companies!" was blazoned over the pages. I was inundated with phone calls. Over one hundred and fifty calls jammed the lines as people responded. I was interviewed on national television and featured in an international broadcast on satellite elsewhere in Europe. If the dream needed media attention, then it certainly got it! What's more, it was totally out of my control.

However, all this publicity was having an adverse effect. Hundreds of people were responding, but they were not the sort of people I had imagined. These were the unsuccessful ones facing bankruptcy, near suicide cases. Only desperate people were contacting me. This was useless. I wanted successful businessmen who could serve others, not failures!

"Lord! Help! What's happening?" I cried.

As I opened my Bible the pages fell open at 1 Samuel 22, verses 1 and 2: *"David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down there. All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him. And he became their leader. About four hundred men were with him."*

I read the words with astonishment. This was exactly what was happening to me! David was the anointed king. He was commanded by God to take his position, and here he was in a cave with down and outers! David had been commanded by God to take the whole of the Promised Land and place it under God's Lordship. Yet this mighty man of God had a rag-tag army. These poor souls were the first army he ever had. Like the endless businessmen I had heard day after day as I received the phone calls, they were all desperate men. Nevertheless, thirty-seven of these men would go on to become David's mighty men. They were handpicked by God Himself, who saw the end from the beginning. These were men who had been disillusioned under King Saul and had given up hope. However they had seen the anointing of God manifest over David when he killed Goliath. Now, they probably thought he had a solution to their problems.

Had I been like this when I wanted to meet Demos Shakarian? Had I seen this same spirit over Demos and hoped that he had a solution? Probably, and right now others were seeing me in a similar way. At this time I could not see how God would use these men and how successful and blessed they would become!

In the same week that all this began, I had to fly to Lugano, Switzerland. There, I was to meet Dr. Fred Ladenius, the former secretary of the Pope. He was an old friend through

the Full Gospel contacts, and he was now involved in a wide reaching television ministry which went out to Italy from Lugano. I wondered if we could learn from him and perhaps help him.

As we sat having dinner in his beautiful lakeside villa, the phone rang and I noticed that Dr. Ladenius started to speak in English. He had no problem switching languages as he spoke nine languages, fluently. Strangely, the phone call was for me. Quickly, I took the receiver and listened to the words of prophecy:

"The initiative that you've taken is from God. It's going to impact the whole world and will have ramifications far beyond your imagination."

And so it continued. I grew puzzled. Who knew about my plans? Who was this?

"Excuse me sir, who are you?" I finally interrupted.

"It's Dr. Willard Cantelon and I'm calling from Washington!" We had met two years ago, and I had not heard from him since then. Now he was prophesying into my situation and the birth of ICCC!

Events happened rapidly as ICCC came into being in 1985. God led me to each of the five founding members: one Australian, two Americans, one Canadian, and one Belgian. The Lord directed my steps in detail in a supernatural way. The dream was becoming a reality, and events were definitely not in my control. I was swept along in a current as the Holy Spirit moved through my life in a remarkable way.

As I had prayed about the next step, the Lord had directed me to go to Belgium late in 1984. After all, this was to be an international organization, not a Scandinavian organization. I obeyed and spent three days in Brussels where I believed we had to register the association. Those days were set aside to pray and see what would happen next.

During the first two days my time was totally consumed by a long counselling case and finally, on the third day there was only time to make one phone call. This call led me to James Lockett, an American who was the only Christian lawyer in Brussels! We met over lunch, and as I shared my vision with him, he agreed to help me.

I shared with him what I sensed was the direction of an International Christian Chamber of Commerce, and how I saw it functioning. Over the next weeks, James set this out in legal and organizational terms. Then we met again in Brussels early in 1985 to present our proposal to the Belgian Government, which had to approve this special type of international non-profit organization that James proposed using. However, he pointed out a slight problem – we were legally required to have a Belgian representative. That was the law, and I knew no Christians in Belgium.

We had scheduled a meeting with the Minister of Justice at one o'clock that afternoon, and as we sat in James Lockett's office at 11 a.m. with several of the future directors and with no Belgian representative, he looked at me and said: "Gunnar, this will never work. Forget it. It will never be approved without a Belgian director."

"If this is of God, He will send the man," I responded.

Behind my back was a glass partition and as I turned, I saw a man coming up the stairs. I'd never seen him before in my life. "He's coming now," I said.

Sure enough, the man walked into the office.

"Are you sent by God?" I asked him.

"I don't know, but I'm a Christian," he replied, smiling.

Dr. Emile Vanbeckevoort had come as a result of what appeared to be some confusion, but now he found himself being invited to join us in our meeting with the Minister of Justice!

"Well, I have a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs," he began. And then he

looked at me for a while and promptly cancelled that meeting.

Emile was a gift from God, given to us at the eleventh hour. He became our Belgian director and consequently all the paperwork went through smoothly. My dream was taking shape, but we still needed clearance from the Ministry of Justice, and this came later in 1985.

I was on the west coast of Sweden, ministering in a conference when James Lockett, our lawyer, called me. He advised me that we had to conduct our inaugural meeting right away. He told me that unless we submitted our application immediately we were in danger of losing the opportunity to register the chamber of commerce.

"What's the hurry?" I asked.

"It will be difficult because the government won't understand why Christianity should be linked with a chamber of commerce," he warned me. Then he explained that owing to a government crisis caused by a football tragedy, this would be a suitable time to slip the proposal through. He realized that unless we acted quickly our proposals would be dismissed as the politicians pressed on with more urgent matters. The procedure was quite complex as the papers had to go through the Minister of Justice to be signed as a Royal Decree by the King of Belgium.

"We must hold our first official general meeting immediately," he said.

"But all the board members are travelling. I can't possibly reach them at such short notice," I explained. I also told him I could not come to Brussels because I had meetings in The Hague, Holland.

James replied, "Just give me authority to call the proposed directors, and we'll fix an immediate meeting in The Hague, Holland.

We need to get them together to sign the documents."

I agreed but it seemed impossible. Today was Thursday and the meeting was scheduled for the following Wednesday. Many of these men were frequently travelling all over the world. How would we manage to contact them, if at all? My concerns increased when James Lockett, our lawyer, phoned me Friday evening to inform me that he had not been able to locate any of them. I sat in the living room totally baffled. I believed that the chamber of commerce was an idea from God, and we had to be registered and receive governmental approval, but how?

The phone rang as I was sitting alone with these thoughts. Dr. Willard Cantelon was calling from Vancouver, where he was on a speaking engagement.

"What's up?" he asked in his direct way.

I explained we had been trying to contact him and told him why. "The Hague? Wednesday? Right. I'll be there on Tuesday!"

No sooner had I put the phone down when Dr. James Garvin called. We had a similar conversation. He had just returned from Europe to the USA that day and now he was telling me he would turn round and come right back just to be at our meeting!

And so when we met on Wednesday everyone was there except for Dr. Keith Cleland, who was too far away in Australia.

Somehow the Lord had ensured that the meeting could go ahead, and I was so grateful!

Something was happening. The dream God had given me would soon take over my life. I knew that but at the same time I was anxious. Who was I to think I could do something on such a grand scale? These men were all highly esteemed world-class businessmen. They were top professionals, and I was just a small businessman with a dream from God. I felt so inadequate. In fact the night before I left Sweden, I was weeping uncontrollably at home in the early hours of the morning:

"Lord, have I got everything now? Is this really what you want? Lord, help me!"

I was sorting through my briefcase, checking documents again and again because I was so afraid of making an utter fool of myself. To my amazement, the phone went as soon as I finished praying. It was 1:30 a.m. and the call was anonymous. I still do not know to this day who the person was, but words of prophecy flowed, speaking right into my situation:

"This is the time when this new thing shall be done. It is a plantation which is clean and pure. I see great trees and many smaller trees and bushes. The big trees will protect the plantation when the storm is breaking loose. This is a shelter for many people. No one will be able to touch what I am now doing. The enemies will try to destroy, but I will hit them on their fingers. They will not succeed. There will be neither high nor low but only Jesus. The Lord will use these for many remarkable miracles. The trees and bushes are full of fruit and berries containing great power.

When people see what I am now doing they will envy you, but they shall not be able to enter in. The Lord is showing the Kingdom that cannot be shaken. He will send it down to all those who believe that the Lord is faithful and real, already here. It shall not be taken away from the Lord's people and will remain when Jesus comes. It shall not be capable of being shaken here on earth. "Many who think that they have much to offer will become very small when they come, because what they bring cannot last.

There are many things to be shown, many things to be experienced.

"Do not let what I am doing rock you out of balance. I will do unusual things. Just remain calm and in peace. All the answers come from Me. You can trust Me completely. Do not trust in flesh and blood. Yield yourself to Me and lean on Me.

"Irritations will arise, but remain in peace. They have not heard and understood the Holy Spirit. I will protect you in spirit, soul, and body, and put my wall of fire around you. You will grow in the Spirit in a new way. The Lord will give you new gifts. You will be able to communicate with your dear ones in the Spirit, and they will understand you completely. The Lord will speak.

"You will be bestowed with a wisdom that will astonish many. You will see My power in such a way that you only can be at rest. You will be like a child who is not leaning on your own understanding. Remain in purity of heart, faithfulness, and rest, lest you lose your orientation. You are My servant, and you shall feel that you are completely free, completely happy and fulfilled, dressed in My glory as when I polish my jewel. The Lord will use you especially.

"Keep your eyes on the Kingdom that cannot shake, that begins here – that the Lord sends to all those who hold Him faithful. It begins already here and shall not be taken away from you.

"The golden chain that is about to be closed with the last link tells that all is finished, When that last link is put into place, all has been fulfilled. This will all come to pass when My servant has gone to be with the Lord."

"Lord, take me home now!" I cried.

But of course that did not happen, and I didn't fully understand what the golden chain was until several months later. Right now I didn't need any more confirmation. Whatever was unfolding, it was the Lord's plan. His supernatural leading was obvious. Throughout our time in Holland I was reminded of God's watchful presence over the tiny beginnings of ICCC, and it's something which I have seen again and again. The foundation of ICCC was birthed in heaven. It came from a dream, and this was just the start.

The Holy Spirit was at work to make sure that everyone arrived in The Hague, and while we were there I was constantly aware of His presence. I hardly knew Dr. Willard Cantelon and because he was to play a vital part in establishing ICCC, he suggested we should meet for lunch the day before our official meeting, which coincided with the European Convention of Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship. We hoped to find a quiet

restaurant outside the conference area where we could have some fellowship. To our surprise, all the directors appeared and so we had lunch together.

I already knew Dr. Clifford Hill, and I suggested to Dr. Willard Cantelon that he should meet this man of God. As I was saying this, one of the others told me to turn around. I did and saw Dr. Clifford Hill just taking a seat right behind me. As I had been speaking to Dr. Cantelon, Clifford had suddenly appeared right on cue! And so they met, and Dr. Clifford Hill came to our inaugural meeting. He prayed for us and prophesied powerfully over us forming what he saw as a Gideon's army.

Chapter 11

Liberty not slavery

As the vision for ICCC developed, I still kept my special friendship with Demos, who was a wonderful brother and mentor in the Lord. Owing to the amount of work involved in setting up the chamber of commerce, I had to leave the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, but I remained in contact with many of its members. Most precious of all was my fellowship with Demos.

Just before he went to be with the Lord in 1993, I knew that I had to fly to the States and see him. When I arrived at Los Angeles airport, I was met by two of his friends, as arranged. They were wondering why I had come there.

"Well," I began, "the Lord has told me that He's going to take Demos home very soon, and I want to express my love and gratitude to him and ask him to pray over me."

"You must be mistaken," they replied. "He's made an excellent recovery and he's quite well."

However, I had the privilege of spending a whole day in Demos' home, and we had some precious fellowship. We prayed together and he prayed and laid hands on me. Two weeks later, this great man of God died.

And so Demos went to be with his beloved Lord, and I lost a dear friend. Later, while I was sitting quietly at home, thinking about him, a phrase in the prophecy suddenly flashed again through my mind:

"The golden chain that is about to be closed with the last link tells that all is finished. When that link is put into its place, all has been fulfilled. This will all come to pass when My servant has gone to be with the Lord."

Somehow Demos and the prophecy were linked. Then I remembered our first ICCC Board meeting in October 1985, where we had wondered about our discovery of these same words in the title of the final chapter of Demos´ book, *The Happiest People on Earth*. Quickly, I searched through the bookshelves and sure enough there it was, entitled *The Golden Chain*. Was it a coincidence that the prophecy which had so affected my life also referred to a golden chain? Was the "servant" who was mentioned referring to Demos? The final link in the golden chain represents the glory of God manifest in the marketplace – in the world of business and commerce. This was where the Lord was leading me all along. Perhaps ICCC was part of God's plan to demonstrate a new aspect of His Kingdom in the business realm. God Himself has called us to glorify Him in our professional walk so that we can take His glory into the world of industry, commerce, and finance. Business is the final battlefield. Its time has come! God longs for His glory to be demonstrated not just in churches or evangelical meetings but where we live our daily lives – in our workplace. This is "the final link" to which the prophecy referred.

I first grasped this during a conversation with our son, Mats. He had once asked me what a Christian business was, and his question made me think very carefully. At first I thought of the companies which were printing Bibles and Christian literature, or producing praise and worship materials, Christian broadcasting, and Christian magazines. Then I realized that excluded all other businesses, so surely there was another perspective on this?

"Mats," I said, "can you tell me, what is a Christian donkey?" "It doesn't exist. It's just an animal."

"Exactly, a donkey is a donkey, and a business is a business, but I can think of a donkey

which cooperated with Jesus. What do you make of that? You see God has created us as creators and some of the things we are creating are companies and businesses. We have power over them because we have created them. They're under our control."

Meditating on this during the months that followed, I began reading passages of Scripture with a fresh understanding. The Bible is rich in images describing man's dilemma, and I realized that a donkey, a traditional beast of burden, could represent the working life. At the time of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God was made manifest as a foretaste of the coming victorious Messiah. Jesus commanded two of the disciples to go into the village ahead of Him where they would find a donkey and her foal tied to a stake. He instructed them: *"Release them and bring them to me. The Lord has need of them."*

The stake illustrates bondage and lack of freedom, showing the curse of sin. The animal, a beast of burden, symbolizes slavery. How amazing that Jesus, who was the King of Kings, rode into Jerusalem on a donkey! Why did He choose such an insignificant animal when He was prophesying about His glorious Second Coming? As I read that passage, I realized that in the End Times, the days preceding Jesus' glorious return, there would be a great release in the ordinary world of work for those who are called according to His purposes. The glory of the Lord will come right into the heart of the marketplace, where all the people are. God Himself will impact the professional workplace.

"Lord, I need to know if this is right because I don't want to be in error," I prayed.

Immediately, I found two other passages supporting this. When Jacob is prophesying over his sons he says to his son, Judah, *"Binding his donkey to the vine. And his donkey's colt to the choice vine"* (Genesis 49:11). Jesus said, *"I am the Vine, you are the branches"* (John 15:5). Immediately, I saw the connection, and then in Exodus 13, I read: *"And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, that you shall set apart to the Lord all that open the womb, that is every ftrstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the Lord's. But every ftrstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the ftrst born of man among your sons you shall redeem"* (Exodus 13:11-13). The blood of the lamb redeemed the donkey, which symbolizes the world of work and drudgery. In the same way, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, has redeemed us from the curse of the law, which includes working by "the sweat of our brow," to receive the glorious inheritance which He has given through His death and resurrection. We could have a Christian Chamber of Commerce because the world of business like everything else has been redeemed! Revelation poured off the pages of my Bible as I sat and read:

"Loose them and bring them to me" (Matthew 21:2).

Slavery, which was the result of Adam's fall, was represented by the donkey. Man's creativity had become a snare because he had to labour and toil, literally by the sweat of his brow. The Garden of Eden, which was once a paradise for man to enjoy, was covered in weeds and thistles. Everything that was creative and blessed was lost, tied to the stake of sin. Now the blood of the Creator Himself would set us free. Through our faith in Jesus Christ, we can find a new freedom in our work, enabling us to carry the glory of God into the workplace, in our everyday lives. And in the prophetic timetable, the calling goes out:

"Blessed are you that sow beside all waters and send out freely the feet of the ox and the donkey" (Isaiah 32:20).

The ox is an ancient symbol of prosperity, and even today the stock market refers to the "bull market" when prices are soaring. The same symbol can be seen in the Bible. When the Israelites sinned on their way to the Promised Land, they made a golden calf and worshipped it.

As businessmen and women, the world is open to us. We can use our ox and donkey to carry the gospel into every corner of the world! The world is open to businessmen in places

where it is closed to missionaries and evangelists. Let's use the wonderful freedom God has given us to move out under Him, carrying the glory of the Lord on earth. I believe that God wants to create a testimony to Him in every sphere of life before the return of Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus must penetrate the very fabric of human life just as deep as sin has penetrated this world. Christ's redemption includes everything, even business and finance!

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him" (Ephesians 1:7-10).

What's the main difference between a Kingdom business and a secular business? First the business needs to be founded on Christ, on the rock. Even the world of business is reconciled to Christ, but it does not know it:

"For it pleased the Father that in Him (Christ) all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:19-20).

I believe that "all things" means "all things" including business. Therefore, a reconciled business has a place in the Kingdom of God. Through the shed blood of Jesus, it too is redeemed but this can only be accessed through faith in Him. The workplace is a nation's lifeblood, created by God for its support and growth. Work is meant to be joyful, creative, and fruitful!

The Bible is full of examples from business. But everything in God's Kingdom begins with God Himself. The method by which it becomes manifest is "through the Spirit, by faith." First, God speaks, just as He did to Abraham. Then, we receive His Word, through faith, like Abraham, and start walking in obedience to the Word, just like Abraham. This is how we journey to our Promised Land.

Of course, there are other vital characteristics which should distinguish our work. Our business dealings should reflect the excellence of the Lord. As we are serving the King of Kings we ought to love as He loves, and manifest the same high moral and ethical standards. This should impact our relationships in business, whether with employees, customers, suppliers, or financial institutions. We are meant to build relationships of trust and love. We should "love our neighbours as ourselves," even our competitors. God loves the world and the businessman is required to love the world as Christ loves it.

However, there is yet another aspect which distinguishes the Kingdom business from the secular business, and that is the glory dimension! This is the level which should be normal for a Christian businessman, and I had to learn about this as the Lord brought us through various situations at our company, Alfapac.

As a plastics industry, we produced huge silage bags. We had introduced this method of storing silage, and it soon dominated the market. Farmers had quickly seen the advantages of using these bags as the method was cost-effective and provided greater flexibility at harvest time. However, one year we experienced an enormous problem. Production had begun in December and the first shipments were scheduled for the end of April. Towards the end of April, we had produced hundreds of thousands of silage bags worth several million dollars, and they were now ready for shipment. I had no idea that anything was wrong until my brother, who was the general manager, came to see me. He looked troubled.

"Gunnar, I think we've come to the end of the road at Alfapac," he told me. "Whatever do you mean?" I said.

I listened as he explained that all the bags, which had been produced during the last five months, were faulty. Something had happened to the plastic molecules during

the processing and instead of producing a bag with two sheets of plastic, they had laminated together forming a single sheet of plastic. After heat-sealing the bottom of the bag, we had an automatic folding machine, which had made it impossible to discover the problem until it was too late. Over one thousand pallets were standing in the yard ready to go but not one could be used! That week, experts had been called in from all over Europe but no one could see a solution. Our production was totally useless, and the reject bags could only be used for recycling.

My poor brother was almost sick with the worry of it all, because he had been carrying this burden for over a week. Our production had continued over five months and no one had noticed what had happened! He knew that I was ruined. Alfapac could not sustain such a great loss and would never regain the market. However, at this stage, the information was simply in my head, but not my heart, and so I told him to go home. We needed to pray and he couldn't possibly pray feeling as he did.

I assembled the family and shared the news. Then we decided how we would deal with the problem in prayer. We would simply present the situation to the Lord and then listen to the Holy Spirit because we had given the company to Him. After a short time of prayer, each person shared what he or she felt the Lord was saying.

"Lord," I prayed, "you know what's happened. What shall we do?"

Then we waited on the Holy Spirit. We began with Git, our youngest. She said she knew that the situation was not from God, it was the work of the enemy and we should stand against it in the name of Jesus. Mats agreed, and Asther said, "If Jesus could turn water into wine then plastic bags are no problem!" I felt that if we had faith the size of a tiny mustard seed we could command the mountain of a problem to heave itself up and throw itself into the sea. And so we were agreed. We weren't going to receive the problem even though it was a fact. We were going to receive the solution. Just as we finished, the phone rang. Someone was calling from London. It was a man I had met earlier in China and Israel.

"Listen," he said, "I don't know what's going on, but I have a word for you. You must speak to the invisible." That word of encouragement was enough. Our faith was sealed.

Then he continued, "If you can't deal with the small things, how are you going to deal with China?"

I had some plans for China and his words hit me. How we praised the Lord and thanked Him for hearing our prayers! That phone call had reassured us of His love, and I felt the physical pressure of the burden lifting away. I immediately phoned my brother and told him to relax with his family and go and play a round of golf.

"What's up with you?" he asked. "How can you say that at a time like this? Don't you understand you're finished?"

"Just go and play golf," I replied. "There's going to be no problem." He had told me the bad news on Friday, and the first opportunity we had to visit the factory and see the pallets was Sunday evening. Driving out, we agreed that we would not allow even the tiniest piece of sealed plastic to remain after we had prayed. As we stood holding hands in the yard, I was glad I hadn't seen all the pallets before. They were everywhere! To the natural eye, it was overwhelming. For a while, we stood and praised the Lord for His faithfulness and mercy. Then I yelled at the top of my voice, "Listen heaven and earth! Who is Lord over Alfapac? His name is Jesus! In the name of Jesus, I command all those plastic molecules to come back into line!"

Praying in tongues, we laid hands on each pallet and after three hours we had finished. We went home. The job was done.

On Monday morning, my brother ordered the whole factory staff to open all the boxes and check their contents. And to the glory of God, not one bag was sealed! What a mighty God we serve! This is the glory element which becomes visible as we submit every aspect

of our lives to Him. There is a joy which carries us through as we work with Him, and He is excellent in everything He does. That's the difference between a secular business and one that's given over to the Lord. His glory and His life is manifest in the workplace.

