

# The Potter's Product

*Meaning out of Mud*

Neville Holmes

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**Other Publications by this Author:**

The Father Ran - February 2020



## DEDICATION

To Jeanette and Paul,  
David and Betsy,  
Joshua and Abigail  
Nora and Reece.

This is a record of the life of JNAH.

My account might differ in fact and perception, but they are as seen by me or your mother who sees the same event differently and should not be corrected to agree.

If it is published for the benefit of others, then we dedicate it to all of you.

If not, then keep it as a record of the past and we hope you learn to trust the Lord to take you through life in His strength.

## Introduction

Romans 9:23 And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.

Does not the Potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble use and some for common use? What if God choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of His wrath.

He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy whom He prepared in advance for glory. Even us whom He also called not only from the Jews but also the Gentiles.

### **The Material the Potter Uses**

Clay, very ordinary, every one made of the same material.

The Potter decides, dictates, delivers.

### **The Way the Potter moulds that material**

The shape, the usage, purpose, The Clay allowing the moulding remains firm yet pliable, never questioning what is taking place. Only the Potter knows the end product. When the work is complete.

### **Working *with* the Potter**

The Potter does *all* the work. The clay held, shaped, receiving personal care. The Potter will complete the good work he began. Needs time, pure clay, no hard lumps/objections.

### **The Results of the Potter at Work**

Pleasing to the Potter who are the Potter's Work for the Potter's glory. Not the clay but the Potter who are the result of the Potter's activity.

## Lessons learned by the clay?

- Not to work for the Potter but to work *with* the Potter.
- The Potter stays in control of the clay.
- Allow the Potter to shape the clay.
- Various products of the work of the Potter who chooses.
- The Potter gets the honour not the clay.
- No purpose of the Potter can be thwarted.
- The Potter takes His time. Has His way. Takes a lifetime.
- The clay waits for the Potter to start and complete His work.
- Only the Potter knows the finished product.
- Clay the same for all in the hands of the Potter.
- The finished product depended on the constant personal touch of the Potter.

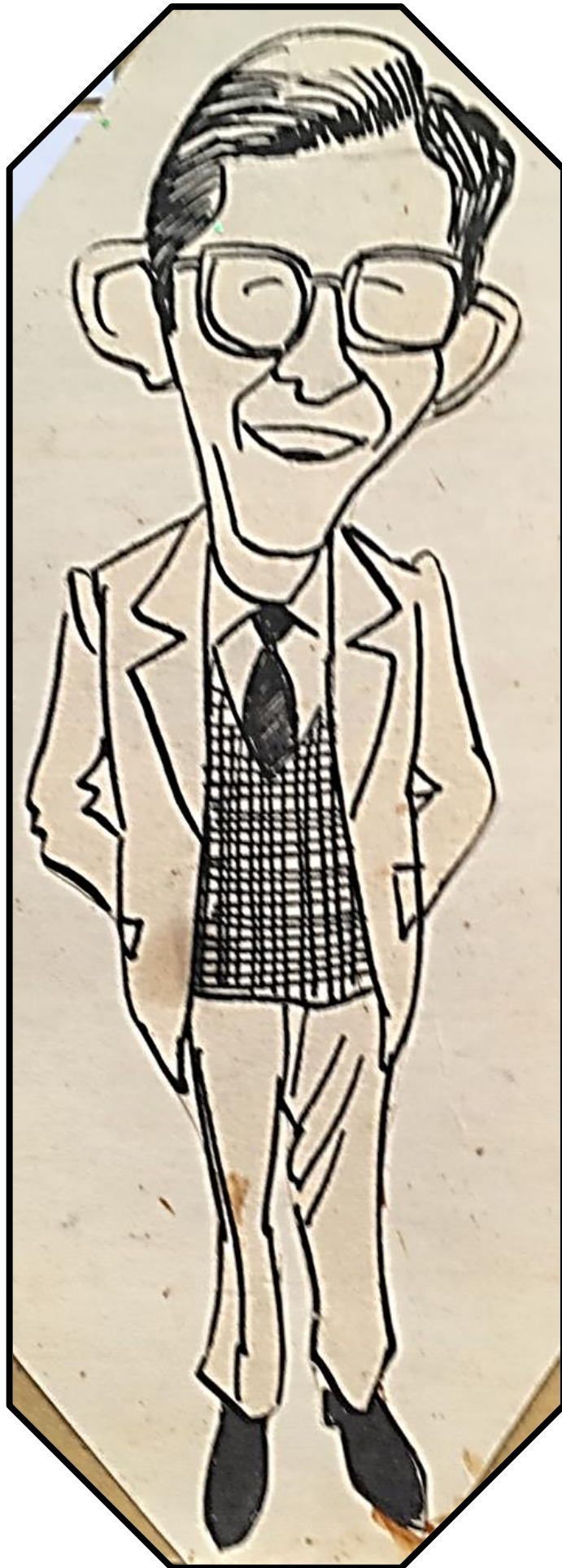
Romans 9:20 Who are you Oh man to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, “Why did you make me like this?”