Chapter 12

The King and His authority

For seven years I worked with the son of a king. The difference between him and me was that he was born a prince. By birth, he had great privileges, but as a child, he probably did not understand the level of privilege and authority that was his. Although he was the son of the King of Sweden, he had to grow up and come to an understanding of his inheritance as a prince. The court taught him manners and punctuality for he was always exactly on time. He was neither one minute early, nor one minute late. He was always gentle and kind, never raising his voice or showing stress, regardless of the situations we faced as a business. However, in spite of his unique upbringing, he made a bitter mistake during his youth. He had fallen passionately in love with an actress, so he asked his father for permission to marry this girl although she was a commoner. Now, he had to approach his father as the head of state, the king, and his father acted accordingly. The king explained that matters of state were more important because as a prince, he would stand in line to the throne. In view of this, the kingdom was the priority and not the relationship, and so the king could not grant his son permission to marry.

In spite of the expressed wishes of his father, the prince went ahead and planned to marry the actress. The wedding took place in London, and as the king knew of the situation, he sent an envoy to the young couple. A Swedish emissary appeared during the wedding reception and handed over two new passports for the prince and his wife. His passport no longer bore the royal insignia, but his name appeared simply as Mr. Sigvard Bernadotte. He had disobeyed his father and lost his inheritance. Through his act of disobedience to the Crown, he lost his royal privileges. It came as a total shock to him. Not only did he lose his title but also his annual royal allowance from the court. He also lost the right to participate in functions at the royal court, where normally he would have sat next to the king at the table of honour.

It was a salutary lesson for all concerned, and I knew this was true because I worked for him. No one could dispute the fact that he was still the son of the king, but his disobedience had cost him everything. Although we may not be members of a royal household, as believers we have a responsibility to our heavenly Father who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We need to know what we are saying when we come before Him and to pray responsibly. We need to receive from God in humility and put ourselves under His will.

Disobedience disqualifies the answer to prayer. As we remain in a place of obedience, we remain in God's will. Here, we fully acknowledge our privileged positions as sons and daughters of the King of Kings, *"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. His own special people"* (1 Peter 2:9).

As the Lord taught me about knowing Him as King of Kings, He also taught me how to act in His authority. Occasionally, I would receive calls from other businessmen asking for advice, and one such occasion especially taught me how to take authority in the name of Jesus. God was teaching me the difference between the intimate times of prayer with Him and the times when we stand in authority in the name of Jesus, accepting His mandate of authority.

One of my friends had a company that manufactured pine products, predominantly as a subcontractor to the furniture industry. He was only just making ends meet. There was no profit at all. And so when he phoned me he was desperate. Something had to change, or he would have to give up.

When I went over to see him, I took a financial expert with me, a banker. This man was an expert in corporate analysis, and he could always pinpoint the weak spots in a business. A whole day was spent thoroughly investigating the production process and the entire budget, and the only weakness we found was a high level of raw material waste. In the production process, the knots of the branches were cut out and only the remaining wood was used to produce perfect pine products. Twenty-seven percent of the raw material was wasted. Therefore, we concluded that if this waste could be used, it would make the company profitable.

"What are you doing with this waste?" I asked. "We use it to heat the place," my friend replied.

"Do you have anything left after you have heated the factory?" I felt prompted to ask. "Do I have anything left?" he laughed. "I have a whole mountain left!"

As soon as he said "mountain," I felt something trigger in my spirit, and I knew that this was what the Holy Spirit had been waiting for.

"Let's go and look at it," I suggested.

He took us across the large building, and I realized that he had not been exaggerating when he referred to the waste wood as a mountain. The pile was about the height of a house, and it was simply scrap. As we gazed at this "mountain" I was overcome with a new boldness.

"This mountain is the solution to your problems, "I announced.

Several workers had shown a keen interest in our little group and wondered what we were doing. Ignoring their puzzled expressions, I continued as I felt instructed by the Holy Spirit and explained we were going to pray. Now, we really had everyone's attention. All eyes were focused on us as we stood by the mountain of wood on the factory floor.

"We're going to do something unusual, but you carry on," I suggested. Few, if any, of the folk on the factory floor were believers, and so our behaviour must have seemed strange to say the least. By now I had started praying, and I shouted at the top of my voice: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command this mountain of waste wood to heave itself up and become a product! Thank you, Lord, amen!"

Although my friend and the banker were Christians, they were clearly embarrassed by my extreme behaviour. Swedes are naturally reserved people, and my shouting had shocked them. They had probably expected me to pray quietly and certainly not to bellow out so loudly in front of the workers. In fact as soon as I had finished praying I suddenly felt quite ridiculous. Making some excuse, we left quickly. I thought I had gone completely over the top and upset everyone. Moreover, I must have looked like an idiot. I really felt ridiculous and couldn't wait to get away.

Two weeks later the owner of the factory telephoned me. Something extraordinary had happened and he thought I should be the first to know. Someone from Norway had called him and asked if he could make the centre piece of kitchen cabinet doors. His request had been remarkable because he did not want the good part of the wood, but only the knots and eyes of branches. The mountain was moving at last. By the end of that year the company had an excellent profit.

Once more I was learning. The boldness I had experienced was because I knew I was standing in a position of authority in Jesus. This was totally different to those intimate times of prayer. I had been standing under a heavenly mandate given by God through the Holy Spirit. Since then, we have had many similar experiences at Alfapac when we have had to take our authority as believers and act in the name of Jesus in prayer to see results.

The fate of my old chairman of the board has spoken to me very deeply, and I don't think it was a coincidence that I came to know him intimately. God gave me a very clear

example of unwanted experiences relating to Kingdom privileges. First, I realized that although we are born into the royal family of the King of Kings, we need to grow up and assume the authority we have by birth. For example, Galatians chapter 4 states, *"Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father."*

Secondly, I came to an understanding that it is possible to lose all the royal privileges relating to the Kingdom of God through disobedience, but still remain a child of God. How wonderfully He illustrated this deep truth to me! In order to experience the privileges of the Kingdom, we need to be totally obedient to Him. Total freedom presupposes total obedience. Furthermore, we can only access these privileges through birth. This is why Jesus said, "You must be born again." Regardless of how much Asther and I love our two children, we could only give them physical life, which suffers from Adam's fall into sin. Our life in the flesh is still dominated by death and decay, no matter how refined we are.

Similarly, when we are born by the Holy Spirit, we enter into God's eternal life. We need to be born by the Spirit to have access into His Kingdom. As new believers, we need to grow up into the authority we are given as a birthright. The only condition is believing and obeying. Part of our growing up comes as we are trained in acts of faith and obedience. There is a phrase in the Bible which refers to *"being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulftlled"* (2 Corinthians 10:6). Here, Paul says that we are totally ineffective to correct the disobedience of this world until, we ourselves, have been established in obedience under God. Only then will our prayers be effective.

This issue of obedience is crucial if we are to fully understand all that we have inherited in Christ. I learned this through specific lessons as the Lord used my company to teach me about Kingdom ways and purposes. However, God also had to show me that He was more than my loving Father. He was the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

During the oil crisis, I was invited to join an energy savings initiative. My company, like many others, had to cope with the crisis, and we were in a special position because our products were designed for that very purpose. (God knew what He was doing when He gave me pressure cookers for my first company, in spite of my aversion to pots and pans!) For several months, I had been working on this new project with a couple of friends, and we were now ready to launch it. To do this, we needed official recognition, and so we had prepared a special portfolio to be presented to the Minister of Energy in the Swedish Government. This had been meticulously prepared as it was such an important meeting and the outcome would affect the company.

Naturally, I was feeling nervous because I had never had a meeting with a prominent government official. As the minutes ticked by, I found it quite difficult to cope with my nerves, so in my mind, I went over the words of my speech.

At three o'clock, a secretary came over and informed me that the Minister was currently involved in a special government session. She suggested I could make another appointment and return another day, or I could wait. I chose to wait as I had travelled for a few hours and already waited forty-five minutes.

While I sat patiently waiting, the Lord spoke to me in my heart and an inner dialogue began. "I can see you're waiting," I felt Him say.

"Of course, I'm waiting! I'm waiting for the minister," I said. "Then why don't you ever wait for me?" the Lord replied.

I was stunned. Did I wait for God? Recently, the pace of life meant that I had been running in and out of prayer times, muttering, "Lord, bless me and help me," but I was not waiting for His answer. I would rush off and go about my business. Here I was waiting for a man of authority, and I was prepared to wait even longer. Why didn't I wait like this for the King of Kings to speak? After all wasn't He the ultimate authority?

I sat pondering this, and after twenty minutes the Lord spoke again and I experienced another inner dialogue.

"And why don't you prepare yourself to the same degree?" The portfolio we had written was almost like a book. We had done so much preparation and worked so hard for this meeting. However I felt God was teaching me yet another lesson.

"I needed to do this amount of preparation because I need to know exactly what I am saying when I am addressing those in authority."

"Why don't you ever prepare yourself before you speak to me?" the Lord asked.

His words cut through me and I knew God was speaking to me that afternoon in Stockholm. "King of Kings." How many times had I used that phrase? I had let the words trip off my tongue in a glib, religious way, and now the Lord had shown me that He was King and I needed to act accordingly.

Since that day God has brought me before many other people in high positions of authority: government officials, statesmen, heads of state, and even kings. The necessary protocol for such occasions has become second nature to me. I know that I will have their attention for a brief moment only, and, therefore, what I say in those few minutes is vital. The impression that is given in those minutes is often the only opportunity I will have.

More importantly, I realize that God requires us to have a level of moral responsibility when we come before Him in prayer. He wants us to know what we are saying and to choose our words carefully. However, it's often very difficult to discern between the spirit and the flesh. I have needed to recognize my innermost motives, and so I have learned to wait before I come before the King of Kings. At times, this has taken me almost a year, but I need to know what I am really asking of God. Sometimes, as a family, we have waited for several months before we are sure of our prayers and petitions. This does not mean that we neglect our daily prayers, but on bigger issues we need a deeper understanding first. When we eventually bring our prayer in this way we often end like this: "Lord this is what we want, but there's one thing we want more than this. We want to be absolutely sure of being in the centre of Your will. Therefore we submit what we want under Your will. Let Your will be done. Amen."

As we have learned to pray like this, the Lord has answered our prayers every time in a very distinct way. God requires us to morally own our decisions so that He can interact with us as adults rather than children who don't really know what they want. He wants us to grow in authority and responsibility before Him to access His Kingdom privileges.

Chapter 13

Be faithful in the small things

If we are faithful in the small things God gives us, He will give us bigger projects – even the nations for our inheritance. My work in touching the nations began in a small way, starting with my own nation, Sweden.

Just before the inauguration of the International Christian Chamber of Commerce in July 1985, I woke early one morning with the conviction that I had to go to Dalarna, a region a few hours north of Orebro. The Lord was specific, instructing me to go to Vansbro to take a message to the priest of a Lutheran Church there. I told Asther and off we went. Little did I realize that there was something else in store.

On our way north we passed through several small towns including Lesjofors, which had once been a prominent industrial town famous also for its excellent bandy team (a popular Swedish winter sport, rather like ice hockey). Now the place was bleak and desolate. Factories had been closed, and the empty buildings resembled a ghost town. As we drove through that place, the Lord spoke clearly to me and said: "I will do miracles in this place!"

The words that I heard were so distinct that we stopped the car and prayed for a while. Then, we drove on to visit the Lutheran priest. I thought we had gone to Dalarna to see the priest, but the Lord had another much bigger purpose. The words He had spoken remained in my heart and over the following weeks I did some research on Lesjofors and the surrounding region of Bergslagen, the industrial cradle of Sweden. Then, I travelled to the west coast of Sweden where I was ministering at a large conference with business related seminars. One day, after I had shared my message, a man came forward for prayer. As he stepped towards me the Lord spoke in my heart: "This man is from Lesjofors."

"You're from Lesjofors," I told him.

"How did you know that?" he asked, astounded. "I'm a fork lift truck driver." "Listen," I continued, "the Lord says He will perform miracles in your region!"

I knew God was underlining something to me even while I was on the west coast, and so I continued studying the history of Bergslagen. As I researched I learned that iron ore was found there and that it had been at the heart of industrialisation for the entire nation. It was the birthplace of Swedish industry, and now it stood empty.

Later, I saw a news broadcast on television which affected me deeply. It focused on Grangesberg, a small mining town in that area. The Swedish Government had closed down the main industry, and all the mines were now shut. Several thousand people were unemployed, and it was a total disaster. The television showed a whole population marching in protest. They had turned off all electric lights in the town, and they were marching in darkness showing their despair. Their homes were worthless now, and they had no work, nothing. Everything had collapsed around them. They were literally walking in darkness. As I watched this, the Lord spoke to me and said, "Go and turn on the light."

I had experienced a deepening burden for that situation, and now I knew that God wanted to touch that place. But how could we help turn on the light? At the next ICCC meeting in Orebro I shared the problem, and we discussed possible ways of helping the people up there. We approached almost one hundred companies and asked if they would consider putting a subsidiary factory in Grangesberg. We also offered to help with that process. While seeking to assist in a practical way, we recognized that there was a spiritual dimension to the problem, so I formed a small prayer team for some spiritual mapping of

the area to identify strongholds there. We quickly realized that there was a heavy spiritual darkness in the area and identified seventeen New Age and occult centres. With this understanding, we entered into spiritual warfare together with several local pastors and churches, praying and prophesying that the land would once more be used for God's glory in the name of Jesus Christ! There were few churches in Grangesberg and they were predominantly used by old folk. Church life was virtually dead. However, we met a miner who had been praying to the Lord every working day for over seventeen years. Each day he had gone to a cavern deep underground called "The Cathedral" where he would cry out, "God have mercy on Grangesberg, come and glorify Yourself in this place." Meanwhile, we continued praying and waited to see what would happen next.

Eventually, we decided to organize a conference in Grangesberg, so we contacted the pastors and the local politicians to discuss the issues with them. We wanted to show God's love in action, and we wanted to do something more than mere preaching. The people there needed hope and encouragement and they needed new jobs. This was how we hoped to "turn on the light" in that dark area.

At the beginning of the same year, Sweden had been shaken by the awful assassination of our Prime Minister, Olof Palme. The whole country was paralysed with shock. Sweden had been regarded as a tranquil, safe country, and this violent murder of a statesman altered the entire spiritual climate. There was of course a huge operation to find the killer, and all possible ideas were being followed through. A new element in the investigations focused on the religious groups, mainly the "fundamentalists" and the "parachurch organizations."

The background to this was quite extraordinary. A Swedish pastor had been troubled by the so-called "para-church movement," which was a result of the Charismatic Revival in the 1970s. He wrote a book warning the public against such organizations. He named the intercessory groups, headed by Pastor Kjell Sjoberg, the Faith Church Movement and its strong leader, Pastor Ulf Ekman, the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International and the International Christian Chamber of Commerce! All these groups were maligned, and being a leader of both ICCC and FGBMFI, I was a prime suspect! The intercessors had taught us about "spiritual warfare" in a number of meetings where the messages had been recorded. We had spoken about "tearing down strongholds of the enemy" and similar things. This was now being interpreted as militant propaganda, even anti-government propaganda and a conspiracy theory was launched, indicating the involvement of these Christian organizations. Several tape recordings ended up in the police investigation, and the research material later revealed that there had been special seminars for the government where they had been given a totally biased understanding of spiritual warfare.

A former pastor and research scientist in the Theology Department at Uppsala University tipped the media in Bergslagen that the group behind the conference in Grangesberg was suspect. Consequently, along with one of the main speakers, Pastor Kjell Sjoberg, I was seen as a fundamentalist leader of a strange para-church organization. Of course, this created enormous tension, and all this happened as we were preparing for the special conference in Grangesberg. The media was suddenly full of articles about us. The information was twisted and warped, and incredible lies were being spread. One morning at five o'clock, our daughter, Git, ran sobbing into our bedroom with the daily newspaper in her hands.

"Daddy, what shall I tell them at school?" she cried.

There on the front page was my photograph with the headlines, "Saviour of Bergslagen is South African Agent!" During this time South Africa was operating a policy of apartheid, and Sweden was at the forefront of the opposition to this system. Any dealings with South Africa were illegal. Now I found myself being accused of the two worst things possible: being a South African agent and murdering the Prime Minister! I guessed this had happened simply because I knew South African-born evangelist Reinhard Bonnke. We had met in Australia and in France in two conferences, but I had never been in any African country

during this period.

Of course, this media onslaught was terrible for us, and all the local politicians immediately withdrew their involvement with our conference. Even the local people were fearful of attending the meeting, and many of our Christian brothers and sisters did not know how to respond. However a few stood with us and Pastor Gunnar Nyberg and Pastor Lennart Persson (now named Hambre) were by our side in this difficult period. Through this, I learned an important lesson – "Judas" always comes from within. (Much later, a professor from the same faculty of Theology at Uppsala University wrote a book describing the entire drama. It was called *The Kiss of Judas*). The world was blind to the truth, yet sadly, the brother who was the research scientist believed he was helping the government by victimizing us, and sold us out. Naturally, the pastor who was heading the conference grew dubious, but the conference schedule went ahead in spite of enormous pressure.

We had engaged a dynamic youth choir and hired floodlights for a special effect. Regardless of the pressure, we were determined to "turn on the light!" The conference began with all the main lights being turned off in the main building. It was pitch-black. People gasped, not knowing what was happening. Then the choir came in with small candles singing, "This little light of mine," and as they came to the platform a huge menorah candle was lit by the small candles. Finally the floodlights illuminated the skies. We were turning on the light in that area!

One of the participants who had arrived late for the start of the conference said that at the moment the skies were lit up so dramatically, he heard on his car radio that the Swedish government had announced a special emergency fund for Bergslagen of three hundred million US dollars!

A few months passed when I was again invited to Lesjofors and I discovered that the young truck driver I had met earlier had led 35 young men and women to the Lord! Later, we also learned that many people had come to the Lord in Grangesberg. The Church had been revived and the whole area was amazingly transformed.

Six months later, the government issued a magazine, with a circulation of one hundred thousand, reporting on the region. It outlined the tremendous change that had taken place and contained many testimonies from various people. "For the first time we have hope for the future!" one person had written. Another said: "There is a new spirit of hope up here now." I was overjoyed! On the front cover of the magazine was a photograph of a bare rock with flowers growing on it. Nothing could have been more suitable. God, our Rock, had done something sovereign in the entire area. Our obedience in the small things is vital if we are to learn to follow Him in the bigger projects.

At the same time, I received an invitation to participate in the "Washington for Jesus Movement" in America where over a million people were assembling on the Mall near the White House. I was to be one of the speakers, and as I was preparing, the Lord spoke to me, saying: "Take responsibility as if you have power but don't reach for power."

He was showing me a vital principle which would apply in so many situations as we reached out to the nations. He was teaching me that I had to be accountable under Him at all times; for only then could He use me. The church is called to demonstrate Christ's love to the world, to be in the world but not of it. Somehow, we have made Christianity religious but the Bible says:

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that all that believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Gradually, the Lord allowed me to understand His concerns for countries, and the doors to the nations were opened in unusual ways. For example, the door opened to China in a most unexpected way in 1985. Asther and I were having lunch when the phone rang and I took a call from someone inviting me to join a delegation to China. I had never even thought of China, and ICCC was very small at this time as we had just started. Now I was being invited to join a high-powered group which

was sanctioned by the White House. A US Senator and Governor were going and the rest of the delegates were equally high-ranking individuals.

"You are the only European person who is invited," the man continued, and then he gave me a message from the then Vice President, George Bush.

I really thought this must be some kind of a joke. However, it became clear that this was serious, and I had been invited as a plastics expert. I knew only one person who was on this trip and did not really know what to do. Alfapac was very small compared with the large plastics manufacturers in the world, so Asther and I agreed to pray about the invitation. The caller had needed an answer by the next day so we needed God's immediate intervention. We agreed that if it was from God then all my expenses would be met. We had to test it.

The next day I had a phone call from the general manager of a large plastics industry. I told him about the phone call and suggested he should go instead of me as his company was much bigger. He was delighted. Protocol would not permit us to both go, but I certainly did not feel I was an expert in the field. Later that afternoon he called me again. He told me he could not go after all as the dates clashed with an important annual shareholders' meeting, but he suggested that I go after all and then offered to pay my way!

So off I went to China. We were treated like government officials with our own limousine and interpreter. A police escort accompanied our line of cars, and I was unaccustomed to such pomp and ceremony! As I had been invited, I presumed that this must be some Christian group, but to my surprise there was only one believer amongst the group. During the ten or twelve days we spent in China I was puzzled.

"Why am I here, Lord?" I would ask.

On the final night there was a banquet in Mao Tse-Tung's summer palace in Vuhan. As I was preparing myself the Lord spoke clearly and told me to dress differently. I wore a white jacket, blue trousers, and white shoes, and I stuck out as compared to the people who were dressed in the sombre uniforms of the Mao era! Before the banquet, a formal reception took place, and speeches followed in strict order. I was ranked number four, and when it came to my turn, I began with what I felt the Lord wanted me to share:

"I have been deeply impressed by what I've seen, but I can see that a new revolution is coming in China."

A hush filled the room as people wondered what was coming next. Mao's widow was present, and I am sure she was waiting for my next words!

"This time it will be an industrial revolution," I continued.

Then something strange happened. The chairman, who represented China's Central Committee, interrupted me: "Mr. Olson, you are from Sweden I believe?"

"Yes I am," I replied, not knowing why he had spoken.

"We have observed Mr. Olson," he continued, "and we have seen the wisdom he has shown as he has walked around, and we have listened to him."

"Why is he saying this? What have I done?" I thought, feeling slightly uncomfortable, remembering that this man was a representative of the Chinese Government.

"The project that he has proposed is going to have our utmost attention," he said. "We will give it our full support and ensure you accomplish it."

"What project?" I thought. I had no project!

The previous night I had been unable to sleep probably because I was thinking about this dinner and the speeches. I had two books to read: the Bible and a small book with various statistics about the economic situation in Sweden. I read both, and when this man

then began asking me questions about the GDP and taxation along with other detailed financial questions, I was able to reel off a whole list of figures I had remembered from my sleepless night's reading! He was impressed and I wondered if this was my so-called "wisdom."

Afterwards, people thronged around me, but I was scared because I didn't know what on earth was happening. I spent most of the following night writing down a proposal for a plastics project, which of course never came to anything. However, in retrospect, I now realize that this man was prophesying and speaking of future events.

Many years later the Lord spoke to us in the ICCC Board that the time had come to revisit China. Both Michael Fenton-Jones, who was then the Vice President and later the International President of ICCC, and myself were commissioned by the Board to go there. As we flew over the country, we looked at a passage in Scripture which proved to be significant. We read from John chapter 10:

"Most assuredly I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."

I had never noticed "the doorkeeper" phrase before, and I asked Michael who he thought he was. We concluded that the doorkeeper was the Holy Spirit, and this was to be our strategy for China: We should love and care for China and the Chinese as Jesus Himself would do. Then the Holy Spirit would open the door to the Shepherd. We did not know what the Lord had in store for us. Nor did we know how He was going to open the door wide into China.

While we were there we met some wonderful believers including a Chinese brother from Singapore. He had bought airtime on Chinese television, and he insisted on bringing us to meet the top men in the CETV, the China Educational Television. We discussed with these men how we could possibly help China as businessmen. The country was in a desperate situation as the change from communism to a free market economy had caused massive unemployment. Over 200 million were unemployed! How could we help to provide jobs?

Perhaps we could teach Chinese people how to start their own businesses? Perhaps we could have a teaching series on television? And so that was how the series, "You Can Start a Business" was born. During the year 2000, between 20 and 200 million Chinese watched the series of ten programmes broadcast on national television. It was shown continuously during the year, and during 2001 it was supplemented with a study guide which was distributed from over 66,000 centres!

They knew we were Christians and that was alright, but they explained we could not speak about the Bible or Jesus.

So we asked, "Can we say, 'It is written' and, 'These are words of wisdom from an old book of proverbs'?"

"Fine," they replied. "We want your ethics."

And so the Lord showed us how to present the programmes in a sensitive way which would convey the love of the Lord and yet remain acceptable to the Chinese government. Two of our leaders, Dale Neill, and Laurence Holt, have invested much of themselves into this project, and through their willing hearts, Christian values are being shared in this way in China. For the first time in Chinese history, the Christians in China have a "face" on national television. God opened the same television channel which had been a major instrument for indoctrination during the "Cultural Revolution." Today, this series of programmes is seen as having the same impact as the Jesus film has had for evangelization.

But this time the Lord is using the basic issues of our "daily bread," or work, as the carrier for the gospel.

As I look back through the history of ICCC, I can see an intricate pattern in the ways God has lead us to serve China. This is the largest nation on earth, and reaching this nation requires patience and endurance. It has been a long and sometimes painful march toward the glorious opening we have now been granted to serve and minister to them today.

This was the huge door that God was opening that began with that unexpected invitation and which was prophetically announced in 1985 at the banquet! During that time I had the privilege to meet with many of the Chinese political leaders, but I had no idea what God had planned.

Later in 1985, Dr. Keith Cleland, one of the founders of ICCC, visited me in Sweden immediately following our first Board meeting in Brussels. We were both invited to meet with the leader of the Norwegian Mission Covenant Church in Oslo, and he told us an amazing story. One of the great women of Norway, Annie Skau, a legendary missionary to China, now elderly and retired, had been featured on Norwegian national television in a show called, "This Is Your Life." Among the surprise visitors in the programme was the principal of the Christian School in Hong Kong, which she had founded. This Chinese man had found favour in mainland China and had been asked to assist in the founding of an independent university for 6,000 students. Now he challenged the Mission Covenant Church of Norway to help him. He appealed publicly on television.

"We are too small to help," Pastor Dahl explained as we talked with him. "We have only 5,000 members. Can you help us?" "No way!" I thought. If they were too small, ICCC was much smaller with only a handful of members at this time.

"How many students did you say you were planning for, was it 6,000?" Dr. Cleland asked. "Yes."

"Well, that's remarkable."

Then Dr. Cleland began to tell us how together with a team of architects, he had designed a university for 6,000 Chinese students, to be built in Singapore. They had been fasting and praying in the process. But, to their surprise, when the planning and engineering was complete, the Government of Singapore decided to extend another existing campus instead.

"So we have all the drawings ready for the project," he finished. We were both deeply touched by what seemed to be the hand of God in this project, so we decided to bring the matter to the Board of ICCC for prayer and further discernment.

Late the following year, 1986, we had organized our first ICCC International General meeting in Antwerp. It was our first international conference with about seventy participants. Among the speakers were Loren Cunningham of "Youth with a Mission" and Bob Osterman, who had been leading the International Church in Beijing. We had also decided to share the vision for China with our members. Dr. Cleland, who had now been to China on a first visit, shared his story of how God had been leading him to a piece of property in Zhan Jiang which was now being offered to us. The name of the place was "Trinity." His sharing moved us all very deeply. Finally, he asked us, "What do you have that you can offer to serve the young generation of China?"

He had imagined that some people would say, "I am an engineer, a building contractor, or I have some professional skill to offer." He asked us to write what we could offer on a piece of paper as an offering to the Lord. As we emptied the offering boxes, I had a shock. Over $180,000 USD had been pledged. I was afraid that some had gone too far and responded too hastily, so I suggested we would cancel the offering and give time for each delegate to pray into their decision. The final offering would be received the next morning.

The next day it had increased to $230,000 USD! We were stunned. God was clearly on the move and was giving us a mandate to proceed with the project. Dr. Cleland had given

his entire inheritance from his father who had recently died, and all of us were stirred in our spirits and gave generously. And so our long march into China had begun.

Over the next years, Dr. Cleland made over twenty trips into China, and finally an agreement was signed live on television. The university was to be financed through a steel mill project, which was to be launched on the stock exchange. Mannesman Demag, a great German corporation had donated the whole feasibility study. It had been a very difficult journey, especially for Dr. Cleland, who frequently faced a feeling of loneliness as he battled with the unexpected difficulties, twists, and turns along the way. Often, as he shared his huge burden for China in our meetings he would weep, totally broken. This great man's heart was rendered in the process.

Finally, the Tianamen Square tragedy brought everything to a complete stop. The project died. But Jesus said, *"Most assuredly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much greater grain"* (John 12:24). This had been the painful truth with the China project. All of us who had worked and sacrificed for years for this project did not know where to turn. And for Dr. Cleland, the blow was devastating. He left the project and his leadership in ICCC. As for myself, I had to write to everyone who had sown financial resources into the project and humbly ask forgiveness, because we could no longer deliver what we had said. But now I must give glory to the Lord, for in our weakness His strength was made perfect. God had truly chosen us, not because of our abilities and strength, but because of our weaknesses. He chose us to open this door because we could not do it without Him! Today, approximately 200 million Chinese are being taught how "You can start a business," based on the Word of God, and the testimony of many witnesses from throughout the world.

If we are faithful in the small things, God will give us much greater responsibility. We have seen an increase as we have been prepared to step out and use what little we have had and use it to serve the Lord. We have learned to take responsibility as if we have had power but not to reach for power. In that way, we have come in the love of Christ and served as He has done. Yet in all this, it's only what He is doing through us as we are obedient to Him that we will yield fruit. We have nothing in ourselves that could ever achieve these things. Our prayers for the nations, cities, even our situations and circumstances mean nothing until we can love all concerned and carry the burden for them. When we bring those situations to God and allow Him, by faith, to act through His Holy Spirit, then He will glorify His own name in our affairs.

Chapter 14

Patriarchs and paint

The way in which ICCC became involved in Russia was again a wonderful testimony. We knew the Lord was leading us to hold a conference in Moscow, but prior to this Jose Pascua, an old friend from the FGBMFI, invited me to go to a conference entitled, "Prayer for Russia." He had served for years in Russia, and now he told me that all the different denominations in the nation would be represented at the conference. Immediately, I knew that something special was happening. If all the churches were coming together with a common purpose, including the Pentecostal Church and the Russian Orthodox Church, then there would be a unity which the Lord would bless. If all the churches were even willing to come together, then God could surely do mighty things for Russia! My name was mentioned in the programme for the conference, and this publicity brought me an unexpected phone call one day – from the Antioch Church, (known officially as the Holy Synod of Antioch), an ancient branch of the Church similar to the Orthodox Church. (I later learned that this was part of the church in Antioch where believers were first called "Christians"). It was an unusual request from the bishop. He needed ten thousand US dollars' worth of yellow and white latex paint.

My immediate reaction was to refuse to help. In my opinion, the Russian Orthodox Church was quite dead, and there was no reason why I should go looking for paint for them. So I responded as tactfully as I could and suggested that it might be quite difficult for me to find the paint, but I would see what I could do. No sooner had I done this when the Lord rebuked me and told me to listen to Him instead of going with my own prejudices! Then, I remembered that one of Alfapac's customers was the largest paint manufacturing industry in Sweden. I knew one person there so I phoned him up and asked if he could help.

"Sorry, we don't manufacture latex paint," he replied.

He gave me the number of one of their subsidiary factories in southern Sweden and I tried them. But they didn't know me, so they eventually referred me to someone who was an expert on the Eastern Europe market. He told me that he couldn't help at all. This was leading nowhere and so I gave up.

However, the events which followed were extraordinary. In the last twenty years, I have hardly spent any time at my factory in Asbro; perhaps five days every year at our Board meetings. However, one morning I felt I had to go there for some reason. When I arrived, the receptionist told me there was a call for me.

I took the call in the boardroom and was amazed when the voice at the other end of the phone announced he was the general manager of the large paint industry.

"As soon as I heard your name," he continued, "I decided we'd give you everything you wanted as a gift!" I was astounded.

"Excuse me, do we know each other?" I asked, wondering what was happening.

"No but I'm a brother in the Lord and I've heard of you. This is my first day as general manager in this company, and this is my first decision. We'll supply all the paint you need."

I was staggered. How wonderful! I was overwhelmed by the man's generosity, and on my way home I stopped by at a pastor friend's office to share the news. While we sat drinking coffee, a man appeared at the door. Now it wasn't unusual for people to turn up, but I had never known anyone to walk in unannounced like this. He was a foreigner, a Russian pastor on his way back to Moscow from Sweden.

God hadn't finished surprising me as the man explained he was on a visit to Sweden and would be returning to Russia with a truckload of goods for humanitarian aid.

"Would you have room for ten barrels of paint?" I casually asked. "No problem," he replied.

He promised the paint would arrive by the deadline we'd agreed in September and off he went. God had not only supplied the paint free of charge but also supplied the transport on the same day!

Everything went according to plan, and although I was not to find out until later, something even more extraordinary happened. As the paint was being unloaded at the Antioch Church, His Holiness, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church was on an official visit to the Bishop of the Antioch Church. He asked what was going on so the Bishop explained it was a gift from a Christian businessman from the West. The Patriarch was surprised and replied: "Really? I never realized they cared about us."

He returned three days later, just to bless the paint.

I knew nothing about this, but when I came to the prayer conference which my friend had organized, I had a message from the Bishop of the Antioch Church and he insisted I go for lunch with him. I was somewhat reluctant because I thought he was after more paint! However, I accepted and while we had lunch together he told me how the Patriarch had happened to be visiting his church when the paint had arrived.

"The Patriarch gave you this message," he continued. "Tell Mr. Olson that I will bless everything he is doing in Russia."

That's nice, I thought. Obviously I hadn't fully understood the implications, because the bishop looked at me thoughtfully and then asked:

"Do you understand what this means?"

I confessed my ignorance, and he explained that the Russian Orthodox Patriarch was a man of enormous importance in the country and that he was even more difficult to see than the Russian President. I was beginning to understand.

"Now, do you realize that if the Patriarch says this, then the way is immediately open to 185 million Russian hearts?" I was astounded.

"Lord what does all this mean?" I prayed silently.

Bewildered, I returned to the conference to deliver my speech to the delegates. When I had finished, a distinguished looking man came over and introduced himself as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church.

"His Holiness has sent me," he announced. "He wishes to extend his gratitude to you, and he invites you to have lunch with him."

"Thank you, but it's really not necessary," I replied.

The official was undeterred: "But he's inviting you and he'd like to see you on Wednesday. Would you mind speaking at that luncheon as well? It will be a meeting of government officials and representatives from the diplomatic community."

And so I went. There were 250 people there, including some delegates from the prayer conference, and by the grace of God I had something prepared. Before I left for Russia I had arranged for the translation of a prayer which I'd been led to pray in Washington during the "Washington for Jesus" meetings. It was a prayer of forgiveness for our disobedience to God. The Lord had worked mightily through that prayer, and I had been able to bring it to the King of Tonga, a small Pacific island with a Christian king. I had asked him to take this prayer as a representative of the smallest kingdom in the world, but a kingdom which was ruled by a man after God's own heart, and pray it on the day of the 70th anniversary of the Communist Revolution. The prayer would be an act of spiritual warfare, challenging the

tyrannical rule in the Soviet Union. Tonga is geographically situated on the dateline, so we were the first country to see daylight on that day. Imagine the smallest country on earth, through prayer, challenging one of the world's superpowers! Somehow I had felt I needed to have this prayer translated into Russian before I left for Moscow. Now I knew why.

I spoke to the Russian leaders about the many atrocities and problems they had caused during the Stalinist era. I reminded them about the time they had taken the Sputnik and used their space flight to mock God, and said, "We've been up there and we didn't see Him!" I explained the importance of asking forgiveness because unconfessed sins were powerful and would hinder God's blessing reaching Russia. Then, I asked those in leadership and the representatives of the Russian Government to stand and join hands, before the visiting members of the diplomatic community in Moscow. Led by an Orthodox priest, they all joined in the following prayer: "Oh Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and keep Your commandments.

We have not obeyed Your Word. We have sinned and committed iniquity. We have done wickedly and rebelled and departed from Your precepts and Your judgements.

Oh Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but shame to us because we have not put our trust in You in all things, and therefore we have not prospered. Oh Lord, to us belongs shame for we have sinned against You.

To You belongs mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Your Word. But You have been true to Your words and in Your righteousness You allowed bondage, poverty, and wants to be brought upon us.

Oh Lord, we come before You in repentance, asking Your forgiveness in Jesus' name, for He is our Redeemer and our Righteousness.

He is our Salvation.

Oh Lord, You are righteous in all Your works, and in Your love, You have reconciled the world to Yourself in Jesus! Oh Lord, according to Your righteousness, we pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from us and release us from the bondage of our enemy.

Oh Lord, separate unto Your name a holy people in the area of finance and business. Release us for we are Your people. Restore in us Your glory, honor, and riches, so that the world may once again see the difference between those that serve the Lord and those that serve Him not.

Oh my God, incline Your ear and hear. Open Your eyes and see our desolation for we belong to You. For we do not present our supplication before You because of our righteous deeds but because of Your great mercies upon us, in Jesus.

We choose to obey You and be a blessing to the world for Your glory and honor, and to extend Your kingdom.

Oh Lord, hear! Oh Lord, forgive! Oh Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for your own sake, my God, for we are Your people and called by Your name! Amen."

I was amazed by all this. It seemed that even paint was important to God. How necessary it is to listen to the Lord and see what He wants us to do! Once more, I was seeing how we have to be faithful in the small things first, and then He will set us over greater things. And all this happened through some tins of yellow and white paint.

Later, we had the privilege of convening our International General Meeting in Moscow. However, the process of finding a suitable location was certainly not easy.

Michael Fenton-Jones and I stayed at the Warsaw Pact Headquarters to find an appropriate venue and to prepare for the conference. We looked at the World Trade Centre in Moscow, but it was far too expensive. The prices they quoted were ridiculous, and then every extra item such as an overhead projector was added as well. During our second meeting, the process was repeated as each of the twenty staff quoted the exorbitant prices.

Finally, I whispered to Michael, “Let’s make a statement.”

After listening to all their presentations, I silently stood up, closed my briefcase, and walked towards the door. “What are you doing?” they asked.

“Gentlemen, we are not living on the same planet“, I responded and walked out.

However, when we got back to our hotel, I was desperate. Was I not hearing the Lord? Every door seemed to be shutting, and we had to find a venue fast. Nothing was budging. I was so desperate, I told Michael I should resign from the leadership in ICCC.

We prayed and I cried out to the Lord for help. This went on some time, and Michael left me in this state and slipped to his room.

I was still on the floor when our interpreter came in.

“What on earth’s happening?” she asked. “What are you doing?”

“I’m praying,” I replied. “This has all gone wrong. It’s impossible and we’ll have to cancel the whole thing because we can’t find a venue.”

“Give me an hour,” she said and left.

I had led her to the Lord earlier that week, and she returned within the hour with the following announcement: “The Second in Command of the Russian Army wants to see you.”

“Where?”

“This is a large complex. He’s at the back of the building.”

And so I met this man and explained our predicament. I told him of our aim to assist his country as it moved into a market economy and our difficulty in arranging this conference. When I had finished, he leaned forward, looked me straight in the eye, and said: “Mr. Olson, I want you to know you have the whole Russian Army behind you. Allow me to make a call.”

He took a red phone and called the White House in Moscow.

Our meeting in the White House took us to a huge room which was dominated by the biggest conference table I have seen in my life. In the middle of this enormous piece of furniture, which probably seated a hundred people, were four cups of tea. We drank and once more, I explained our dilemma.

While I spoke, this high official showed no response whatsoever. His face was like stone. There was not even the slightest flicker of life in his eyes. I honestly felt as if I was speaking to a brick wall. He waited for me to finish and said, “Mr. Olson, you’ve just been in the wrong place. Let me make a call.”

This time the phone call led us to the Lenin Academy of Atheistic Philosophy. It had been the main propaganda training facility for the very top Communist Party leaders. And that was to be our venue for a trade exhibition of 250 delegates, “To Russia With Love.” However, our difficulties were not yet over as I found when I arrived on the Friday night for the opening of the conference the next evening. The Russian staff were supposed to have everything in place, but to my shock and disbelief, nothing had been done. No signs were in place, no tables had been set up. Nothing. There was to be a fashion show and a concert as well as the major exhibits and nothing had been done.

Word had got round that I had arrived, and the leader of this large complex invited me to dinner to meet the other officials. I informed them that if they wanted to meet me they would have to come to me. They did.

“Gentlemen,” I said, “where are the registration desks, the tables, all the things we are going to need tomorrow?” They made some excuse and tried to shrug it off.

"We're not going anywhere until this is ready," I replied. And with that, these high ranking officials spent their evening carrying tables and setting them out. By 6 p.m. Saturday evening it was ready, and no one knew what a trauma the whole episode had been. Again, this became a mighty manifestation of God's love and concern for the peoples of the world, and our trade exhibition attracted attention from the highest authority in Russia. When we entered the building, we were met with cold, stern faces and the rigidity of that place was everywhere. Yet that large institution with stiff, frowning individuals and hundreds of workers, gradually melted under the love of God. When we finished there were only happy, smiling faces surrounding, us and the staff had become so warm and friendly towards us. At our final meeting with the leaders of the Academy, we presented a Bible to their chief official. He stood up and announced:

"It would be a lie if I said I had never seen a Bible before, but this gift is precious to me. This really is the Word of Life! Your presence at the Academy has forever changed this institution. Thank you for coming."

This same man later became a believer and founded a mission organization to care for the children who were victims of the Chernobyl disaster. He is working there today. God is so good!

Chapter 15

Love in action

Before we can be effective globally, we have to be effective locally. This is not only a principle in business but also in the Church. We need to simultaneously grasp the excellence of what we are doing and also be aware of the coming glory of the King of Kings. If we are to understand and move in the purposes of God, we should demonstrate the love of the Lord and not just His mercy. Love should be our sole motivation. Love for God and love for others. Jesus' final words to His disciples were, "Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations." The greatest commandment of all can only be achieved if we allow His love to soak through our lives.

Today there are only a few hundred people groups which have yet to hear the gospel, so the Great Commission is being fulfilled in our lifetime. And the signs are that it won't be long before these people receive the good news of Jesus Christ. As business professionals we can carry the gospel to the far corners of the world, so we have a vital part to play in these times. I feel it's an enormous privilege to be able to walk with the Lord and to work with Him.

"We know that (God, being a partner in their labour) all things work together and are (fitting into a plan) for good to and for those who love God and are called according to His design and purpose" (Romans 8:28, Amplified Bible).

As I think of Christ and the way He won the ultimate victory over sin and death to give me the privilege of life in Him, I can see the manifestation of the love of God in the most awful situation imaginable – the crucifixion. Jesus overcame the power of sin and death not through His physical strength and might but through love. He silently gave Himself into His Father's hands totally trusting because He knew His Heavenly Father. Resurrection life came through love itself. However, it is only manifest after death – death of self. It is through unselfish dependence that we experience true liberty, while selfish independence leads to a false sense of freedom. Although to some extent, I had experienced God's love personally, I still had a great deal to learn, and I'm discovering more about the Lord every day. As I consider the power of God's love working practically, I remember some vivid experiences, which God used to show me that His power is contained in His love.

During my years in the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, I had several opportunities to share the gospel in a small way through speaking engagements. Public speaking never comes naturally or easily to me. It's still a constant battle, but by the grace of God, I've got through!

Once I was in Dublin, Ireland, speaking at a FGBMFI conference. The first meeting was on Friday lunchtime, and this was especially for non-Christians. After a short introduction I shared some of my testimony and then invited people to receive Christ into their lives. To my dismay only one person responded! I wondered what had gone wrong.

Afterwards, however, thirty-seven of these men came one by one to see me, and they all said they wanted to discuss various matters. Each one asked to see me the following day, and as I had no idea of the number I agreed to see them all. On Saturday evening, I was due to speak at a banquet at the Intercontinental Hotel with an audience of up to 800 people. The day had originally been set aside to rest and prepare for the important evening meeting, and now I'd just given up this time.

The first man appeared at seven in the morning, and as the next one came soon afterwards, I had to skip breakfast. Then the next man came and then the next, right through the morning. There was no time for any break at all as they kept appearing at the door. They

all came with some pretext or excuse asking to talk about products, projects, and various kinds of business topics. However, each one really wanted to receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, but like Nicodemus, they needed to see me alone. That day, thirty-seven men gave their lives to the Lord, and at 7:15 p.m. the final man knelt and prayed with me. I was happy but absolutely exhausted. There had been no time for food or drink all day, and there was barely time to shower and get ready for the evening banquet. I was due to speak at 7:30 p.m.

I felt totally drained and desperate. How could God allow this to happen? I needed time to prepare myself. The Mayor of Dublin would be there with other diplomats and officials, and they would be expecting a polished performance as they were used to excellent speakers. Meanwhile, I had no time to even get ready, and I hadn't the faintest idea what I was going to talk about. It was a total mess!

The minutes raced by and I became increasingly nervous. Just before the opening of the banquet, I slipped away from the head table and went out to the men's room. There was a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach, and I was gripped by panic. My mind was completely blank. I had no idea what I was going to say to all those people.