The Master Potter, your Creator is at work in your life.

Psalm 37:23-24

Give Him total freedom, harden not your heart, resist Him not, let Him do what He knows is best for you; His lump of clay in His hands.

He will order the steps of your life, even when you fall, He will raise you up. The Potter upholds you and takes delight in the person whose way He has made firm.



# 1938 - 1954

## Clay without Form

I was born in 1938 on November 24th in Wynberg, Cape Town while my parents were living in a house at the top of Tiverton Road, Plumstead. They named me Justin Neville Albert. Neville was a popular name in those days because of Neville Chamberlain the prime minister who followed the disastrous policy of appeasing Hitler. Albert was a combination of Alfred Herbert from my grandfather who had emigrated to work on the Cape Govt Railways. My mother's parents came from Groningen in the Netherlands and were farmers in the Clocolan area of the OFS before the depression of 1933 caused them to lose everything. After that, my mother was very sure she made provision for every eventuality.

We have an Afrikaans side of the family, the brothers and sisters of my mother. One was married to the daughter of Christiaan de Wet the Boer guerrilla war leader. They were strongly anti-English and were called "bitter einders". Once I was sent to them to learn Afrikaans, but they tried to brainwash me that I was an Afrikaner and the English section was the weak part of the family. It never was an issue to me, but it was clear that the way History was taught in the schools caused the children to hate the English.

There were two brothers, Jannie and Hennie, who both knew and loved the Lord. They came from Kroonstad. Hennie and his wife Lena saw Paul and Jeanette and later themselves adopted their two children. For a while they supported us while we were in Lebanon. I have lost touch with that side of the family.

We then moved to Rosebank and in my early years I appeared to be a happy, healthy boy. We lived at the bottom of Pillans Road in a flat roofed house that became damp in winter. Once I fell off the porch and cut open my forehead and still have the mark.

I remember that in the war years we sat behind dark shutters so as to show no lights but those were years when my body was ravaged by asthma and I was often confined to bed. I remember the awful medicine I was forced to take and going for tests to cut all the things that I liked out of my diet because I was allergic to them - ice cream, chocolate, bananas. Eventually I looked as though I had lived at the Belsen concentration camp. I was a walking skeleton. Once my mother thought I was dying and made a promise to God that if He spared me, she would give me to God for His service. She later told Noreen this.

I remember walking up the road to school and thought all the hedges and fences were so high that I could not see over them. As an adult they were only about four feet high. I went to the Rosebank Junior School and usually came last in class because my asthma confined me to bed for long periods of time.

My father played golf and I remember him pasting golf balls on the stove because they could not get golf balls during the war.

I took an interest in chameleons. We had a whole family of them living in ferns around a tap. A German family lived next door. I learnt to ride a fairy cycle down the road and was often in trouble because I played in the Liesbeeck River.

Coming home one day my father caught me throwing stones at an African lady and gave me a hiding I never forgot.

Later as a family we started to spend six months of the year in Cape Town and the other half of the year in Johannesburg. My asthma disappeared in the higher, drier altitude but strangely I suffered there from various childhood diseases such as whooping cough, chicken pox, measles and German measles - until I came to think that Johannesburg was the place to get sick.

In my tiny hotel room my father caught me smoking. I tried to put the cigarette out with my bare foot. The advert was "Men of the world smoke Max." He asked me to promise not to smoke until

I was eighteen years old as he had started smoking and wished his father had stopped him.

In the school at Yeoville Primary, I was taught in Std 3 by a teacher who scared the living daylights out of me. Once he threw a boy out of the window and woe to the boy who talked in his class. My work and handwriting improved drastically until I went back to my old ways in Cape Town. Eventually we settled in Johannesburg and I went to Parktown Boys High where I proceeded to scrape through or fail year after year.

# 1955 - 1960

## The Master Potter

### Working the Clay

I went to the Parktown North Methodist Church Sunday school regularly. It was in Std 7 that one day I approached my form teacher and asked him how I could find Christ because I had heard of people finding Christ and I did not know how. I did not understand anything but towards the end of the year I went to see a Billy Graham film called "Souls in Conflict"- promoted by YFC in 1955 - at the old Plaza cinema in Rissik Street. I had never been to such a film before but there I heard how three people came to faith in Christ - an actress Joan Winmill, a jet pilot and a nagging housewife. When asked if I wanted to find Christ my hand went half-way up but I prayed the prayer by following the leader. Then when he called people to make a stand for Christ and go to the front, I felt the Lord enabling me to do so. So many responded that night that there was total confusion. I remember running down the road and the sky seemed to be a brighter blue and the trees a brighter green. Six months later, YFC followed me up with letters in Afrikaans that made no sense to me. I realised later that Christ had died for me, a sinner. A fellow student of mine from the same school also went forward but dismissed it as emotion and rejected the response he had made. It made no difference to my school career. I failed that year.

However, the Lord was still at work and I kept going to Sunday school where I was taught by a man called Mr Rodgers who lived according to the Bible. After my experience of salvation, I heard the minister of the Parktown North Methodist church, Rev FT Peck, preach a very clear message on salvation. He obviously always did so, but I was previously in spiritual darkness. I got involved with MRA through other teachers in the Sunday school and realised I had to put things right. I had stolen a watch from a boy at the school.

I confessed the deed to my parents. My teacher at the school helped me by saying that he rejected their teaching because they left Christ out. And I dropped MRA immediately. Yet I was searching for a deeper walk with God. I failed Std 9 and was sent to a cram college called Regis in town. There I made friends and wasted my time going to cinema cafes where we saw lots of old war movies. We had a teacher whose favourite statement was “You are talking out your hat man.” Later I used to imitate him. I made friends there and I kept on visiting one over the years because he needed the Lord. I failed, to the disappointment of my father and mother who had wasted their money once more.

My father volunteered my joining the Army Gymnasium in 1958. I joined the Signals squadron, the smallest of the sections in the army. I enrolled in night classes that were in Pretoria and obtained four passes towards my matriculation. I was sick twice in the army and sent to the hospital.

I had a great appetite and loved corned meat that was served in large helpings. When the others had left the eating hall I would continue eating. I actually grew a further two inches. It was the only time I drank coffee.

I was known as one who did not swear until one day someone stood on my newly polished floor. Our room had a reputation for foul language. The sergeant major often drank too much and would arrive on the parade ground with an incomplete uniform. I would never make a good soldier as I always saw the funny side of the situation and laughed when I was part of a guard of honour at a funeral. It was pouring with rain and our trousers were covered with mud. My nickname in the army was “Sad Sack.”