"Lord," I muttered miserably. "This is the last time I'm doing this. I can't take anymore. Please deliver me from these formal engagements – it's too difficult for me."

I was almost sick with worry, but then the Lord spoke in my heart.

"Don't be so concerned about what you're going to say. Just love the people as I would love them."

That sounds fine but it's very difficult to know how you are supposed to do that! In spite of these words, there was still the most enormous pressure on me simply because I was the main speaker. The people would be expecting something. What should I do? Just stand there and say nothing? And so I walked down the corridor to the banqueting hall wondering what on earth I was supposed to do.

"Love them as I would love them." "But how, Lord?"

As I was about to go through the doors a man came by on crutches and I stood aside. It was obvious he had artificial legs, and he was finding it painfully difficult to walk, even with the crutches. He was almost falling over, and as I helped, I asked him what had happened.

"I stood on a mine," he replied and went on to explain he was a former IRA soldier and he had been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

"That's awful!" I responded.

"No it's not. It brought me to the Lord!"

And I could see from the expression in his eyes that he really meant it.

"And this man is my best friend," he added as he turned towards another man who was seated next to him. "He was the one who planted the mine."

I was amazed as he explained how both of them had come to know the Lord through this tragedy. God's overwhelming love had somehow broken through hatred and prejudice in war torn Ireland and brought two enemies together.

Immediately I knew what I had to do. I invited them to the platform, introduced them, and then stood and listened as they shared their stories and publicly declared their fellowship together through Jesus Christ. As they spoke there was a perceptible change in the atmosphere. The air itself became thick with the tangible presence of God Himself.

It didn't matter what I said. God was in the room. He had presented Himself in our midst, and I almost think I could have spoken about football at this point – it wouldn't have made any difference!

My speech only lasted ten - fifteen minutes, but before the end, I asked if there was anyone who wanted to make Jesus Lord of their life as these two men had done. There was a huge response. There were 800 folk there and I know that 395 came forward that evening as someone counted the numbers. I had not expected such a crowd, and so I had to ask the host what he wanted us to do. He instructed me to usher the people into an adjacent room for prayer.

"If you want to receive the Holy Spirit," I continued, "come now and embrace Him in your lives! Receive Him as the Lord God, filling you with His glorious presence!"

Ninety-five people immediately streamed to the front where the power and presence of God was so immense that as we touched them, they instantly began speaking in tongues. All except one.

Finally, as the meeting ended we went to the other room and prayed for everyone assembled there. The presence of God remained in that room, and no one could remain standing as we prayed. This was something I wasn't used to, and so when a large, heavily built Irishman came up, I was quite wary of his sheer bulk crashing to the floor. I quietly whispered to him that he should try not to fall when we prayed.

"Lord God touch this man and fill him with Your life in Jesus' name," I began.

The man slipped through my hands to the floor. He did not stand a chance as the love of God and His precious presence was tangible in that room. And so we carried on praying for each person until three o'clock in the morning, as the Lord's power and anointing continued flowing out of that room. As the door was slightly ajar, I could see a smartly dressed woman coming down the long hotel corridor. She had no doubt heard the noise. She cut a distinct figure in a red dress and hat and as she got halfway down the passage, she collapsed on the floor under the power of God! She tried to get up but the power of God was over her. Staggering to her feet and steadying herself with the help of the wall, she finally made her way into the room where we were still praying.

"What is it? What's happening?" she asked.

"This is the Lord Jesus Christ", I explained, and she too, received the Lord as her Saviour that night!

When I eventually got back to my room in the early hours just before dawn, I was hot, sweaty, and exhausted. As I started to run a shower, the phone rang – at that time in the morning!

"Mr. Olson, there are more people down here who want to meet you," the man at the reception desk said. "You've got to come down."

So I slipped on some clothes and began ministering again. After all, I had covenanted to give the Lord my time! Later, as I sat thinking about that evening and the strange phenomena, I began asking the Lord many questions. This was not the usual kind of meeting. I had simply obeyed His instruction to love the people instead of being so concerned about what I should say. The two Irishmen, who were once enemies, clearly demonstrated the power of God's love, and His love had flowed through our hearts as we'd prayed for them. But I was puzzled and wondered why everyone had fallen to the floor when at other times nothing had seemingly happened.

"God, why did you do these things?" I asked. The response was quick.

"Don't concentrate on my power. My power is in the love."

There had been times before when I had really wanted to see the power of God manifest and nothing had happened. Through the events of this evening, which had merged into the early hours of the next day, the Lord showed me new principles of His Kingdom. For the first time, I understood that His almighty presence was not just associated with acts of power but in His love. Love itself is the channel for His power to be manifest.

Then, the Lord demonstrated this through a seemingly insignificant event at home. In Sweden we often have severe winters, and this particular year the snow had lasted a long time. The earth was covered with a thick white blanket of snow for months and the wild animals had little to eat. There was at least one rabbit in the neighbourhood, and like other animals, it was obviously searching for food and it had found something tasty in my garden. I didn't realize what had been happening until some months later.

From my bedroom window I used to look out over the garden at the fruit trees below. It was spring and the blossom was beautiful. In Sweden, spring bursts suddenly. Snow and ice melt overnight and the gardens are bright with colour within a week. Such is the speed with which the season changes. Soft pink and cream blossoms swayed in the light breeze. All the trees were in bloom – all except one. One morning as I was dressing, I looked out and noticed one little apple tree in the far corner of the garden had died. The trunk was bare and white. All the bark had been nibbled away by the rabbits during the winter months.

I went out to investigate what had happened and saw that the tree was dead. My first reaction was to cut it down and dig up the roots so I could replace it with another tree. However, as I considered what had happened, I began to think in a new way. I realized that although the rabbit had destroyed the tree, it was actually my fault. The tree was in my garden, and I was supposed to be a steward before God and look after everything He had given me. As I stared at the bare trunk, a feeling of pity welled up inside me.

"What a pity, what a pity," I found myself saying quietly.

Then I did something I had never done before in my life. If anyone had seen me they would have thought there was a mad man standing in the garden. Why? Because I began to talk to the tree!

"I'm the head of the house, and I was supposed to look after my garden. I should have put a fence around you so that the rabbits could not reach you. You couldn't run away. Can you forgive me?"

Although this may seem strange, as I spoke those words I was acutely aware of the presence of God. And here I was talking to a tree! But it was the principles of stewardship that I was learning about here. Suddenly in the presence of the Holy Spirit I spoke over the tree:

"Take courage little tree, I love you."

The words came from deep within as I had no intention of saying anything like that. Then I leant over and hugged the tree as if it were a child and embraced its dead trunk.

"I speak to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I love you and you're going to be the most beautiful tree in our garden."

With the words came an overwhelming sense of the power of God's love for His creation. The next day as I thought of the apple tree and looked down into the garden, it looked exactly as before. But once again I went down to the tree. The trunk was still bare and it looked dead. Standing by the tree, I felt the presence of God and I repeated similar words:

"Hang on little tree, I love you and you're going to be the most beautiful tree in the garden!"

And then once again I hugged it! Every day I felt I had to do this right until the time came for me to go away on a ministry trip. I left in May and returned at the end of June. To my amazement, when I came home the tree was covered in cascades of blossom. It was the most beautiful sight I had ever seen. By June the blossom was usually over, but the tree was still covered in bloom although the trunk remained bare and white. I felt God was saying to me:

"Now do you understand, Gunnar? The power is in the love! Love itself results in the

creative power you are seeing now."

Later, I made a long trip to the Far East, and when I returned home from Tonga at the end of October that year, 1987, a new trunk had formed, growing up from the root. This trunk was much taller than the original and I was able to cut away the damaged part. Almost 400 apples were produced from that same tree, and even now, as I sit writing this book, that tree has just ceased blossoming, signaling another fruitful autumn ahead! Just as huge crops of fruit are produced from orchards, so God intends the fruit of our lives to be love, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit. God is looking for the firstfruits in our lives individually and corporately. There should be tangible results if we are living in His ways and according to His Kingdom principles. Our lives need to reflect the inherent life of his Kingdom so that others can. "Taste and see that the Lord is good." If the fruits are not there, then it means we are drying up from the root and no longer being watered by the Holy Spirit.

Of all the fruit in our lives, the most important is love and this, is not the sentimental emotion which is so often associated with love. No! The love of God covers a multitude of sins, and this cannot be achieved through a weak sentimental approach to a situation or problem. God's love is something altogether stronger and far more powerful!

This lesson has remained with me throughout my life, and God has continually demonstrated this principle in numerous ways. I even learned to apply the same principles when machines failed to function properly in the factories, as I shared earlier. Love after all is the greatest commandment. When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment He replied:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart all your soul and with all your strength and your neighbour as yourself."

I have always believed that we live in a time that is under grace rather than under the law. But at the Last Supper, Jesus introduced a foundational law on which the whole new covenant is based. His final words to His disciples at the Passover Supper show that the new covenant is also governed by a law: *"A new commandment I give to you that you love one another as I have loved you."*

The fundamental law of the New Testament is love. I believe that as the Church, or the wider body of Christ, we often break that law. Why? Because we don't love the world and one another as Jesus intended us to do. In the natural, we easily understand the consequences of breaking the law. If you are caught speeding, you will have to pay a penalty. Breaking the law of love also has consequences. The presence of God will disappear. This is why we don't see the manifestations of His resurrection power as we should. The Bible states plainly that "the house of God, which is the church of the living God (is) the pillar and ground of the truth." Therefore, the foundation of truth in society is the Church of the living God. Now if the pillar is not positioned properly the whole "house of society" will collapse. And we can see that happening all around us. The problem is not with unbelievers; the problem lies with the believers! When the Church acts in disobedience, it has serious consequences for the world. May God restore us in His love! First, we should love God and then our love for our neighbour will flow from that place of intimacy with our heavenly Father. The most important thing is that we are able to love. We need to demonstrate the unconditional love that Jesus showed to His disciples and all those around Him and by which He has loved us. God wants us to demonstrate His love – even to the unlovable.

In the Swedish language we have an expression for issues which are too complicated to understand and we say, "They are talking figs!" The fig tree is an interesting tree, and it's the first tree to be mentioned in the Bible. It is commonly found in the Middle East, often growing up to nine meters tall. Its wide branches provide excellent shade, and, according to the book of Genesis, its leaves covered Adam's and Eve's nakedness. Its firstfruits appear in

April at the time of Passover, often even before the new leaves have appeared after the winter. This fruit is good for eating, but it cannot match the main crop that comes in June, and between August and October there is yet more fruit, but it is usually not so good. Only recently did I begin to understand the passage about Jesus and the fig tree:

"Now the next day, when they came out from Bethany, He (Jesus) was hungry. And seeing from afar a ftg tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response, Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again!' And His disciples heard it.

"On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. When the evening had come, He went out of the city. The following morning as they passed by, they saw that the fig tree had dried up from its roots, And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which you cursed has withered away'" (Mark 11:12-14,16, 19-21).

I have often pondered this passage of Scripture. How could Jesus be so hard on the tree when the Bible explicitly says that it was not the season for figs? It always seemed unfair to me until I discovered the secret of the fig tree. This is the only tree that yields a firstfruit before the harvest season.

Now I think I understand the meaning of that passage. Jesus is looking at His Church today for its firstfruits, the fruit of love, joy, and peace. It is not yet the fruit season because that will come when Jesus reigns on earth as Lord and King of Kings. But now, in the dark time before His Second Coming, He is hungry and searching for the firstfruits of our lives. And I pray, that we all, myself included, will not have to experience withering and dying up from our roots because He cannot find any firstfruit.

The love of God is powerful, and we need to learn this if we want to walk in His ways. Too often we react to others in the opposite way, and this makes us hard and bitter. Jesus said, "If someone asks you to go one mile with him, go two." Why? Because if you go one mile you have simply agreed to his demand, but if you go the extra mile, you are not only fulfilling his request but going beyond it. You are then an over comer through the love of the Lord. His love and power is flowing into the situation and anything can happen when the love of the Lord is present!

This is perfectly illustrated in the crucifixion of Christ. When Jesus died on the cross, He was absorbing all the evil of mankind. His love was embracing all of it – incredible as it may seem. Love covers a multitude of sins even to the point of destroying death itself! Hence, the key to our lives is love, not power. But in God's love we find His power – the "dunamis" working power of our heavenly Father.

There may be something which is eating away at you right now, and you may be reminded of it as you are reading this book. It might be a situation in your work, your family, your city, something which is taking your time and energy. You may hate this thing intensely, but if you continue to hate, then your prayers remain unanswered. In order to overcome the problem, you need to absorb the situation and envelop it in the love of Christ. Then, the power of God will reach into the situation and His life will be manifest.

It is vital that we not only know the love of God, but that we act in it. My understanding of situations has altered as I have learned how to flow in the life-giving love of God Himself. Then His will is done on earth as it is in heaven, and we begin to enter the glory dimension of life!

Chapter 16

The ministry of reconciliation

The Bible speaks about us having received the ministry of reconciliation. We are the ambassadors of Christ, and this has led to specific experiences in our international conferences where we have seen the power of Christ's reconciliation impacting lives in a remarkable way. Our Kingdom walk is far bigger and far greater than we can ever imagine. And we need to be aware of what we carry as His ambassadors.

Our very first conference was held in Antwerp, and after that small beginning we had another conference in Bournemouth, England. There, we came into a deep level of awareness that the Lord wanted to reconcile the world of wealth and affluence with the poorest of the poor. God showed us that He longed to restore the poor to a level of dignity, and He wanted them to see their dignity in Him. That was the start of ICCC's journey, and we are still walking, sometimes running, with Him in this!

When we held our international conference in Israel in 1992, we began to understand the deeper implications of the message of reconciliation. Derek Prince, who was speaking in the final meeting, announced:

"God has put something on my heart, and I don't know where it will end."

He then spoke about the fight between Jacob and Esau and the culminating struggle when Jacob wrestled with God Himself. He described it as the struggle between the Jews and the Gentiles as well as between the Jews and the Arabs. Jacob's struggle ended when he bowed to the ground seven times before his brother, Esau, seeking his forgiveness. He declared that Israel would have to experience Jacob's struggle before it could be saved. His description of this was so vivid we could envisage how Israel's strength would be so broken it would fall on its knees seven times before the Arabs and the rest of the Gentile world.

At the end of his message, he called Eliyahu Ben-Haim and Barry Segal to the platform to represent the Jewish people and Michael Fenton-Jones and myself to represent the Gentiles. Barry and Eliyahu bowed down seven times, for each time they confessed how they had despised the Gentiles and how they had forsaken their birthright, Jesus Christ, and denied their calling to bring the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world.

I reciprocated as the Holy Spirit came over me. As a representative of the Western world, I asked forgiveness for the atrocities throughout history which we had been responsible for against the Jews.

One by one, we all came under the same powerful convicting presence of the Holy Spirit, and we were on the floor, our faces buried in our hands as we prostrated ourselves before the Lord, weeping loudly.

This went on for some time under the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit. As we were using the banquet hall of the hotel, several other guests were drawn to the room during this moment of reconciliation, including about thirty Muslims, who were curiously following the events inside. They knew it was a Christian meeting and yet we were prostrate on the floor, in a similar position to a Muslim when he is praying and facing Mecca. As they watched, they were touched by the presence of Almighty God. Our photographer was standing amongst them, and they asked him, "Can we be part of this, too?" The sweet presence of the Holy Spirit brought many of them to a deep sobbing and weeping and several of them received Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Such is the power of reconciliation as the Lord draws all people together through His love and through the blood of Jesus Christ.

The whole conference had a prophetic dimension in that it provided a meeting place for Messianic Jews and Gentile Christians from the whole world. Jesus Himself referred to the Gentile believers when He said, *"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; they also I must bring and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd."*

There is also a tension within Israel between the Ashkenazi (Jews from Europe) and the Sephardim (Jews from the Middle East countries). Inspired by the text in the first book of Kings, a prophetic act was performed. Someone took ten pieces of fabric and stitched them together, and embroidered over it in large letters "Ephraim." Two other pieces were sewn together and over it was embroidered "Judah." After the participants had confessed the sin of dissension between the two sheepfolds, a new unity was proclaimed between them, and then two pieces of fabric were sewn together to make a multicoloured coat, large enough to cover both a Messianic Jew and a Gentile Christian.

The Lord's blood was shed for us all, and as we are reconciled one with another we learn to show His love on earth. This is another aspect of His Kingdom, which brings liberty in our spirits, which is the greatest freedom there is.

This issue of reconciliation is vital because sin remains sin until it's forgiven. Sin is potent and it can block the purposes of God until it's been dealt with and the blood of Jesus applied. Therefore, when the Lord speaks about us having the ministry of reconciliation, it is not something we should take lightly. It's crucial that we follow the Holy Spirit as we pray for our city, our family, our business, or whatever God lays on our hearts. We need to love others, then our prayers will be answered, and we can only love if we have experienced God's love, for He loved us first.

As we learned to respond to the Lord in this way, we had a similar experience at our conference in Russia. Again, totally unplanned we found ourselves involved in a deep act of reconciliation between East and West. Various representatives from the former Soviet Union assembled with representatives from the West as we asked forgiveness for our attitude towards them. We confessed how we had feared them, sometimes even hating them, and rejoiced when things had gone wrong for the Soviet Union. While we were doing this, a beautiful young woman came forward, took the microphone, and knelt down. She began singing a prophetic love song to the Lord, like the Bride in the "Song of Songs." And so the presence of God descended over everyone in that room. Those who were in bondage and under demonic oppression began screaming and experienced their deliverance as the presence of God was so heavy and so powerful. The impact on lives was tremendous.

And so we continued to travel through nations and learned to move with the Lord as He led us into a deep time of reconciliation. When we were in Washington, D.C., in 1996, one of our group felt we should visit Cape Henry in Virginia to ask forgiveness for our involvement in the abominable slave trade. Many of the slaves who were sold to America landed at Cape Henry, hence his request. I have to admit that I wasn't sure, but as we got there, the power of God came over us.

There were some African-Americans amongst us, and I'll never forget the moment when a man from Regent University came forward. He was an African-American brother, a descendant of the slaves, and as he started to speak, the Africans from the slave trade nations, which had sold their brothers and sisters, began to weep and to ask for forgiveness from the African-Americans. We drew close to God's heart as He led us for hours through deep repentance and reconciliation. And out of this came something very precious.

Two of the leaders, Will Pilcher and Jeffery Sanford, had researched the history of the slaves and seen what is commonly called "The Golden Triangle" of trade. The slave traders loaded tobacco in America for export to Europe. From Europe, they brought arms and liquor to Africa, and from Africa, they brought slaves to the plantations in America. Moved by the power of the Holy Spirit, Pastor Rolland Smith prayed a powerful prayer in which he cursed the U.S. contributor to this triangle, the tobacco industry. Since then we have

watched as the entire tobacco industry has struggled with the largest lawsuits in industrial history, resulting in astronomical losses.

Just as we were all affected by the slave issue, so too was Pastor Zannou in Benin, who had attended our 1996 D.C. conference as a personal representative of the President of Benin. One Sunday morning, he was deeply convicted that his people had been guilty of selling their brothers into slavery. As he shared this with the church, the conviction of the Holy Spirit swept over them and they began to weep. Pastor Zannou then promised his congregation that he would phone a friend in America, share this with him, and ask forgiveness on behalf of his people.

Meanwhile, an American pastor named Jack Gaines, who had seen some television photography of the reconciliation event at Cape Henry, had been before the Lord praying about the same terrible issue of slavery and the deep wounds this had left in society. He committed himself to somehow work towards a reconciliation process. That day he was called by Pastor Zannou and was asked forgiveness by him.

Later, during the Business Executives Consultation in Pretoria, Pastor Gaines shared a dream he had received from God. He dreamt that he was watching a ship returning to Africa and on board were the descendants of the slaves, coming back to "The Point of No Return." He had researched and found that 80 million slaves were sold out of Africa and only 20 million reached their destination due to the appalling atrocities and terrible conditions on board those traders' ships.

I realized this was the revealing of Joseph! What had been planned for evil, God would turn to good. We had our first Reconciliation Conference in December 1999. It was an official conference hosted by the Government of Benin with several heads of state representing the nations from where the slaves were exported. One hundred and fifty specially invited delegates representing the trading nations and the descendants of slaves were present. Prior to this great event, on his first trip to America, President Kerekou visited a large African-American church, The Great Commission Church, to ask forgiveness on behalf of all the leaders before him who had sold their sons and daughters into slavery. It was a very moving experience as he went down on his knees in humility before his brothers and sisters in this church. He also insisted on arranging this Reconciliation Conference before the end of the last millennium, saying that we could not enter the new millennium with this sin unresolved.

At the conference, the President of Benin boldly proclaimed on national television that there was no other way to healing and forgiveness of this sin, but through the blood of Jesus. Michael Fenton-Jones, who was then President of ICCC, spoke on behalf of the trading nations and asked forgiveness in a way that deeply affected the whole conference. Many were openly weeping. Finally, Bishop Perrin, the wonderful African-American pastor of the church President Kerekou had visited, administered forgiveness. He said, "We can never forget and should never forget, but we can forgive in the name of Jesus Christ!" Other speakers followed including several visiting heads of state, senators, and congressmen from the US, representatives of the British Parliament, a former French minister, and others. All spoke at this glorious conference. I noticed that the Benin Government wanted to commemorate the day in a special way and demonstrate to the people of Benin that something was happening, so all public transport had been given names that were in keeping with the event, such as "Forgiveness," "Reconciliation,""Love," "Hope" and so on.

This was the first step in the reconciliation process, and later, a voyage is planned by the African-American Christian leadership onboard a cruise ship which will bring 600 African-Americans to Senegal, Ghana, and Benin, the three main ports that the slaves were exported from. At this time there will be great celebrations with a Gospel Festival, involving art and music, symbolizing Joseph's treasures in Egypt. This will be a glorious occasion in Benin, affecting the entire nation. Finally, plans are being made to follow the reconciliation process with a third step, involving a trade exhibition which will open up the treasures of Africa

and provide new trading links with the world at large. The intention is to make this Trade Show a bi-annual event.

As I share this story, I know that it's time for the African nations to rise up and take their rightful place among the nations of the world. At our ICCC Conference 2000 in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Lord gave me a decree concerning Africa. If you are African, join with me in the spirit as you read it:

"Africa – this is your kairos moment; therefore arise, and take your destiny! "Africa – be released and accept your divine mandate from heaven.