I hated being in uniform but came home some weekends and played golf as a student at the Parkview Golf Club. The Saturday round would be awful but twice on a Sunday I won the weekly cup with a net 67, followed by a 64 and my handicap was cut from 18 to 14. I still believed I was saved but did not grow spiritually.

While in the army I applied to work at the Johannesburg Building Society but did not fit in there and was fired after a few months. My parents only found out much later and my father who was a senior officer in the SA railways was able to get me a job as a clerk in the Chief Accountants office. I did further study by correspondence and was able to get my other two Matric subjects although the one was through a remark.

Into my office came a new head, Mr Stanley Norris. A very godly man, who took me under his wing, invited me to his Easter Camp where I discovered the Christian life to be a daily walk with Christ. I was asked to collate all the figures of the Road Motor Section of the railways for each month. The first time it balanced. Once, through a mistake, the figures were greatly inflated, and the Minister of Transport was able to report in parliament a great turn around in the profit. What happened when it was rectified the next month, I do not know. I asked Mr Norris if he had seen the latest film. He was surprised that I went to the cinema. I asked him what was wrong with it? He came up to me and whispered that there was nothing wrong with it in itself but when I grew spiritually it would disappear out of my life. He was very positive as he encouraged and taught me. He said that I was a different person after the camp.

I felt I had to return the watch. I advertised for the phone number of its owner. I arranged to see him, and I took him the watch. His father had died, and I told him that since I had given myself to Jesus, I had to put things right.

I met two other clerks in the railways, Neil and Bernard, who had both been students at the Bible Institute near Cape Town. We spent our lunch times going to meetings for those that loved Jesus, or we just talked. Bernard later went to the mission field and supported me from 1980.

I teamed up with my father and played in the railways General Manager's Cup that we won. We each received an expensive

stainless-steel cutlery set that we still use 55 years later. One day in 1960, Mr Norris invited me to hear a missionary speak about the work in Lebanon. I was playing golf that afternoon at Parkview and his church was the Kempton Park Prayer and Fellowship band - about forty kilometres away but near the airport. I said I would come if it were possible. On the first tee one of the players said he could not stay for the 19th hole as he had to pick his parents up at the airport. I am still amazed how the Lord planned that I played with that man on that day so that I could travel with him to near the airport and walk the rest of the way to the meeting.

I arrived in time to eat sandwiches. It proved to be a major turning point in my life. There I heard Douglas Anderson and saw slides of Lebanon. A school in the mountains at Ain Zahalta was closed because there were no men. So he cried out, "Oh if there was one young man here tonight who would go out there." I felt as though I was that man. I went back to work and told my friend Neil who said that if I wanted to be sure I should go to the Bible Institute at Kalk Bay near Cape Town. I wrote to the principal, had a medical and was accepted. Then I told my parents. They were most upset at my giving up a secure job. I was asked to think about it for a month but, when I remained determined to go, my father visited the place, and my parents changed their minds. As a student and with my father in the railways I was able to travel first class with a free pass and quarter fare thereafter for each trip.

# 1961 - 1965

## Clay in the Hands of the Master Potter

I arrived at the Bible Institute in 1961. It was situated on the main road overlooking Kalk Bay harbour - a small fishing port. Behind the institute the peninsula rose up sharply. There was even a cave that was flat, and one could only get through on your stomach. It was called Boomslang. We looked across False Bay so there were plenty of inspiring places to meet with the Lord alone and undisturbed. I knew nothing about the Bible or theology or church history. We were placed with second year students to learn to live with others of other denominations. I liked Rock 'n Roll and like many my age could sing quite a few - not a very spiritual start. I still liked food and when sandwiches were left at teatime I took them but was caught eating in lectures. I apologised to the lecturer and did not do it again.