"Africa – your shackles of slavery, poverty, limitations, idolatry, paganism, discrimination, exploitation, servitude, perversion, discord, witchcraft, ancestor worship, Satanism, and all evil is crushed. Arise! Arise! Arise!

"Africa – bring forth your sons and daughters who will arise and take their rightful place among the kings, princes, and nobles of the earth. Let them execute the righteousness of God, and advance the purposes of God to bring healing, prosperity, and manifestations of majesty, excellence, and glory!

"Africa – the Lord will build a highway of holiness and righteousness, and everyone who walks on this highway will find refuge, strength, and purpose!

"Africa – all the nations of the earth will come to marvel at your wisdom and glory!

Africa, oh Africa – the deepest fountains and resources of heaven that have been hidden deep in your belly because of the deeds of evil men, are now breaking forth because of the righteous remnant that has regarded the will of God higher than the opinions of men.

Africa – Arise! Arise! Arise! For God has risen upon you and your enemies are scattered!"

When we had declared this decree at the end of the conference, the whole congregation was released into dancing before the Lord. I had never experienced such joy, and as I left the meeting, a man came running towards me.

"Have you heard what has happened in Benin?" he asked. He had heard on the radio that as we were making that decree, Benin had received the largest gift in African history and been released from 470 million US dollars of its national debt! Glory to God! In no way can we claim any part of this, but it was wonderful to see the glorious work of the Lord.

Chapter 17

Give – but guard your heart

Giving is something quite special in the Kingdom of God, and the Lord taught me vital lessons in this area. In 1972 I saw something new. As mentioned earlier, I had already given away all our liquid assets, and by January 1973 I was due to start a company with only one Swedish krona (10 US cents) in my pocket!

During that time we were experiencing a strong move of God in the Pentecostal Church in Sollentuna where we were members. The prayer movement, which had started in our home, was now impacting the church. There was such a breakthrough in this realm. It was wonderful! A desire for prayer permeated the church, and the prayer meetings filled the church so that even the balcony and the side rooms were bursting at their seams. The power of God was clearly manifest, and there was a liberty and freedom in the church which filled our hearts with joy.

Then, towards the end of the year, the pastors and elders announced something which was totally new to me. They spoke about a faith offering to the Lord, and for the first time, I understood that I could wait on God to receive an offering and pledge it to the Lord, a "faith offering." This seemed wonderful and like the rest of the church, I spent time waiting upon the Lord to know the amount we should give on New Year's Eve. However, we had nothing, absolutely nothing. We had already given everything away. This saddened me as I longed to give and yet I had no means do so.

"Lord, you know my heart. I want to give to You but I have nothing. Please give me something to give to You!" I cried out to God. Throughout the Christmas period I carried this deep longing, and then on the afternoon of New Year's Eve, Asther and I were invited to the home of a businessman. The offering was due that evening, and I was inwardly weeping, as I still had no money. To my surprise, when we arrived at the man's house, he placed 5,000 Swedish kronor in my hands. "This is what you should bring to the Lord tonight," he said, placing the cash in my hands.

Instantly, the power of God came over me and I became drunk in the spirit, staggering and rejoicing, as I received the seed I had to sow. Words of prophecy flowed from my lips, and the indescribable joy of the Lord filled the room. That evening, we were able to enter into the celebration and give our faith offering to the Lord.

This was not only a breakthrough for me, but also for the church. Previously, the church had only a small missions budget, but from that night on, over 60 percent of the income went to missions. At last, the church began to sow into the field of the Spirit and reap abundantly from there. God was teaching me that there is an inherent joy attached to giving as He purposes. Paul writes about this: *"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver"* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

The emphasis here is not on our sense of responsibility but on our heart attitude. We are not supposed to give out of necessity or grudgingly for that attitude is not acceptable to the Lord, but we should be compelled only by the freedom and joy of the Lord as we give. How often have we misunderstood this and made mistakes!

It was only when we moved to Orebro much later that I fully understood this. There, the spiritual climate was totally different. As another faith offering was announced in the church where we were now members, we responded. However, this time it wasn't from our hearts, and we had no joy because we gave out of necessity, believing it was the correct thing to do. When Asther and I prayed and sought the Lord, we heard nothing. There was

absolute silence. The Lord did not instruct us to give in the same way as He had in Sollentuna and we were puzzled. Surely we were supposed to give? Finally, with heavy hearts, but with a sense of responsibility, we gave into the offering. Asther, myself, and the children all participated in the offering, and we even pledged a larger sum. But the experience was altogether different. Before, our hearts had been singing as we were so in harmony with the Lord as we gave. Now, giving had become a burden, almost like slavery. It was an obligation, not something which gave us freedom. Furthermore, there was no reaping from that giving. Why? I quickly understood the words of that verse of Scripture: *"Let each of you give as he purposes in his heart."*

Giving comes from within not from outside. It comes as a heartfelt desire and not a law. In Sollentuna, we had given with joy and experienced such an overflow of reaping with joy. First, we had felt the love of the Lord in our hearts. Then, we experienced His love for us as we were reaping from the abundance of the hand of God as He gave back to us. Always follow your inner man and don't violate your spirit. If you don't listen to your inner man, then you won't bring any glory to the Lord. Instead you will come under legalism and bondage. Giving is much more than a mere offering; it concerns our entire being and relationship to our Heavenly Father.

The Lord has continued to teach me about the giving heart and recently, another lesson came at an international board meeting for ICCC in Orebro in 1998. We always have fellowship before getting down to business, and so we spend time together listening and sharing what God has been doing amongst us. One of our brothers gave a powerful testimony of God's abundant blessing in the area of sowing and reaping. He was tremendously blessed financially. Yet a few years earlier, he had been in an extremely difficult situation and almost faced bankruptcy. We had prayed daily for his situation and took courage from the fact that this man was a giver. He had been sowing into God's Kingdom throughout his life. And so we firmly believed that God would redeem his situation. Eventually the breakthrough had come, and we listened as he shared his testimony. Now his business was doubling every year, and I rejoiced as we saw the glory of the Lord manifest in this business. It had become one of the fastest growing companies in Europe in its market niche. Moreover, it was a miracle that such rapid growth had been sustained without incurring bank loans. With tears of joy, he shared his gratitude to the Lord for having had the privilege of being able to give hundreds of thousands of dollars to the poor and needy people of the world. As we listened to his story, the precious presence of the Holy Spirit came over us all, and I heard the Lord speak to me:

"What you have experienced so far is only a thirty fold harvest."

Thirty fold? Surely not? Immediately I thought I would be much more radical in my giving. If I had given a certain amount before, then now I would double it or even treble it! But as I quietly considered the issue, I knew that was not the way God worked. He had shown me earlier that giving is not a legalistic issue, done out of obligation or sheer willpower. When we had given in this legalistic way, we had experienced a desert in our lives. What did the Lord mean by "only a thirty fold return"? I determined to find out!

At this time I had become involved in the "AD 2000 and Beyond Movement," with its goal to reach the unreached people groups in the world with the gospel. Only when we saw all those people receive the good news of Jesus Christ would the Great Commission be fulfilled. Together with the "Business Professionals Network" we were working towards this goal. My heart was moved to use my business and serve these people groups somehow. I realized business could be a tool to serve the Lord and reach those people across the globe. We could adopt a people group, or provide help to believers in those areas of the world, or equip the Christians in neighbouring countries to go with the gospel. It was very much a pioneering movement, and I wanted to be part of this.

"Lord, let me have the privilege to give into this," I asked. "Lead me and show me how."

And as I prayed, my desire to do this increased during the following weeks. Then on December 23, there was a phone call from a friend in Finland.

"The Lord is telling me you need some money," he said.

"Well my personal needs are met," I replied. And then I explained how my heart was burdened for the unreached people groups.

"Okay. Well the Lord spoke to me and so I'm obeying. I'll be over!" When he arrived at the ICCC office in Orebro, he immediately put some cash into my hands, and as he did, something triggered in my heart. I heard the Holy Spirit say, "Triple it!"

Joy welled up inside me, and I knew the Lord was answering my prayer. That was what the Lord was after! And so I put the money aside for the purpose God had put in my heart. However this had only just begun as far as the Lord was concerned because another phone call came the following day, Christmas Eve. This time, it was a friend from Germany, and he repeated exactly what my friend in Finland had said:

"The Lord has told me you need money."

Again I explained that I had no personal lack but told him of my desire to help serve others elsewhere in the world. Again, the brother insisted on giving me the money, and once more the Lord told me to triple it! The same overflowing joy was present as I shared the news with Asther.

In Sweden we exchange our gifts on Christmas Eve, and so later that day I tripled the money and wrapped the cash up in Christmas paper and wrote on the label: "To the Kingdom of God!" After dinner we assembled as a family, and the first present we opened was the gift for the Kingdom – for the unreached people groups. As a family we had a time of celebration before God, praising and worshipping Him, and our hearts were overjoyed as we gave that gift to the Lord!

And this was just the beginning of the most incredible outpouring of giving as people from all over the world started to give to this cause. Finally in early spring 1999, when I met mission leaders from all over the world at the "AD 2000 and Beyond Movement," I had the privilege of bringing with me hundreds of thousands of Swedish kronor as a designated gift to the unreached people groups. And still the money is pouring in! There is an incredible dimension to the whole aspect of giving, and God longs for us to enter in.

As we sow into the field of the Spirit, those things which God has initiated in our hearts have the ability to grow and multiply. Nature provides daily examples for us. A seed of corn which is planted in the ground will multiply and increase in volume over 70,000 times! No one can say where the growth comes from. It's not the soil, the water, or the air although each of these are factors in the process. It's the inherent life in the seed that produces the fruit. Giving is linked to sowing in the field of the Spirit. If it is rooted in His initiative in your heart and comes with joy in the Lord, then it will multiply.

If you have never experienced this joy of giving, but want to become a giver, express your desire in prayer to Him. Wait upon Him and don't move from this position until you "hear" Him speak to you. There may be small things He will show you that need to be removed from your life before you can enter into the joy of the Lord. Perhaps you have to forgive someone who has hurt you, or treat your wife or children in a God-fearing manner. Perhaps you need to take your responsibility as a father or mother in your own home and establish order in your life. Listen to the "small voice" of the Holy Spirit and cooperate with Him. Then you will see the multiplication factor, and you'll enter into something wonderful. Giving is not a law but a source of joy and freedom in the Spirit. And as we take responsibility in the small areas of our lives, He will give us greater things. There are certain key Scriptures for this area, firstly in the Psalms: *"May He grant you your heart's desire and fulftl all your purpose"* (Psalm 20:4).

You see we can boldly come before God and ask Him for these things when we are

flowing in the same character of life with Him.

This is clear in the Scriptures:

"Ask of me and I will give you the nations and the ends of the earth for your inheritance" (Psalm. 2:8).

"You have granted him the desire of his heart and have not withheld the request of his lips. You welcomed him with rich blessings and placed a crown of pure gold upon his head. He asked you for life, and you gave it to him – length of days forever and ever. Through the victories you gave, his glory is great; you have bestowed on him splendour and majesty" (Psalm. 21:2-5).

"Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap" (Luke 6:38).

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

There's a tremendous freedom in giving. And this is a vital lesson for those of us who are in business. We might be struggling, or we might have achieved a satisfactory income. We can all appreciate the hard work that goes with it, but sometimes we get stuck in our budgets and planning, and sometimes we are mean with the money God has given us. We may not have entered into the experience of sowing into the realm of the Spirit, and therefore, not seen the multiplication factor in the Kingdom of God. The only experience we might have had is that we must try harder, work harder to see some results. But we need to turn and look to Him who is the source of all blessing and listen to Him. We need to come to God with our desires and listen to His heart. Come to God with your desire and receive the fulfilling of your desire first. Most importantly, wait upon the Holy Spirit to move you into that position where you're flowing in unity with the Lord, and then you will reap with joy because you will be sowing into the field of the Spirit. Then, you'll see the multiplication factor, which is the inherent life in everything that is born of the Spirit. Be a cheerful giver but never violate your "inner man" by going against the witness of the Holy Spirit within you.

How do we know when we are going against the Holy Spirit's inner witness? We knew when we gave out of duty rather than as God prompted us, and there was an even more painful lesson to be learned later. This time, it concerned our move from Stockholm to Orebro.

In 1976, we knew that we had to find a home in Orebro as I had been travelling to my work in the week and coming back to Stockholm to see Asther and the children at weekends. We longed for a place where we could be together, and so we began looking for a house in Orebro. We searched constantly and after a year, we still hadn't found anything. Our requirements were quite modest, as we knew we could not replace our home in Stockholm which was near the lake. We all loved being on the waterfront and knew that it would not be possible in Orebro.

During this period, the housing market was difficult, and the few properties that were available were disappearing rapidly. I had almost given up when I found an advertisement in a Stockholm newspaper for a house in Orebro! As I read the details I had a strong witness in my spirit that this was our house. That weekend we were visiting Asther's relatives in Jonkoping, so we made a slight detour to look at the house. As we saw it, our hearts sang! It was exactly what we wanted. It was spacious with enormous potential, and there was a large amount of land attached. And what's more, it was cheap! There was no lake, but we didn't mind. We returned to Stockholm, knowing we had at last found our new home.

Of course, we prayed as we wanted to know that we were doing the right thing, that this house was part of God's purpose in our lives. Our peace and joy remained whenever we thought of the house. We contacted the estate agent, and a contract was quickly drawn up. We were ready to move to Orebro.

Then one day, while I was visiting my parents in Orebro, a phone call came for me. It

was the woman who lived in the north of Sweden, who had played such an important part in our lives earlier. She was as direct as ever and announced:

"The Lord says you should not buy a large house." That was all.

I was devastated. Why? Why had we all had such a strong inner witness that this was our new home? Why had we felt such joy and peace when we saw it? I became despondent and confused, and as a result we didn't sign the contract. How could I, if we were going against God's will for us? This woman had been so used by the Lord that we did not question whether she was hearing God this time. We were utterly bewildered.

As the days went by the estate agent phoned and asked what was happening. I explained we weren't ready and we would be contacting him. Asther and I discussed the situation, and we firmly believed that if we were meant to have the house than God would have to gently push us, because we did not dare to go against His will and simply follow our own desire. In my heart I was weeping as I still had such joy when I thought about that house, and yet we had received such a strong word rebuking us. Finally, the bank manager phoned and asked what the delay was. For the first time in my experience, the bank was offering us whatever credit we wanted. They would help us with everything! But still we couldn't accept. And eventually the house was lost. It was sold to another family. We were devastated.

We moved into a small townhouse in Orebro, which was never suitable for us as a family. After this, we plunged into a dark depression. All of us. I had been commuting between Orebro and Stockholm for two years, and we moved into that house out of desperation. We paid for it! When I came home from work, I was constantly exhausted and feeling overworked. My joy was gone and for months I was in this state of depression and fatigue.

We had gone against the witness of the Spirit in our hearts and consequently entered a dry, desert period. This taught us never to go against our "inner man." Don't allow anyone to speak against this witness of the Spirit in your heart. If you do, then difficulties will follow as we experienced. Don't be driven by words of so-called prophecy because prophecy *"speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men,"* (1 Corinthians 14:3). It ought to confirm what we have already received from the Lord. It should never be used to control another person's life. But unfortunately, both Asther and I were too inexperienced to correctly discern the gentle leading of the Holy Spirit against this so-called "word from the Lord."

Later we learned that this dear woman had been influenced by someone who, for whatever reason, thought we should not have a large house. She was not acting under the Lord but under the misguided ideas of another person. She was a wonderful servant of the Lord, and she has since gone to be with Him. It was a painful lesson we had to learn and it took five years to recover from such a mistake. We have to learn, to walk step-by-step with the Holy Spirit who lives within us. We should never violate our inner man, the testimony in our spirit is all important.

I had to learn this lesson through my workplace as well. For a long time, Alfapac had experienced a steady 30 percent growth and there were eighteen months when it levelled out. This was the period when I was tempted and wanted to use the business for my selfish reasons, to satisfy my own desires. I had compared our circumstances with others and grown selfish, and in doing so I was violating my "inner man." I had already given the company to the Lord, but now I was using it for myself. When I realized what I had done and I saw the figures for that period, I felt awful.

"Deliver me from my own trap!" I cried out to God. "Allow me to confess my sin!"

I felt I had to share this with someone in a confession, and the Lord instructed me to go to a Lutheran Church one Sunday morning. We had never been there before, and when we arrived Asther and I were the only people there apart from the organist and church warden, and of course the priest! However, the priest gave a sermon which was directed exactly at

my situation, even though he knew nothing about me. Afterwards I shook his hand and asked if I might see him. We booked an appointment, and when I saw him I shared what I had done. He listened, prayed, and administered absolution to me and together we celebrated Holy Communion. The burden had lifted from my conscience, but the company had still suffered from an eighteen-month period when I was following my selfishness and not the Holy Spirit. However, since then, Alfapac has grown and continues to grow.

The key here is not to satisfy our desires in our own strength, but to wait upon the Lord until He satisfies our desire.

If we violate our inner man and allow our own craftiness to dictate to us, then we enter a desert where nothing can grow. It's like death. We know from Scripture that our hearts can be deceitful, so we need to cultivate an awareness of God's presence in our daily lives to enable us to walk free each day. We thank the Lord for His grace and forgiveness as the blood of Jesus Christ restores us to that place of blessing when we return to Him. We make many mistakes, but His love is constant. He forgives and forgets, and He lifts us up to walk with Him once more.

Chapter 18

Eating heaven's food

One evening as I was sitting at home watching a news report on famine conditions, I was particularly affected by the story of a young girl who had been the victim of starvation in Sudan. She had been found in an appalling condition by some relief workers, and now she was being served her first bowl of soup after a long period of starvation. The camera zoomed in on her face as she tried to swallow the warm soup, but each time she tried to swallow, she grimaced with pain. The narrator explained that when someone had been starving for so long, it was almost impossible to revive the digestive reflexes. Finally, this young girl, about twelve years old, put down the bowl of soup. She had lost the ability to swallow. Struggling to her feet, she staggered out of the tent, into the dark African night. As I watched I knew she was walking to her death. Then, the Lord spoke in my heart.

"This is the condition of my Church," He said.

I was shocked. What did He mean? Surely that was an exaggeration? But the scene I had witnessed on the television would not leave me. As I prayed that night, the Lord spoke to me about eating spiritual food, bread from heaven. He showed me the Church was generally dealing with the issue in the wrong way. There was plenty of food available, but to look at rather than to eat. It was like an exhibition of different meals which were seen and admired but never eaten. That was how we were dealing with the Lord's food for us. I saw another analogy as I thought of the marathon race in the Olympic Games. Originally, the marathon came from the messenger who had to run and carry a report to the Emperor concerning the outcome of a war. Now, it was totally different. It had become something existing in its own right for a small elite, and it had lost its meaning. Many of our Christian conferences are the same. We clap and rejoice from the balcony as we see the Word of God manifest in miracles and healing, but when it is all over, we have difficulties applying the Word of God in our daily lives! Please understand that I am in no way criticising, the wonderful servants of the Lord who are laying down their lives for their ministry. I am observing our own inability to apply the Word of God in our daily lives. We can be starving although there is plenty of food available. We try to compensate for our hunger by going to more conferences rather than applying more of God's Word daily.

There was spiritual food as well as physical earthly food, and I had never fully realized this. That evening, the Lord led me to look at John chapter 4 where Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at Sychar's well. The story tells us that Jesus and His disciples were all weary from the journey, and the disciples had gone into the city to buy food. At that moment the Samaritan woman had come to draw water and Jesus had asked her for a drink. Through her encounter with Jesus, this woman had a life-changing experience that impacted the whole city. Meanwhile the disciples had returned with the food and they were saying, *"Rabbi, eat."* His answer perplexed them as He replied, *"I have food to eat of which you do not know." The disciples, understandably, asked, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?"* Jesus then said to them, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to ftnish His work"* (John 4:34).

Spiritual food, the food that Jesus was talking about, means doing the will of the Father. Suddenly I understood the leading of the Holy Spirit. When had I been eating this kind of food? How many Christians were starving? As I prayed, I begged the Lord to put me on a steep learning curve, and that's exactly what He did.

The first example of this came when the Lord woke me up one night and spoke very clearly in my heart. "Go and find Ingemar. Tell him that he is to lay the foundation for the

House of the Lord."

The command was so strong and direct that I could not question it, but although I knew a man called Ingemar, I did not know where he lived, and what's more it was the middle of a cold winter's night. Now God was asking me to get up out of my warm bed and look for a man – but where?

In obedience, I crept out of bed and got into my car and began driving. I knew I had to travel north but didn't know the exact location of the house. "Holy Spirit you are my helper, and I am obeying You. Please direct me to Ingemar's house," I prayed as I journeyed on. I eventually reached a deep forest on the northern edge of Stockholm and began travelling up a small gravel road. This quickly became a dirt track, which turned to the left, and as it did I saw a barn right in the middle of the forest. But there was no house.

"This is ridiculous!" I thought. "I'm going crazy. What am I doing here? It's two o'clock in the morning! No one will be living in the middle of the forest. Even if they are, how can I possibly knock on the door and wake them up at this time?"

I turned the car round and headed back to the road. As soon as I reached the road I felt very uneasy. It was no good. I knew I was disobeying the Holy Spirit. I realized I had to go back.

When I returned to the barn, I parked the car and got out, still feeling quite unsure, but at the same time I knew I had to do what I believed God was telling me to do. As I went round the back of the building, I saw a small peasant's dwelling, a rough sort of home at the back of the barn. I hadn't noticed it earlier because I had stayed in the car and I had only seen the barn. Lights were on, and as I approached I saw a man sitting inside. It was Ingemar!

I knocked on the wooden door, and he had hardly opened it before I blurted out an explanation for my strange appearance at such an unearthly hour.

"I've come to bring a message from the Lord. I believe He is telling you that you have to lay the foundation for the House of the Lord."

Ingemar stared at me, and then tears welled up in his eyes. Sobbing, he explained: "I've been waiting here praying and seeking the Lord for three days and three nights. I have said to God, 'I'm not going to leave this place until you speak to me Lord'."

He went on to explain that someone wanted to buy his home, and he was thinking of buying another home which would be used for God. It would be a house for the Kingdom of God and yet he knew that he needed confirmation, otherwise it was just his good idea and not necessarily what the Lord wanted no matter how good it seemed. Here I was confirming what he had on his heart! He was overjoyed.

The vital lesson I learned blessed both Ingemar and myself. I was learning to do the will of the Father, and I was growing as I did so. When we obey the Lord, we are eating heavenly food, which causes us to grow.

I continued to learn, following the instructions of the Holy Spirit as He taught me to do my heavenly Father's will, no matter how ridiculous it sometimes seemed nor how trivial. Another example of this came later when my business had grown and was prospering under God's direction. I was driving through the city of Varnamo, and the Lord told me to stop at a large company further up north. I was puzzled because I didn't know anyone in that company. Inwardly, I fought against God's instruction because I was afraid of making a fool of myself. Finally, I stopped the car, and as I walked to the reception area of the company, I tried to think of an excuse for my visit. I did not know why I was there or what I had to do, but I knew that God wanted me there for some purpose. Then an idea popped into my head.

"Excuse me," I asked the girl at the desk, "I need to see the purchasing manager. What's

his name now? I'm sorry, I've forgotten." And so I sat waiting in the reception area wondering what on earth I would do when the man came. I didn't want to see him, but this was the only reasonable excuse I could make on the spur of the moment. The man had agreed to see me. What's more he would be coming soon. I was informed he would be downstairs in five minutes. I had to think fast!

My stomach was knotting already, and then I heard someone approaching down the circular staircase. I didn't look up but became aware that the footsteps had stopped halfway down the stairs.

"Are you Gunnar Olson?" someone shouted. I was surprised.

"Yes, do you know me?"

"No, but I've read about you. What a pity! I've only got such a short time right now. Never mind, let's have some coffee."

And so he took me to the large exhibition hall, and as we sat over coffee, he gradually opened up about personal details in his life. He believed in God, but he was in a difficult personal situation. It was painful for him to share his problems with me, and he told me that he had tried to pray but he couldn't. He had taken himself out for long walks through the forest to try and find peace of mind, but he couldn't, and his domestic situation remained awful. His wife wanted to leave him, and he was in agony over the whole problem.

"I cry to God," he told me, "but I hear only the echo of my own voice. Where is God in all this?"

As he shared, I sat in silence, but I prayed in my spirit. I knew that God had brought me there simply to meet this man, but I did not know what I could do to help him. Then, after a while, the Holy Spirit dropped a word into my heart. He simply said, "Prostate." Hardly something spiritual! The man was talking about his domestic situation. What use was this? But the word would not go away, and so I knew I had to do something.

"Excuse me, but are you ill at all?" I tentatively asked. "No," he replied.

"Well, the Lord's telling me you have a prostate problem."

"Yes, I do. I've had it for years so I've learned to live with it, so I did not think about it when you asked."

As he confirmed what I had heard the Holy Spirit telling me, I immediately knew why God had brought me there and what I was to do. This man had thought God had forgotten him, and he was so full of despair about his situation. I realized that the Lord wanted him to know God's love in a new way, and this would happen as he was healed of this prostate problem. Insignificant perhaps, but God knew it was the key to the man's heart at that present time.

I looked at him and said, "The Lord is healing you right now, and He wants you to know that He has not forgotten you." We prayed and he was immediately healed. He knew at that moment that God was listening to him and he had not been forgotten. Today that man has continued walking with the Lord, and he is an elder in a church.

I learned so much that day. The experience provided yet more spiritual food, as I understood that I had to walk in obedience no matter where it led. I also realized that I could not say anything or do anything until my heavenly Father instructed me. It was a vital lesson – to learn that we should not say anything except the words that the Father gives us in certain situations.

As I trusted the Lord more in such areas, then He showed me other aspects of the heavenly food He provides daily for us. One day I was driving home from Denmark, and so I took the ferry from Helsingor to Helsingborg. The crossing takes only thirty minutes, and as I was hungry I went to buy a coffee and sandwich. I was learning to become more

sensitive to the Holy Spirit and learn His direction. The following incident may seem trivial or insignificant, but it is in the insignificant things that God shows Himself. The small details of our lives weave together to form a pattern, which the Lord makes, if we allow Him to be Lord of our lives at all times and not just when we feel like it.

Feeling quite tired, I was standing in the ferry waiting in a long queue for coffee. Everyone else had the same idea, as the line stretched on and was moving slowly. A slight quarrel was breaking out at the front of the queue, and people were beginning to notice. I looked up and saw some young men obviously the worse for drink, arguing with the girl at the cash desk. They were demanding beer and she was refusing to sell it to them as she could clearly see the state they were in. A loud argument was taking place. Neither side would budge, and we were all waiting for the situation to be resolved, but no one moved.

God had been showing me new things, and I knew that when something unusual happens, no matter how slight, God is usually in the situation. He wants us to respond to His Spirit and follow His directions.

"Lord is this one of those moments?" I asked quietly in my heart as I stood there. As I prayed this, the leader of the drunken group turned round and looked at me. I responded with a knowing wink, as if to say, "Leave it to me. I'll sort it out."

For some reason, the man responded and led his friends away to a table. When it came to my turn, I bought some light non- alcoholic beer and took it to them. "You're a real pal," they said before discovering that it was non-alcoholic beer. Then, the leader of the group said, "Honestly, we never drink this stuff. It's like water, but thanks anyway." Nevertheless, it seemed to solve the problem. They quietened down and began drinking.

As I had to take a table nearby I could hear them discussing me. After a while, they started to look across and eventually the leader of the group came over.

"Now what?" I thought.

"That was very kind of you," he said.

Before he could continue, words poured out of my lips. "Listen, the Lord needs you," I replied, spontaneously.

He was already drunk, and here I was saying something totally unexpected to him. However, the words had the most amazing effect. He stopped and stood still. As the words from the Lord registered in his spirit, tears filled his eyes and he began to quietly weep. God knew what He was doing, and He broke through into that man's life even while he was drunk. Such is the love and grace of our heavenly Father. The words God gives us are powerful spiritual substance. Jesus Himself said that the words He brought were spirit and life. Why? Because they came from the Father.

Another example of this came when I was travelling by airplane. As ICCC began to impact other nations, I found myself travelling much more, and once I faced a particularly gruelling schedule. Leaving Orebro at 6 a.m., I arrived in London and then travelled to Bournemouth for a meeting. Afterwards, I had to return to London and fly out to Brussels and then return to London to take a night flight out to Singapore – all in the same day!

By the time that night flight to Singapore came, I was absolutely exhausted. "Lord, please give me a place where I can stretch my legs. I'm tired out and I've been on Your business," I prayed as I entered the terminal.

"There's a message for you Mr. Olson," an official at the gate announced.

"Is there anything wrong?"

"No, you've been upgraded to first class."

I was delighted. Now I could really relax! However, when I was seated, I remembered that when something unusual happens God is often in the situation. By now this sort of

thing had become a signal to my spirit. I did not know what to expect. I simply wanted some rest after an extremely long day.

Another passenger, a woman, occupied the seat on my left and the stewardess asked her if she would mind switching seats to help another passenger. I looked up to see a young woman behind the stewardess. Her foot was heavily bandaged and she seemed uptight and irritated as she left her crutches with the stewardess. She began flipping through the pages of the flight magazine so furiously I thought she would rip them.

"Lord, is this why I've been upgraded?" I asked in my heart.

Neither of us spoke. As the plane flew towards Singapore, I sat half asleep, but I found the Holy Spirit revealing details of the woman's life to me. In fact He was telling me her entire life story, so I knew God was definitely in this! As we descended to refuel in Dubai, she turned and introduced herself. A conversation opened up, and we chatted as we walked around the international lounge at Dubai airport. A conversation opened up and eventually I was able to be quite direct.

"I noticed you were rather uptight when you came onboard," I began. "Oh, could you tell?" She seemed surprised.

There was no going back now, so I just shared what I thought God wanted me to say to her at that moment. "Do you know that the problem you have with your mother can be solved?"

Now I really had her attention. She flushed slightly and looked directly at me.

"What do you know about my mother?"

"I know that your mother left when you were seven years old, and the hurt you felt is still there."

She was absolutely shocked. Then she began to open up and shared what had happened. She was an air-stewardess working on long-haul flights between London and Australia. A food trolley had toppled over and landed on her ankle, badly damaging it. She had been hospitalised for two weeks in London. During this time she had thought about writing to her mother.

"I've tried several times to write to her but I just can't do it," she explained.

"Do you realize the way out is to forgive your mother? You don't have to feel the way you are feeling," I suggested. "How? I don't have it in me to forgive her."

"It has nothing to do with your feelings, you can use your will to forgive her."

As our conversation progressed, the Holy Spirit gave me a gentle way of leading her to an understanding of a spiritual principle.

God was guiding me step-by-step through a difficult conversation.

"You know the commandment which says: *'Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you'*." I continued, "You need to take a position which will result in blessing for yourself. It doesn't say, Honour your father and mother if they're honourable. Can you see that?"

"Yes," she replied, "but it's quite difficult for me."

"It's quite simple – like taking a shower. You can't take a shower without getting under the flow of water. You have to move under the water to get wet, you have to be in the right position. Well, it's exactly the same. We should honour our father and mother. It's a principle, and it doesn't depend on how good they have been to us. That's not the issue. You honour them because they gave you life."

I was careful not to mention the Bible or God because that was not the way the Holy Spirit was directing me, and I had to allow His leading and not put in my own ideas.

"Simply forgive your mother and say, 'I forgive you, Mary'." (During our conversation, she had told me her mother's name was Mary).

"But I don't feel I can forgive her," she responded.

"You must understand this has nothing to do with your feelings. Use your will and forgive her, regardless of how you feel."

The presence of the Lord was there, and the young woman quietly said those words. She said afterwards that she had not felt a thing. However, I knew that she had put herself in a position where the blessing of God could reach her, and I was sure God wanted her to experience His love. I asked if I could pray for her injured foot, and as I held her foot in my hands, I asked the Lord to show her how much He loved her. By the time we reached Singapore, she was healed and had given her heart to her Lord and Saviour.

God allowed me to have all these experiences and many more to teach me about heavenly food. Such incidents impacted my understanding of the Lord's Prayer and gave me fresh revelation of the words "thy will be done," and "give us this day our daily bread." These words don't simply refer to the normal bread we eat. God was showing me there was more to this. We need to eat daily of the bread from heaven.

In Psalm 23, perhaps the most familiar of the psalms, David writes about a banqueting table that is set before us in the presence of our enemies. Here again, I believe the Bible refers to the bread from heaven. Our lives are destined to serve our heavenly Father and to do His will. Our whole lives are intended to be given in service for our heavenly Father. If we call Jesus Christ Lord of our lives, I wonder if we sometimes fully understand what we are saying. Even our time is to be given to Him. In twenty-four hours each day, we are given countless opportunities to do the will of God in a variety of ways and to eat heaven's food.

Chapter 19

Prophetic prayer and victory

The kingdom principles that I have learned have often come through precious men of God who have come alongside me at key moments in my life. Kjell Sjoberg and Sven Nilsson are two such men. They have been wonderful friends and companions, and both have impacted my life in a tremendous way.

Kjell was the leader of the Swedish branch of Intercessors International, and our paths crossed in the early 1970s at an intercessory conference in Stockholm. Towards the end of the conference there were various groups covering a wide range of topics. One of these was focused on "World Economy," and although very few people were drawn to this, I was. As I went to stand before the Lord during prayer on behalf of the world economy, someone came alongside me and whispered:

"You've chosen world economy, haven't you?" "Yes", I replied quietly.

It was Kjell Sjoberg, and this was the start of a friendship that was to span over the years. We travelled together on several occasions to Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the former Soviet Union, China, and Japan, and the Lord laid on our hearts financial centres of the world where we made ourselves available to the Lord in prayer and intercession. Much of the deep work that was accomplished in later months came as a direct result of these prayer journeys.

Sven often joined us, bringing his special gifting as a remarkable minister of the Word. He would bring the truth in such a powerful way that we could almost see it before us like an immovable sculpture, or rock. Through him we would have the clarity to speak clearly into situations, addressing the "mountains" or obstacles.

Through Kjell, I came to understand the power and authority of the name of Jesus. I saw the truth that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. It's easy for us to imagine this happening in heaven, but it's something else to see it happening in difficult situations here on earth! Yet we saw it happen on many occasions, and the following examples illustrate the practical reality of this wonderful truth.

Free Masonry has remained shrouded in darkness over the centuries, and Kjell prayerfully came into a position where he was able to wage spiritual warfare in this particular area, which affects much of world business and banking. He had spent a great deal of time researching the subject and was totally convinced that this secret organization was a terrible snare for many men. He had written books on the subject, and eventually he knew he could take certain steps to expose the darkness. Free Masonry pervaded the business world and also the Swedish royal family at this time. The king's uncle was the Grand Master, and he was next in line to the throne. Prince Bertil was highly respected, but there was the question of his allegiance to the Masons.

Kjell assembled several church leaders, and they took a boat out onto the archipelago of Stockholm. For three days they prayed and sought the will of the Lord on this issue. How could the darkness of Free Masonry be exposed in the light of Christ? Finally, they all went to the gates of the Free Masons' headquarters in Stockholm and declared, in the name of Jesus, His authority to expose the darkness that was there.

A few days later, while construction work was being carried out in an adjacent lot next to the Free Masons' headquarters, the dynamite exploded in an unexpected way, blowing a hole right through the Free Masons' building. The Masons have a room known as "the Chamber of Death," which is used in their ritual practices. The dynamite had blown a hole

into this chamber, and the workmen were so shocked at what was exposed that they rushed home to fetch cameras to record what they saw.

Their photos showed hundreds of bones and skulls placed in this room. For the first time in 350 years, this aspect of Free Masonry had been brought into the light! As the media reported the event and the photos were broadcast across the nation, public outcry forced the Masons to respond. They did so, but the damage had been done. The works of darkness had been exposed through the authority and the name of Jesus!

The Scriptures explain this principle fully:

"For though we live in the world we do not wage war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulftlled" (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).

And the Swedish Bible is very useful here as it says: *"When obedience is established among you, then, (and only then) are we ready to address all disobedience"* (verse 6). Therefore, there is a direct relationship between our obedience and the manifestation of the authority of Jesus Christ in our words and our deeds. If we live in disobedience our words are null and void, but if we walk in obedience, acting through the Holy Spirit, by faith, then there's authority in the name of Jesus. However, it's not just faith – our faith needs to be motivated by love.

At the funeral service of Pastor Kjell Sjoberg, the final victory was announced. The headlines of *Dagens Nyheter*, Sweden's largest daily newspaper, read: "The King refuses the Masons' invitation to become their Grand Master." This was the first funeral in which there was spontaneous applause. It was as if the Lord smiled and said to His deceased servant, "I will give you this one!"

As a small prayer group in Orebro, we also experienced the power of the name of Jesus. We met every Friday evening, and there were several teachers from a large school in our group. It was one of the largest high schools in Orebro, and for two years we heard the same cry:

"Please pray for us, the students are so unruly. The school is violent, and it's difficult to maintain control in the classroom. Now we have drugs in the school."

And so it went on. We would pray and nothing would happen. The situation remained exactly the same for two years. Then one night it dawned on me how useless our prayers had been! We had been totally ineffective! I was filled with a righteous anger and when we met together I said:

"Listen. We don't understand how to pray." Everyone listened.

"We're not going to pray for the school tonight. I'm sick and tired of it! Let's be serious and fast and seek the Lord for what He wants with this school. We'll start tomorrow and continue until our next meeting. Then, we'll decide in the name of the Lord and declare what we want to see from this school. Let's record our decisions, and then go to the school on Saturday and proclaim our decisions to the main entrance doors!"

So we did exactly that. We decided that the glory of the Lord should be manifest in that place, that many students would come to the Lord, that future leaders would come out from that school, and there would be a strong Christian influence there. The next day we went to the school gates and proclaimed to the doors our decision, taking authority in the name of Jesus Christ.

On Monday we heard that something was already happening. A missionary had come to visit the school, and she said that she had never experienced anything like it. She explained how hungry the students were for God and how she had even been able to pray

with some of them! In the following year, 15 percent of the students came to know Christ. Two servants of the Lord rented a building next to the school and led many of the students to the Lord. There was a youth revival in that place. There's power and authority in the name of Jesus. We need to understand this, so that when we pray we prepare ourselves, and we'll see the power of God manifest in a new way.

No one lives or dies for himself. Our lives are interwoven one with another. The Bible describes us as being members of one body. And so the victories we have in our lives impact others. Our victory is not simply a matter of going to church or receiving prayer from others. We need to overcome in the very area where we are experiencing the problem or oppression. We need to engage with the enemy in the very area where he is attacking us, and overcome him in the name of the Lord.

This was illustrated to us in many ways, and one example came in 1976 when we had moved to Orebro. We came into a totally different spiritual climate. As I explained earlier, we lost the house we should have had, and our faith offering produced no fruit, but there was something else, which was much worse. The entire family experienced a severe hopelessness. It was a spiritual depression which was like death. Initially, I didn't realize what was happening. I simply thought I was overworked because every day I would return home exhausted and fall asleep in my chair at six o'clock in the evening.

Finally, after a few months I suggested we should take a long holiday in the Canaries because I was so worn out. Then it dawned on me that it was not simply tiredness. My joy was gone. There was something else to this overwhelming fatigue. Our prayers felt as if they were bouncing off the ceiling and falling to the floor. There was no longer the open heaven we had experienced in Stockholm. We couldn't break through in prayer any more. In fact we were falling asleep as we prayed. It felt as if we were fighting for our lives! So we made a decision as a family. We saw that we were falling asleep whenever we wanted to pray, and I knew we had to overcome the enemy in another way. We took a decision to run three kilometres in the name of the Lord each evening. At six each evening we would put on tracksuits, set off, and run around the neighbourhood. I'm no great athlete, and so this was not an easy decision, but it was an act of prayer. We did not run and pray at the same time. We simply ran as an act of prayer, giving that time to God. We ran every evening for almost two months, and then one morning I woke and knew we had broken through. Heaven was open.

"Darling, we're through!" I yelled to my wife.

That morning as I went to my office we had an economic breakthrough. A large corporation placed an order, which turned our company around making it very profitable. The oppression was gone and the breakthrough was manifest in the factory.

Our church was also impacted. That Sunday, I pulled up in the parking lot as the pastor arrived. He was to preach that day, and I suddenly spoke a few words which seemed to impact him, almost hitting him in the solar plexus! He was inspired to speak something out, which he had never done before, and when he had finished, I immediately had a word of knowledge about someone with a heart condition. The man stood up and was instantly healed.

Our victory is never just a personal victory. Our victory always concerns others and brings blessing to them. Others are dependent on our overcoming the enemy in the name of Jesus Christ. Our victory concerns the whole body of Christ. When many of us are living in this level of victory, we have a situation where there is a high level of faith as we come together. Then, the power of God can easily be manifest. But it depends on us overcoming the enemy in the area where he is oppressing us!

Chapter 20

Journey to Jerusalem

Our journey to Jerusalem began in the late '60s when Asther and I returned from the USA and I began managing the company in Stockholm. My predecessor, had come over from Berlin, a survivor of the holocaust. Tragedy hung over this man. His family had died, and he had contracted polio. I got to know him during my initial time in the company and grew to love him.

Then, one day he told me he was going away and would not be back for a few days.

Something in his voice made me anxious. There was a heaviness around him, and I felt uneasy.

That night I didn't sleep a wink. In the morning, I called our subsidiaries and asked if he had arrived. The answer was always the same, "No." I spent the whole day phoning the police and even hospitals asking if they had seen him. All the time I grew more troubled. Eventually, I contacted his landlord and persuaded him that we had to get into his apartment in Stockholm, by force if necessary. We did. What we saw next confirmed my fears.

He was lying deeply unconscious on his bed. I picked up letters to his family and one to myself, instructing me what to do when they had found his body.

To the glory of Him who sent me, that man's life was saved, and his family invited Asther and me into their home. There, they expressed their gratitude in giving me a beautiful gift. It was the Star of David in gold – a wedding gift from this man to his wife on their marriage. I treasure that special gift and wore it recently at the ICCC conference in Jerusalem, where we will soon have our headquarters.

Again, this began in a small way at our inaugural meeting in 1985 in The Hague, Holland. Our very first decision as ICCC was to sponsor the Prophetic Conference, convened by Dr. Clifford Hill on Mount Carmel in Israel the following year. God had impressed on Dr. Hill the words from Micah, *"For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"* (Micah 4:2). He wanted to assemble all those with a recognized prophetic calling from among the Christian leaders in the world to a week of waiting upon the Lord. The goal was to receive the Lord's instructions about His ways so that we, as the body of Christ, would walk in His paths. The gathering was to take place on Mount Carmel, near the place where Elijah had challenged the priests of Baal. This week in which 153 prophets and intercessors assembled became the first project to be sponsored by ICCC. And so, through the conference, I was privileged to set my foot in Israel for the first time. Although I did not see anything else but Carmel and Tiberias, I knew that ICCC should serve Israel, but how?

In the same year, Pastor Kjell Sjoberg and I had the privilege of hearing Steven Lightle share his experience of a forty day fast in the deserts of Israel. Here, the Lord had impressed upon him that the time had come for all the Jews in the *diaspora to return home. I remember pinching my arm wondering how I could possibly be hearing all this firsthand. Later, Steven wrote all this in his book, Exodus II. Somehow, I believed we could help those Jews who were making **Aliyah, returning to their homeland.

** Diaspora is a Hebrew term which is used to describe the dispersion of the Jews throughout the world. ** Aliyah is the Hebrew term which is used in Israel for the returning of the Jews from the diaspora.*

Gustav Scheller, one of our members, played a prominent part in providing opportunities for the return of the Jews, and when the ICCC International Board decided to have its Board meeting in Jerusalem in 1991, we had the privilege of seeing the first airlift of Russian Jews returning home to Israel. All of us had been part of sponsoring this first flight and Steven Lightle witnessed the start of his God-given vision. Jews were now returning to Israel from the four corners of the earth. On May 23, 1991, we stood at 3:30 a.m. with representatives of the Jewish Agency awaiting those first Russian Jews returning to their Promised Land. What a moment! They streamed down the stairs of the aircraft, children, and old folks, weeping and laughing, sick and healthy. And they were all received with such joy! As they touched Israel, many of them wept and kissed the tarmac, young and old alike. It will remain in my memory forever, and I was so thankful I had the privilege of being able to participate, even in a small way, with such an enormous project.