I had to learn how to learn and discovered my own method using mnemonics. I generally obtained an average of about 65% that was, for me, unusual. The pass mark was 50%. I knew the other students got higher grades. There was one in my second year that just used to read her notes and the next day receive very high marks but forgot the material weeks later. Whereas I would study well and only get about 70% but then remember what I had learnt years later.

I liked the girls at BI as they had the same goals. Some impressed me as real missionary material especially some of the second years. I remember walking with my sister in Johannesburg and meeting one of the second years during the holidays. My sister was all painted up to look beautiful but the BI girl was radiant with the love of Jesus. Strange that every time I liked a girl someone else did so too. I had no idea how to deal with girls, as I had never had a girlfriend before. Every time I got interested in a girl I would

pray and ask the Lord that if she was not His choice for me, to stop the interest. Nothing happened the first year.

Every Sunday I taught at a Sunday school in Facreton. We were mainly taught by Rev Murdo Gordon and Rev Howard Green who had both been trained at the London Bible College. The latter was very good in teaching the prophets and the New Testament. He used drama in his presentation of the lectures and much of it still lives in my mind although I have come to a different understanding in some passages. Rev Gordon was good at teaching the doctrines of the Bible. Much of it went into our heads and some into our hearts, as so much was taught in such little time. Church History was a waste of time because we always got side-tracked.

Asthma returned with a vengeance and I used to cry out to the Lord at night for air to breathe. Eventually I took awful medicine, but the asthma made life unpleasant and no one knew how I was suffering. I told the Lord that I could not go to Lebanon if I had asthma. So, I said that I would trust Him to heal me without the need of medicine. He did. Later on, there were slight attacks in Lebanon but were a sign that all was not well spiritually, and I had to be obedient. When I was once more in line with His purposes, it would disappear.

I preached my first short message in front of the students and then another full one. My text was “He that keeps My Word will never taste death.” (John 8:51.) The students laughed throughout my message. I was told by the lecturer that I had the tendency to make people laugh. This put me on my guard and for years I watched the use of humour. My humour was dry, and I never told jokes in the pulpit. There is enough humour in the Bible that can be conveyed naturally. Because I was in the Methodist church, I applied to become a lay preacher and was accepted as one on probation. The Bible aids supplied by the church questioned the miracles of Jesus and watered down the impact of good Bible teaching and preaching. I found it difficult that those who knew

not as much of the Scriptures needed to check my sermons beforehand as though I could not be trusted. This eventually led me to leave that church but only after completing the Bible Institute course. I owed much to that church for the long years of Sunday school teaching and young people's meetings on a Friday night.

I once went with a student to his assembly and saw the bread broken and the cup of wine passed around. Hymns were sung but there was no planned order, and it was a real blessing to me. One of the students, Boet, had a car and we went all over the place in it. He went as a missionary to Thailand. We went to a debate between Ahmad Deedat and Dawie Pypers at Green Point Stadium. Dawie spoke in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He spoke in English and dealt with the death and resurrection of Jesus. At the end of his message, he said that Jesus, who is alive, would heal anyone of any disease right there if they came forward. Bruce was horrified and blushed. A lady with a brace in her back went forward. Ahmad Deedat was asked to verify that she wore a brace. He replied that as a married man he could not touch another woman. A stick was used by the chairman. Dawie prayed a brief prayer for the woman and she was able to walk without that brace. Later the lady was completely healed and entered into the work with Dawie. The Christians rose up and sang "Hy Leef, Hy leef", (He lives, He lives). Bruce was filled with praise. Afterwards we gave out tracts and got involved in arguments.

Cynthia from my first year, later supported us and got involved with MECO. Doreen, though aware of her limitations, treats people with kindness and still comes on visits. Stan, whose parents were Brethren missionaries came in my second year and is today an elder at our local assembly. We still remember others as our friends who live far away. Some supported us in later years.

I was always getting into trouble. Once I arranged for the lady students who were crammed in a second-class compartment on the

long journey to Johannesburg to come into my empty first class compartment and have a much-needed sleep. The ticket examiner made trouble and my father agreed with his actions when I told him.