When they had all disembarked, Gustav Scheller, Steven Lightle, and I were invited to stand on a specially built platform. The Israeli anthem was played, and we were asked to give short speeches to welcome the Jews home to their land. On behalf of ICCC, I received a plaque commemorating this great moment. Later that day the Jewish Agency invited us for lunch in Jerusalem, and there a senior spokesman for the Jewish Agency challenged us:

"You are the International Christian Chamber of Commerce. You must assist us in creating job opportunities in Israel for the returning Jews!"

So this was what God was after! Months earlier, we had already prayerfully decided that our next international conference should be held in Israel. Now I knew why. This was the beginning of the "Shalom Israel Conference," which included a matchmaking project. It was a new step for ICCC.

We prepared by telling our delegates from various parts of the world to investigate the type of products which they could import from Israel which would meet requirements of their home market. We knew that it was difficult for those outside Israel to fully understand the subtle political and financial climate in that country, and usually it was only the large corporations who were successful in establishing companies in Israel. Prayerfully, we began our preparations to provide job opportunities in Israel and so provide practical help for those making "Aliyah."

In order to facilitate the process, the Board agreed to send Asther and me on a two-week visit to Israel. Michael Fenton-Jones and his wife, Gill, would join us during the final week. My knowledge of the country was limited and I had to learn quickly! I had already contacted the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm prior to leaving and asked them specific questions relating to the business environment in Israel. However, I was totally unprepared for the government official who greeted us as we stepped off the plane in Tel Aviv. He was our host, and for the next two weeks he would give us a guided tour of Modern Israel to help us assess the situation and gain the best possible overview.

Both the representatives of the Government and the Israeli Export Institute received us warmly, and we agreed to work closely together. Our visit was a wonderful experience, and after Michael and Gill returned home, Asther and I felt we wanted to thank God somehow for the wonderful way in which He had opened the door for us. We needed to celebrate, and so we decided to have a meal at the best restaurant we could find, in honour of the Lord. As we arrived at the restaurant, we went to sit outside on the terrace, and I noticed two gentlemen appearing as our meal arrived. They sat in the far corner, and the Lord clearly spoke to me about one of the men. The Holy Spirit was giving me words of wisdom and knowledge, and as I was so absorbed in this, Asther noticed and asked what was happening. When I quietly explained to her, she fell silent and we ate our meal hardly speaking a word!

I paid the bill and then rose to leave. Asther was surprised: "Aren't you going to speak to him?" she asked.

I was nervous and was not sure whether I could disturb them. However, my wife gave me the prompting I needed, so I went over.

"Forgive this intrusion on your privacy," I began, "but I have something important to say to you, sir." "Yes?"

"The Lord says..." Then I stopped as I remembered someone had warned me that if you spoke like that in Israel you could be thrown out!

"Yes, go on!" he urged, interested in what I had to say.

"The Lord says that only you can do what you are doing, but you must listen to your heart. Don't compromise, or be maneuvered by pressure from anyone, otherwise you'll fall between two stools and hurt yourself. If you listen to your heart, God will bless what you're doing. Thank you. Forgive me for intruding."

Quickly I left. I didn't say anything apart from the words the Lord gave me. I had not even given my name or asked for theirs.

However, as we were leaving the restaurant we heard them say: "Wow! Wow!"

"They must be Americans," I murmured to Asther and we left.

A couple of months later, I was in Nashville, Tennessee, at the US ICCC Board meeting in America. As we sat together, a phone call came from the Israeli Embassy in Washington. Four people wanted to see us: a US Senator, an Israeli general, the host of Yitzak Shamir's gala-dinner to be held in Hollywood, and the son of the publisher of *The Jerusalem Post*. Why did they want to see us? What in the world were we supposed to do?

Feeling quite apprehensive, we decided to give them half an hour the next day. So they came, and as I was the President of ICCC, they invited me to participate in the first ever Christian Prayer Breakfast to be held in Jerusalem in honour of the Israeli Government. As they spoke about this, it dawned on me that this could have something to do with my experience in the restaurant in Jerusalem. I shared what had happened, and sure enough the man I had spoken to had been responsible for putting this event together! When they realized this, our visitors not only wanted me to attend but to join the speakers as well.

In fact there were many speakers at this prayer breakfast. The Israeli Prime Minister was first and I was last. There were so many speakers that I noticed people were growing tired. Eventually, there were two more, one other man, and then it was my turn. "Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being so patient. There is just one more speaker," the Master of Ceremonies announced.

One more? Then I don't have to speak after all, I thought, slipping my notes into my briefcase. I sat back and relaxed. When the man finished there came an announcement:

"I apologize, there has been a mistake. Thank you again for your patience, but we have one more speaker. I assure you this man will be very brief. Now we have Mr. Gunnar Olson from Norway."

I am from Sweden of course, and I had never had a worst introduction anywhere! What's more, I knew everyone was exhausted, and they would simply want me to finish and then they could go home. However, I shared how God had laid on our hearts to come and serve Israel, to reach out with His love and say, "Shalom Israel." I shared how we wanted to provide job opportunities for the homecoming Jews, and my message touched their hearts. They all listened in spite of the late hour, and when I had finished my short speech, about fifty people crowded around my table wanting to shake my hand. They were trying in vain to close the meeting, and eventually, I had to ask the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs to please sit down so they could close the meeting!

That night, only two speeches were broadcast on Israeli national television, that of the Prime Minister and mine. I was amazed. Following this, I was invited to participate in a 24-hour radio programme bringing greetings from all over the world. I had to speak for

five minutes. First, I would be listening to the person speaking before me, and this was the Prime Minister, Yitzak Shamir. Then, after I had spoken, I would have the opportunity of listening to the person who followed me. This was Ronald Reagan, the US President.

The Lord had instructed us to take responsibility as if we had power, yet not reach for power. He had shown us that we had to come with His heart, with a servant attitude and love people as He loved them. Once more, He was showing us that if we are faithful in the small things, then He will give us greater things. There is a doorkeeper in every situation, and he only opens the door when he sees the love of the Shepherd. Again, the Lord was teaching us.

The "Shalom Israel Conference" took place in 1992. It was breathtaking, and it had a huge impact on our young organization. Over 500 delegates from 29 nations were represented. President Chiluba of Zambia sent his Vice President, the Brigadier General and Minister of Education, G. Miyanda. The theme for the conference was taken from a passage in Isaiah, chapter 60, *"The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you."* In this way, the Brigadier General represented the first of many national leaders who will come to rebuild Jerusalem. The delegates came from many different professions, from a member of the Board of Directors of British Airways to a one-man company. One delegate represented an organization with over 18,000 corporate members.

Among the many inspiring speakers were Derek Prince, Kjell Sjoberg, Eliyahu Ben-Haim, and Lance Lambert. A speech by the Jewish rabbi, David Hartman, affected us all. He spoke about "Prophetic Israel" and said, "Because you are recognizing our body and concern yourselves with our physical need, one day, we will also listen to you as you talk about our souls."

One day was set aside for the "Matchmaking" process between visiting Christian businessmen and Israeli businessmen in the Congress hall in the great Hyatt Regency Hotel. "Matchmaking" usually refers to bringing a couple together for marriage, but in this case, we were bringing together Christian and Israeli businessmen to develop their businesses. All the delegates had already completed a form indicating their type of business and the type of products they could use from Israel. Over 600 representatives, all Israeli businessmen, had been provided with a list of appointments with respective foreign delegates. The shoe shop owner met with a shoe manufacturer, the electronics manufacturer met his new supplier in Israel, and so on. Some people received about twenty "matchmaking" contacts while others had less, but every foreign delegate had the opportunity to "matchmake" with an Israeli businessman, thanks to the hard work and effort of Mrs. Rachella Weinstock at the Israeli Export Institute.

On the first evening, an American businessman related his story. He had applied for our "matchmaking" conference at the last minute, so he had not given us any of his requirements.

He needed a particular chemical substance for his production process and wondered if it was available in the area around the Dead Sea. While at the conference he saw two Israeli businessmen sitting alone at a table, and he went over to talk with them. To his surprise, they represented the chemical industry. When he mentioned the substance he was looking for, they said, "But this stuff is just waste in our manufacturing process, and we haven't yet been able to find any use for it!" Initially, they thought the American businessman wanted to buy the chemical from them, but he explained that he wanted to bring his production process to Israel. Still, they did not understand, so he explained that he wanted to be part of the initiative to create jobs for the returning Russian Jews. Just as they were about to enter into an agreement, the legal advisor for the Israelis happened to walk into the hotel. They were able to draft the contract and have it signed before the evening! God opened so many doors that day, and the Holy Spirit was evident in so many meetings.

It has been difficult to assess the exact amount of business that was negotiated that day,

but a conservative estimate puts the final figure at about 30 million US dollars. Our intention was to show God's covenant people His love in their daily business concerns. And the words of the rabbi are still ringing in our ears, "Because you concern yourselves with our physical needs, one day we will listen to you as you talk to us about our souls."

Today, there is still ongoing activity as a result of that conference. A love offering provided the seed money for the "Shalom Israel Foundation," and since then, large donations have come through to provide loans for starting small businesses.

It is a special privilege to serve Israel because God is making Himself known to the nations through the restoration of His covenant people, Israel. He has made Himself known through His prophets in the Scriptures, and this is how He demonstrates that He is Lord over the history of man. In righteousness, He is judging the nations according to how they deal with Israel. Through His righteous judgement, He redeemed everything in heaven and on earth to Himself, through Christ. He judged our sins through the body of Christ on the cross, so that we would be declared righteous. And He will make Himself known today on the basis of how we treat Israel.

In the summer of the year 2000, Sweden experienced unusual torrential rains. Hundreds of homes were destroyed through floods. Rain poured down while I sat in our summer house on July 21, proofreading the first manuscript of a book describing Rev. Kjell Sjoberg's life and ministry, Steget Fore or A Step Ahead. Gazing out at the grey skies, I asked the Lord why this was happening. Just as I reached the page in the book that described Kjell's experiences in the valley of Jehosaphat, news came over the radio that Sweden had secretly promised to deliver East Jerusalem to the Palestinians as their capital. This was to happen within the seven-year timetable of the Oslo Accord, the Peace Plan. Sweden's hidden agenda in the Peace talks was unknown to the public.

But now I knew, and I also knew the Lord had said He would judge the nations on the basis of how they had divided the Land of Promise.

The Israeli Government is clearly under great pressure from the world to reach a peace accord. Many of our leaders have been involved in efforts to reach an acceptable compromise for peace in that land. But the world fails to see that for the Jews, the land of Israel is vital, just as the fullness of Christ is everything for a Christian. Therefore, how can anyone compromise on this area? How could a Christian compromise on the deity of Christ, or the virgin birth, the very foundations of faith? The key territories that are under dispute, Jericho, Hebron, The Temple Mount, and now Jerusalem are the key areas where God Himself led the Jews into their Promised Land. This is intrinsically connected with their identity as a Covenant people under God. God will institute His International Court in the Valley of Jehosaphat and judge the nations on this basis:

"For behold, in those days and in that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather together all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehosaphat; and I will enter into judgement with them there on account of My people, My heritage, Israel whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land" (Joel 3:1-2).

The Valley of Jehosaphat just happens to be East Jerusalem! All this is happening right in front of our eyes today. I feel strongly that we, as the body of Christ, should hold on to our position by faith in God and live without compromise. If we fail, Israel will suffer physically.

There is an interesting link between events in Israel and the Church worldwide, and so we cannot touch issues relating to Israel flippantly or carelessly. In 1885, when the first "Aliyah" was made from Odessa, there was simultaneously a release of the Holy Spirit in Armenia and the southern part of Russia. Over one million people became spirit-filled. Similarly, the second "Aliyah" in 1905 resulted in the Azusa Street Revival. When the State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948, the Holiness Revival swept across the world and great ministries were born, including Billy Graham, T. L. Osborne, and Oral Roberts. When

something happens in the physical realm to Israel, it releases something in the body of Christ. During Israel's victory in the Six Day War, we saw the release of the "Jesus Movement," which developed into the Charismatic Revival. So no wonder that, while Israel is being pressured into a peace process in exchange for land, the Church has had to give up spiritual territory, pressurized by the gay movement and other humanistic forces.

Through the best of intentions, peace at any cost, our political leaders are risking bringing our nations under judgement. We need to pray for our leaders today and stand in the gap as watchmen on the wall. We need to come before God, confessing our own sins and the sins of our nations, and ask Him for His grace according to the Scripture which says, *"If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, then will I hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and heal their land"* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Right then, I realized why we were having such horrible weather. We were being judged. A cry welled up in my heart, and I knew we had to take a position in prayer and stand in the gap for our nation. Our leaders did not realize they were putting Sweden at risk with this policy.

And so, a prayer conference was convened between ICCC Finland and ICCC Sweden. This was a cruise conference, and some meetings took place on the Silja Line ferry boat, while others were in Abo (Turku) in Finland. Perhaps it was significant that the conference coincided with Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year celebration.

During this time we all entered into a written covenant with the Lord as an act of prayer and obedience, to position ourselves with His purposes for the Land of Israel. While we were doing this, Ariel Sharon, the future Israeli Prime Minister, went up on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It was the turning point in the Peace Process between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and the second Intifada began.

Yet the burden did not lift from my heart, and I knew that as leaders of the ICCC we had to demonstrate our loyalty to Israel in a practical way. Therefore we had our Leaders' Conference in Israel in May 2001, the following year. The theme was: "Participating with God's Purpose for Israel." Our main objective was to be able to enter into a covenant of love with that nation.

Among the speakers were Samuel Avyatar, the Mayor of Jerusalem's advisor on Christian affairs, and my old friend, Raanan Levi. Just before he walked to the platform, Raanan took me aside and informed me that when he had accepted my invitation to be a speaker, he was my good, old friend in Israel, but now, as he was about to address the ICCC leaders, he would speak on behalf of the Prime Minister. He had been elevated to the position of Advisor to Ariel Sharon!

In the middle of his speech, completely out of context, he suddenly pointed his finger at me and said: "Now the time has come to move your ICCC headquarters to Jerusalem!"

"You can have it anytime, just tell me," I responded jokingly. His sudden comment had taken me completely by surprise.

At this moment, Eliyahu Ben-Haim leaned over to me and whispered: "Gunnar, I think you should respond to this seriously. Not only did he speak under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, but remember, he's speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister. It's great to have such a friend in the Prime Minister's office, isn't it?"

Consequently, the International Board Meeting was now scheduled for Jerusalem in September 2001. We had expressly invited Raanan Levi to help us understand what he was saying between the lines. We needed to know what he could see which we could not.

He spent a whole day with us on September 11. All morning until midday he spoke to us and yet he said nothing. There was nothing he was telling us that we did not know already. Finally, I caught him over lunch and asked him: "Do you trust us?"

"Yes, of course," he replied.

"Then why aren't you telling us what is on your heart?" I asked.

We went back into the meeting room and all of us, except one, dismantled our mobile phones. Then he spoke to us. The very second he finished, Claus Philippin, who had not taken his phone apart, shouted:

"Turn on the television!"

We did. As we followed the news on both CNN and the BBC, we witnessed firsthand the incredible events that were taking place at the World Trade Centre, New York, and the Pentagon, Washington. For some reason, while I watched, I was instantly healed from symptoms of a stroke which had happened earlier in the year. My left foot and leg were still weak, and I had been walking with a limp. As I saw the events unfold on the television screen, that weakness immediately left me. Now I understood why we had to move our headquarters to Jerusalem. We had entered into a new time, and this new era had started with this terrible, tragic signal. Now I knew I would live to see the Grand Finale. It was certainly the first time I had experienced the anointing of the Holy Spirit through CNN!

The events of September 11 were pivotal in many ways, and for myself they spoke yet again of the times in which we live and the importance of living daily in an awareness of the Kingdom dimension, which is eternal life. I know that what we are building in Israel must reflect the glory of the coming Kingdom. We are so accustomed to stories of earthly success, and we recognize the business billionaires and film stars in this arena, but there is another level that transcends all this and that is our constant goal.

For various reasons, the pressure mounted after that time, and I found myself totally involved in business matters and the complexities of organizational issues. However, I was forced to a temporary standstill in January 2002 when I suffered a heart attack, which left only 42 percent of my heart functioning. Yet through God's love and grace, I was able to fulfil most of my engagements and see the outcome of our summer conference in Jerusalem that was billed as "the business event of the year."

In June 2002, together with seven other Christian ministries, we co-hosted a conference in Jerusalem, "Where Eagles Soar." Eagles mate in the heavens after a lengthy courtship during which the female drops a stick for the male to pick up. He responds by seizing the stick between his talons and returning it to her in midair. Then she repeats the process again and again. Finally, they soar hundreds of feet into the sky and in this spectacular gesture, grapple each other's talons and at this high altitude enfold one another. Then they plummet to the ground, and just before they hit the earth, they loose each other and soar upwards again. When eagles mate, they mate in the heavens. They mate for life, and they are faithful to death. Hence, there was a purpose in choosing eagles for our theme: "Where Eagles Soar." Like the eagles, we had a higher perspective; we were seeing beyond the present, looking at the glorious future of Israel and the coming Kingdom.

Three official governmental organizations hosted the conference: The Manufacturers' Association of Israel, the Israeli Export Institute, and the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce. These groups were in unity to welcome us to Jerusalem. It became the business event of the year with 1,100 business meetings with Israeli business professionals conducted in one day alone! This was unparalleled in Israel's history, and consequently through an agreement of mutual cooperation with the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce, ICCC has been contracted to represent the Israeli business sector to all Christians in business worldwide.

Our aim was to be relevant to Israel in terms of furthering her business growth in a practical way through targeted "Matchmaking" programmes. Israel needs to reclaim her lost inheritance of the glory of the Lord. This is the unseen dimension described in the Second book of Corinthians:

"While we do not look at things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

This unseen area is the glory area, the Kingdom life touching earth. This is where we should have our earthly experiences, in this liberty in the Spirit.

Chapter 21

The times in which we live

Acceleration is the key word that sums up the times in which we live. The world is undergoing rapid changes almost like convulsions. The world map needs to be reprinted almost every year because of the many new nations which are appearing.

Jesus said, *"Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they are already budding you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near"* (Luke 21:29-30).

All of us would agree that the fig tree represents Israel, but here, Jesus is also saying, "and all the trees." Here, I believe He is referring to the new nations breaking loose from the empires. It's a sign of the times, and now the process is taking place very fast, historically speaking. Who would have thought that the Soviet Empire and later also the Iron Curtain would fall, without bloodshed? It's a sign of the times in which we live. All the other trees are budding and summer is near!

During the October 1998 ICCC conference in America, certain passages of Scripture were highlighted to us by Dale Neill. In Numbers 10, God instructs Moses to make two silver trumpets. The whole congregation were to assemble in the tent of Tabernacles whenever they heard the two trumpets blowing. When only one trumpet blew it was a signal for the leaders:

"Make two silver trumpets for yourselves; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movements of the camps. When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before the door of the tabernacle of meeting. But if they blow only one, then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall gather to you."

"And these shall be as an ordinance forever throughout your generations" (Numbers 10: 2-4;10:8).

This means that whenever God wants to do something in the history of man He blows a trumpet! I began to see a recent pattern emerging. The Chernobyl disaster was one such signal. The word "chernobyl" means "wormwood," and this leads us to the passage in Revelation chapter seven which describes a great star falling from the sky and *"the name of the star is Wormwood."* We had been praying for the former Soviet Union for years, and when this happened, it hailed a new time for that country. Immediately afterwards, Gorbachev announced "perestroika" and "glasnost" which entirely altered the political picture. Then the Iron Curtain fell and new nations rose up across the former Soviet Union; the trumpet had signalled a far reaching change that was taking place.

A more recent example of a similar signal occurred in the economic collapse in South East Asia. This was dramatically demonstrated in Indonesia where there are 60 million new poor in the society. This incredible calamity was signalled earlier when vast forest fires swept through the country spreading through South East Asia, engulfing Malaysia and Singapore in the smoke and creating a huge ecological disaster. This environmental catastrophe preceded the financial collapse, and, as Christian leaders, we should have seen what was happening because these are times to advance.

Throughout history there have been a series of signals. These have included "the cultural revolution" in China in 1968, which came at the same time as the student demonstrations in the Western world. Both events were a challenge: In whose hands did authority lie? In 1971 the Club of Rome was formed, which was a challenge to the competence of world leadership. Two years later, the oil crisis and the creation of OPEC challenged the affluence of the West with far-reaching economic consequences. The collapse

of communism in 1989 was again a challenge to world leadership. Communism had the wrong concept of society, of economics, of man, and most important, of God. It could never last.

I believe that no other event in human history ever received such media coverage as the terrible tragedy, the terrorist attack against the World Trade Center in New York. It is worth noting that the attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were directed against world trade and world finance, as well as world intelligence, while the jet which crashed down in Pennsylvania was most probably heading for the White House, aimed against political power. No other trumpet call has ever been as clear as this one. The message of the Bible is also very clear – everything that can be shaken will be shaken. For me, the tragedy in New York points to the book of Revelation, chapter 18, verse 10, which describes the fall of Babylon, a symbol of the world of finance and commerce:

"Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come."

God is warning us of a future calamity, and He is saying to the Church:

"Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, and you will not receive any of her plagues. For her sins are piled up to heaven and God has remembered her crimes" (Revelation18:4-5).

The important question now is: How can we come out of her? And how can we have our entire being, our life and business in the Kingdom which cannot be shaken?

We read the answer in Exodus, chapter 13, verse 13, which says: *"Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons."*

All of us understand that redemption points to Jesus' vicarious death on the cross when He redeemed us all from eternal death. But the truth is that His sacrificial act has to be actively received by faith. It is "by faith" that we are saved. Faith in Jesus is therefore also the key factor for our "donkeys" or our businesses not to have their necks broken in the shaking to come.

We should watch carefully all that is happening in the world today. Yet I believe we've just seen the beginning. The trumpets have been blowing for some time now, and we should be aware of this. As Christians in business we have just entered the time when God will take His glory into the marketplace. The time ahead is turbulent, but it's in these days that God has released us into a new level of liberty and freedom. At ICCC we understand that we have to be aware of this, and certain Scriptures seem especially pertinent right now. One of these is found in Malachi:

"Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and meditate on His name. They will be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, on the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him" (Malachi 3:16-17).

Then, chapter 4 describes a day of severe trouble which "will burn like an oven" for all the earth, but it also says:

"But to you who fear My name the sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this, says the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 4:2-3).

Right in the midst of severe trouble, the day of liberty will come. We are called to be those who "fear His name," who have an intimate relationship with Him, and walk with Him in seemingly hopeless situations. We are to rise victoriously above the encroaching tide.

Certain trends in society indicate that there could be several painful good-byes. In

September 1995, there was an assembly of experienced world leaders in the famous Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. Among them were Mikhail Gorbachev, George Bush, Margaret Thatcher, and George Schultz. There were also certain business magnates, key players in the IT field, as well as equally respected financiers and professors from Stanford, Harvard, and Oxford. This "global brain trust" predicted that just 20 percent of the world's workforce will be sufficient to keep world economy going. Just one-fifth of the workforce is needed. The pragmatists in the Fairmont Hotel summed up our future in the ratio "20:80" and the phrase "tittitainment." In other words, 20 percent of the world's workforce will live a very active life, earn money, and have the capacity to be good consumers, regardless of which country they come from. But what about the rest, the other 80 percent? For them the future will be very different, as one of the leaders put it, "To have lunch – or be lunch!"

Mr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former advisor to Jimmy Carter, coined the word "tittitainment." This word is a combination between "entertainment" and "tits" – the American slang word for female breasts. It describes the need for plenty of entertainment and enough food to keep the world's frustrated 80 percent in a good mood! What a world to live in! We could be describing the Roman Empire just before its fall.

We will have to say goodbye to job security and long-term career planning. We will need to be flexible, to adapt to new situations as everything shakes just like the Bible describes. We will have to say good-bye to childhood. The children of today are miniature adults, losing their childhood innocence through media influence. The middle class society will also disappear, along with democracy and national moral leadership. Many leaders today are like salesmen rather than moral leaders who would father a nation. Our society is a fatherless society, and this is nowhere more prominent than in the political arena. Consequently, core values are daily eroded, and sin is legitimized. For Christians today there are two vital issues: First, we need to be willing to change and be malleable under the Holy Spirit; and secondly, we need to love unconditionally. Both are crucial if we are to preserve the core values in an increasingly meaningless society. We've met the final enemy and found it to be ourselves. If we read the global signals, then the time is short.

Trotsky remarked: "Whoever wants a quiet life has chosen the wrong time to be born." It may seem like the wrong time for some, but for those of us who are called by God into business, according to His purposes, everything must serve for good. This is a time to dare to do things we have never done before. It's a time to reach out, to participate in the grand finale of the Great Commission, which is being fulfilled before our eyes as the final people groups are receiving the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

These will be difficult days for many, but they present a tremendous challenge for us to learn to walk in the liberty of God's sonship through His Holy Spirit. This is a time to move out boldly trusting in the Lord, in His love and His power.

"Blessed are those who sow beside all waters, who will send out freely the feet of the ox and the donkey" (Isaiah 32:20).

Praise the Lord for the challenge He has set before us! As we seek to move with Him in His purposes, we'll see the glory of God manifest in our days as the waters cover the sea.

However, we must understand that there is both a physical and spiritual dimension to everything in life. In Him, all things were created. All things were conceived in God's Kingdom. This means that there is a spiritual dimension to everything, with the Father. That's "the glory dimension," and it's in heaven. The glory dimension is in Jesus. We need to touch what is in heaven, by faith, in Jesus, and see it released here to the glory of the Father. When the eternal glory dimension is manifest here on earth, then God is glorified. Through faith, we release what is in heaven, and that which is in heaven has the ability to multiply itself! The Kingdom of God is in heaven, but it should be manifest here!

I long to constantly dwell in that newness of life here and now. I firmly believe our calling is to live the eternal life right now, through the Spirit, by faith! My prayer is to see

more of God's glory manifest on earth, even in the small circumstances where I live. I pray that the testimonies I have shared in this book will produce a new resolution in your life. Do not accept anything less than His Kingdom manifest in your daily life. Even though my story is told in fragments, like a broken mirror, I pray that my memories will reflect a glimpse of the coming Kingdom.

The privilege of living here on earth is that it provides the opportunity of glorifying the Lord. I'm willing to trade the world's version of success for His glory any day because His manifest glory is the ultimate success. Knowing Him is the greatest thing a man or woman can choose.

Chapter 22

Kingdom business – The summary of what I learned

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Time affects everyone, and there is a very important principle that we need to understand: Time is only a temporary element of life. As born of man, we are partakers of the created life, which is carnal, but when we are born again in Christ, we experience the uncreated life of God, which is eternal. His life is in us! For a Christian, this means that our life on earth has a purpose, which should be fulfilled here and now.

Time is the element that we cannot alter that also causes change. There are seasons and just as we are ageing, so the world undergoes major changes. Transition occurs. In the last century we moved from an agricultural society to a more complex, industrial age. While I sit writing this book, further changes are taking place, and we now live in an information age, an age which has virtual economy. Therefore we live in times of change, and God's calling is formed for its particular time. It's vital that we handle the changes without altering the underlying values for life.

Time is a small interruption in eternity which has been occupied by the devil. But through Christ, God has invaded the darkness to reconcile all things to Himself and to reveal the attributes of His eternal Kingdom. We are called to live in that dimension, which can only be accessed through faith in Jesus, and thus become a testimony to the world and to principalities and powers in the spiritual realm, that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Then, we will overcome the evil one in the same way as Jesus. Through our faith, here in time, the Kingdom of God becomes manifest. It will happen through the Holy Spirit, by faith!

The mystery of the Kingdom is this: that the Kingdom which will one day change the entire external order has entered into this age in advance to bring the blessings of God's Kingdom to men and women. We are experiencing the powers of the age to come. This age belongs to the future, but the powers of the age to come have entered into this present evil age.

The basic requirement of the Kingdom is a response of man's will. It does not ask us to create the life that it requires; God's Kingdom will give us that life. But there is one demand: Repent, turn, decide, and act! Receive the Kingdom through faith in Jesus! For as we receive it, we receive its life and its blessing. We receive in Him our life's destiny, reserved for those who embrace it by faith.

Through faith in Jesus we enter into an entirely new realm of life, the Kingdom of God, which is eternal, unchanging, and unlimited. We should experience eternal life right now! However, we cannot see it in all its fullness until the Lord reigns after the devil has been bound and cast into the eternal fire that is reserved for him. But as we walk by faith and not by sight, the attributes of God's Kingdom are being manifest in our daily experience. We are glimpsing the manifestations of the Kingdom which belongs to the future. This is why I have subtitled this book *Memories of the Coming Kingdom*.

The International Christian Chamber of Commerce was born out of this desire to glorify God in the area of business and commerce, and to define the unique call of the Lord in the workplace. This is an international ministry created by God for the special purpose of touching the nations with His love, through service in both the spiritual and the practical realm. God is releasing the business sphere to change nations and to fulfil the Great Commission, carrying the gospel of Jesus Christ to the final unreached people groups across the globe. All this comes as a direct result of understanding the Kingdom principles of business.

Since man is under God and created in His image, he possesses limited sovereignty over

nature. Therefore, man is responsible, as God's faithful servant, to co-labour with Christ to bring all nature under God's Government, so that His will might be done on earth as it is in heaven. This mandate to subdue the earth (Genesis 1:26-28) was part of God's provision for man in creation, and was fully affirmed in Christ's victorious death and resurrection.

Business and the working life are part of God's order of creation; they are the lifeblood of a nation, created for its support and growth. Here the mandate to subdue the earth is carried out by those who are serving mankind, through the love of Christ, in productive activities. They are establishing the reign of God in their respective areas of stewardship. The working life is a creative act, full of joy and mystery, where the gifts of the Spirit are manifest in their natural setting. Revelation knowledge coupled with professional excellence is vital.

The role of Christian business people is unique and far-reaching. They interact with major segments of the adult population; they are instrumental in the distribution of wealth; they exert significant influence over public policy; and they give credibility to many themes of Scripture. God has a special calling for the businessman. He wants him to experience a release into a new dimension of faith in which corporate goals, strategies, and plans become the outward manifestation of an inward walk of faith. This walk of faith includes realizing that our security is not based on accrued assets but based on Jesus, who is the source and fulfilment of everything.

The Old Testament divisions between "secular" and "spiritual" were done away with in Christ, and believers should see their secular work as full-time Christian service. Through Christ, all things were reconciled: *"For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by him reconcile all things to Himself whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross"* (Colossians 1:19-20).

By faith we enter into this understanding of the reconciliation of all things. It's through faith that we are redeemed – not through our abilities or good works. Faith in Jesus goes beyond our senses, touching the reality of our relationship with God. This is the prerequisite for entering into a new dimension of freedom as expressed in our professional life.

As we enter into this liberty through Christ by faith, our concept of success is transformed. God in His sovereignty has called men into various duties and stewardship in His Kingdom, giving them differing talents and gifts. Full use of those talents determines success in the eyes of God. Success is much more than the acquisition of material possessions. Success in Kingdom terms is progressively increasing dominion in one's sphere in obedience to God's will as revealed in His Word and in the continuing revelation of His Holy Spirit.

There is a dimension of abundant life waiting for every Christian professional. We are called to walk with God every day in every aspect of our life. Significantly, the first recorded conversation between God and man dealt with work. This conversation was renewed again with Noah after the Flood, and again the discussion went beyond one's conduct at work to the consequences of one's work: stewardship, fruit, multiplication, and replenishment.

Man is called to work with God as a co-labourer, and this comes through an intimate relationship with the Lord, not through following a manual or religious system. The difficulty facing a Christian professional is that God's relationship with him is unique, based on who he is and where he is. Therefore, to understand how a business can be developed under the principles of Kingdom business, we don't look outward to a list of rules or instructions, but we look inward, at the holiest of holies, face-to-face with the Father.

Similarly, decisions are often coupled with patience and prayer as answers come from confirmation. We have to be totally dependent on God, which is why Jesus said, *"It is difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven."* This does not mean that it is difficult

for a rich man to be saved, but in the Kingdom of God everything is done through the Spirit, by faith. We no longer rely on our own ability, willpower, and strength. There are no shortcuts into Kingdom living. The answers to our prayers do not come through fulfilling a legal requirement but by the grace of God, in Jesus Christ. Everything flows from that place of intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, and Saviour. When this is established, then the businessman or woman can enter into life as priest and king.

Kingdom business is not a demonstration of the moral application of capitalism or free market economy. Instead, it reveals prosperity, both spiritual and material, as a fruit not a goal. It reflects the Spirit of God and the fruits of the Spirit, involving prayer, intercession, and spiritual warfare. It is based on the transcendent economy of God, the source of all blessings.

When a businessman or woman comes into this relationship with the Lord, they must let go of control, because Jesus is Lord. He will rule and reign in every aspect of life. Everything is now done with the overriding purpose of the glory of the Father, and a Kingdom business will flow with the heart of the Father. We can tend to man's soul, feed the hungry, house the homeless, educate the illiterate, care for the earth – do all that is good and admirable – but may still not enter the Kingdom. Why? Because this necessitates receiving everything through grace, believing and trusting only in Jesus Christ. The most important questions are: How hungry am I for Him? How much do I want to experience His life here and now? It's serious and it's our choice!

Jesus said: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven."*

Chapter 23

With gratitude – Fellowship and love in the Lord

None of the precious events in ICCC could have been achieved without the deep experience of fellowship we share together. This is a fellowship which began with ICCC, but which has expanded to include the other groups that have joined with us as we share the common goal of reaching the unreached people groups through our professional lives being sanctified to the purposes of God's Kingdom.

On the Board of ICCC we have sought to maintain a spirit of honesty and integrity, so that people can speak the truth and the truth can be embraced in love. It's not always been easy, and there have been times when great men of God have had to walk out of the room because of the pressure. But in all this we have experienced a deep level of love and commitment towards one another as we have focused on the Lord's purposes in our lives.

Since ICCC started, others have moved alongside, and these men are carrying the vision further. Michael Fenton-Jones, our former International President, carried the vision in his heart. Through his life and leadership, he has set a standard of integrity and excellence for which I am forever grateful to the Lord. Michael and Gill have been moving in a prophetic anointing, touching leaders of nations as the Lord said. Their loving care and leadership has also touched our ICCC members across the globe. They are loved and respected greatly. May the Lord richly reward them.

God brought James Lockett to us, the only Christian lawyer in Brussels. He was there when we needed him. As the Secretary of ICCC, he brought order and structure to the organization, together with a keen insight into the prophetic dimensions of world economic developments. For his loyalty and sensitivity to God, we praise the Lord, and we recognize him and his wife, Tonia, as precious gifts to us.

Dr. Emile Vanbeckevoort is one of the founding directors and for a long time he served as Treasurer for ICCC. He and his wife, Reintje, have such integrity before the Lord so that he has been like a spiritual plumb line! Nothing escaped his eye as he was deeply grounded in the Word of God, serving others through his honesty and sensitivity in the Spirit. The Lord is sending this man out into a great harvest field. He has founded Christian schools in Holland and Belgium and launched a full MBA course on biblical principles, which has been exported to many nations, and I know there will be a great reward for his obedience in this area.

Dr. Keith Cleland, our first Vice President, and his wife Carolyn, equally impacted our lives. He is a man of prayer with a deep understanding of the walk with God manifest with sensitivity and passion. He has contributed significantly through his sacrificial walk into China. And what a contribution he's made! He helped us carve out our aims and purpose right at the beginning when he came to Sweden to share with me, helping me formulate in the English language what the Lord was speaking to me.

Dr. Willard Cantelon propelled us into a new level and spoke prophetically into my being. His pioneer spirit opened new doors as he taught us to walk with the Lord. This great man, a prophet of the Lord, who impacted Christian leaders in a similar way, has gone to be with the Lord. He is one of the heroes in the great cloud of witnesses. Without his encouragement at a crucial moment in my life, ICCC would not have been born.

Today, Dr. James Garvin is a resourceful businessman who retains that entrepreneurial edge which dared us to do things we wouldn't dream of doing! He had no inhibitions in his spirit, and I'm grateful for his and his wife Karen's willingness to invest themselves into

the future purpose of ICCC. James is a true friend. He was the man who came, as a sign from the Lord, before the beginning of ICCC, to Stockholm airport with all the lapel pins carrying the logo which became our logo. I am forever indebted to this dear brother.

There are others who joined our International Board later, like Claus Philippin and his wife, Inge. His radical decisions to follow the Lord in His footsteps wherever He leads, cause me to have a deeply rooted respect for his integrity in the Lord. I have never known anyone so radical, willing to face the consequences without compromise, as Claus and Inge. It is an honour to have the privilege to call them friends.

Equally, Gerhard Rauch and his wife, Hannelore, have exemplified a level of leadership in the Kingdom of God, which is free from compromise. With them, it has been coupled with a keen anointing and discernment of the strategic consequences of our actions as an organization. They are pillars in the house of the Lord, who can carry great weight on their shoulders. Their humble attitude of servant hood is like a heavenly aroma.

Dale Neill, our current International President is a "hundred percent" man; someone to whom you give utmost trust. God has also often used Dale to initiate the prophetic word among us in an unassuming but powerful way. He and Sharon are examples of what it means to undertake great things from a position of rest in Him. As I am writing these words, I am reminded of the phrases in Matthew chapter 5, *"blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" and "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see their God."*

Two other brothers from the US are Jeffery A. Sanford and Cal Mason, who have both served faithfully in the leadership of ICCC, and who are continually bringing the fragrance of the life of the Lord into the ICCC ministry. Jeffery was one of the persons to whom the Lord spoke, and his obedience to those words led to the act of reconciliation at Cape Henry. This was surely an act which was recorded in the Book of Life.

Laurence Holt and Peter Michell are both teachers. God used Laurence to write the teaching notes for "You Can Start a Business," and he features as the teacher in the programmes which are now impacting China through television. He has also served as a member of the International Board and been responsible for leading the teaching committee of ICCC. He and his wife are peacemakers and will therefore be called "sons of God." Peter Michell has been very active in producing teaching material, and for several years, he has faithfully travelled the world, teaching and sharing his insights, impacting many lives.

There are other members of the International Board, Brother Kofi Amponsah from Ghana, and the former General, Brother Marcel Bopeya, from Zaire, now the Republic of the Congo. They were our first two African International Directors. Also there is Brother Eliezer Hardjo from Indonesia, who contributed so selflessly during his term of service on the International Board.

Ntiense Ubon-Israel from Nigeria, Colbert A. Bryan from Jamaica, Anton Hemantha from Sri Lanka, Fredrik Ekholm from Finland, Grahame Scofield from the UK, and Brian Cape from South Africa, have until recently served on the International Board, or are presently serving on the International Board. All of them manifest a walk with the Lord which fills me with deep respect. It is beyond my understanding that I have received the privilege of an intimate relationship with each one of them. I love these men!

And there is Laura Kent, our first woman International Director, formerly our treasurer. What a lady! There is a fragrance around her, and she literally dances for joy as she's giving. She and her husband, Peter, have had so much to teach us about giving. Her purity of heart is reflected in her willingness to lay down everything for the purpose of God to be manifest in her life.

Pat Kellard, also a former Board member, has seen the glory of the Lord manifest in his company in many ways. He and his wife, Jenny, have a heart for the poor, faithfully serving and giving to those precious lives. His integrity of life and his love relationship with God is so special. I believe songs will be sung about both of them in eternity.

Another precious gift to ICCC is brother Emeka Nwankpa and his wife, Bade, from Nigeria. Emeka is the Coordinator of Intercessors International in Africa and an internationally renowned speaker. His ministry as the leader of the intercessors within the ranks of ICCC is a wonderful source of blessing. He has the stature of a statesman and is unusually equipped for his ministry. As a lawyer accredited at the Nigerian High Court, he has an ability to divide the Word of God with excellence and clarity. And when he prays, heaven and earth stand to attention! It is a great honour and privilege to be joined with him.

This list can never be complete because there are so many who have contributed to our work in so many ways. But it would be wrong to neglect to mention my Swedish brothers in ICCC. These great men of God have shown a willingness to spearhead many of the new aspects of the ministry. Dag Wilund, President of ICCC in Sweden, was the very first person to offer his services in 1984. Similarly, Jan Sturesson, Bertil Olsson, Wolfgang Romer, Dr. Lennarth Holmgren, Uffe Sandberg, Eyvin Kerschner, Kai Serholt, Stellan Nilsson, and Folke Gronlund have all invested their time and love in the work of ICCC.

There are many others who have contributed to the calling of God through ICCC. For example, Jorgen Edelgard was our first full, time employee, and he helped us establish our International Office. Joakim Arnryd, his successor, willingly took the workload of several people, always handling the pressures in a gentle spirit. Then there is Gunnel Gustafsson and Louise Arvidson who both faithfully serve our members at the International Office.

There is a principle which is clearly shown in the First book of Samuel that, irrespective of whether our calling is to stay with the supplies or to take part in the battle, all share alike (1 Samuel 30:24). The same is true for everyone who has responded to God's calling through ICCC. Together, we carried the burden of serving the call of the Lord, and therefore we will also share alike.

Then there is my own family. First, my beloved Asther. What a woman! How could I ever describe the reality of my wife? She's not a dynamic person but gentle as a dove, and she serves like an angel. In her prayer life and her willingness to serve, she has been the greatest lesson to me. She's been like a rock to me, always stable and calm. Peace is all around her. She won me to Christ, and I owe my life to her. Forever, I am indebted to her because without her I would have been a wreck. I love her, I honour her, I adore her. She is the love of my life, and she is my bride today. I don't have the words to describe how much I love her. She has taught me what life is.

Mats, my son – how I love this young man! He is a pillar of strength, and I really appreciate him and his contribution to my life more than words can tell. His ability to bring clarity and structure to intricate questions, and his ability to carry heavy burdens is unusual. His marriage with Asa is tender, full of peace and joy. The combination of strength and tenderness flows from their unity in prayer. They have three precious daughters, Amanda, Ida, and Ellen. Mats is characterized by his stability, peacefulness, and clear mind. Gentleness surrounds him, but he's very effective in a quiet way. He's been there whenever I've needed him. He's my son, and he's a precious jewel.

Git, my daughter has become a mature prayer warrior. She had to fight every step of the way, and she has experienced her own victories. This is how she has grown strong in the spirit. She and her husband, Joakim, are a real source of strength to both Asther and me. We love to fellowship with them because they know how to pray. Whenever we have something crucial we need to share, we lean on them to pray things through with us. Joakim is strong like an oak tree and unmovable as a rock. He was more than an employee while serving at the International Office. He is a brother I can trust. God has blessed them with little Richard, their son, a future leader, and Sofie, their lovely baby daughter. I'm Git's father and Joakim's father-in-law, but we're also great friends. We can pray together, laugh, cry, rejoice, and carry burdens together; such is our relationship one with another. Their contribution to my life has been so precious as they have come to me whenever I have been burdened and brought the releasing word of the Lord, speaking into the heart of the

situation.

Ake my younger brother came to serve as General Manager at Alfapac in 1986. When he offered his services, I was first hesitant because of our close relationship in the family. Then he said to me, "Gunnar, don't hinder me. This is my way of serving the Lord." He released me from the daily burden of running the industry, and I am deeply grateful for his faithfulness, excellence, and willingness to carry the workload of a growing industry. Alfapac could not have had a better coach than Ake! Together with him, I must mention all the employees and staff who have served us faithfully throughout the years. My thanks to them for their service to us.

I must also speak of my parents, Elsa and Ingemar, who provided a warm and loving home, where the trust in the Lord was as real as the air we breathe. It was a special blessing to be born into such an environment. Mother was always busy, caring for all the small things in a buzzing home with four children, and my father epitomized stability, manliness, and love. Our home was simple but always warm and welcome to guests. It was a home to be proud of because of my parents' life and integrity.

Similarly, my sister Vera and her husband, Stig, have played an important role in my life. During the initial shaky period when I started the company without any money, their home was always open. They received me in spite of the fact I had nothing to offer them in return. Since that time, we found a deep level of fellowship in the Lord which went beyond family ties. They have faithfully served us in their prayers, and we enjoy a wonderful fellowship with them and their children.

My brother Henry should also be remembered. His loving and kind attitude and willingness to help us with the numerous practical details surrounding our home has been invaluable.

My wife's parents, Joseph and Ruth, were righteous and gave generously of themselves in everything. Their home was full of joy and peace in the Lord and provided a spiritual environment from which Asther could draw strength. They went to be with the Lord before all this happened, but what a heritage they gave to my wife!

I'm grateful for all of those who went before us and for those who are walking with us now. Without these dear brothers and sisters, none of these things would have been possible, ICCC would have failed, and my life would have been very different. I thank God for their contribution and faithfulness. May the Lord bless them forever and ever.