I was always getting welcome gifts of money from my family and when a second-year artist painted my birthday card he showed wads of green notes, a glass of port because I admitted drinking port in the dining carriage (as though I was some person of class) and my trousers always at half-mast. I stand at 196 cm and usually the waist was too narrow for the length. I continued to be thin and was told that I should never wear shorts, or they would arrest me for having no visible means of support. Or they called me Sahara (miles and miles of nothing). However, one second-year encouraged me that I never took offence.

The Lord through the studying of the Bible was changing me. I came to the end of 1961 never realising what the Lord had planned for the next year. When the first-years arrived in 1962 there were only four men and about seventeen girls some of whom were very attractive. There was another Methodist lay preacher on trial that was amongst the lady students. She was Ms Noreen Keenan and I was attracted to her immediately but felt totally unworthy of her and therefore turned my attention to others. Once again, the same students attracted the interest of the other male students. The BI had rule 5B that stated that one was not allowed to speak to a member of the opposite sex for longer than three minutes, nor travel in the same carriage, nor walk together down the main road of Kalk Bay. Both of us, studying for the lay preachers exam, had to make use of the same books, as Noreen did not have the money to buy them. So that meant studying together. Once the game of "This is a sad and solemn occasion," was played in which no smiles were allowed. Noreen and I were at the end face to face and the matron detected something.

The months went by and nothing happened. I met Noreen's mother who was visiting and was introduced to her. I remember being rather loud mouthed at the time before being introduced. I was drawn more and more to her but kept it to myself. Flowers came to the college. I bought a bunch. I asked, "Who would like flowers? How about you, Noreen?" As I said before I did not know how to approach girls. Once she was ill, so I lent her my portable radio, but the other students told her that I did that for everyone. One day we broke rule 5B. After I preached at a Methodist church, Noreen and I walked together for over a mile to the station. Only as we arrived at the station did she say that we were breaking the rule. Another time a group of us went to Newlands to watch South Africa play England in a rugby test. When we got to the ground, Noreen found that she did not have enough money, so I paid for her. We were separated because we were in the standing area only and Noreen, being short, needed to be near the front. I was right at the back. After the game we went back together to BI, breaking rule 5B again.

I had to preach my second full message to the students and this time I prayed that the Lord would bless the message. When the male students found fault with my message, the ladies would defend me, and I really enjoyed the aftermath of the message. The text given to me was "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." One of the first-years preached what he thought was a great message but he made it up of sermons from two great preachers and after the criticism that followed wanted to leave.

We had a fun evening and I had to lead a team on the subject of the "Pygmies". We decided to rather make a skit on the "Big Me's" of BI. Cynthia (from the Church of England) was "the Bishop", the Big Me of Church History; another, Bill (McCarthy) the Big Me of McCarthyism. The biggest me of them all was BIG ME! My exploits were famous. Cycling down to Fish Hoek, the wheel jammed, and I sailed over the handlebars to land in a heap in the main road. So,

I was the Big Me of flying into space. Another time I fell asleep in the train so saw the BI flash past me. We won the prize for the best team. Another time I was involved in a competition to get people not to say yes or no. They picked on me as the first sucker, but I used the phrase that is right or wrong.

My father arranged a blind date for me with the daughter of a colleague from his office. She was studying in Wellington. A pleasant evening but I told the girls at BI on my return that they were still the best.

One day I was asked by the Lord if I was willing to go to Lebanon alone. I opposed the idea. I said that I needed someone from BI who had the same outlook to be my partner in the venture. The pressure built up until eventually on an outing in which we climbed Table Mountain I told the Lord I was willing to go alone. I felt free and the burden was gone. The principal asked if I was interested in Ms Keenan and I said I had been but that it was no longer the case. About two weeks later I woke up totally in love with Noreen and I could not deal with it. I resisted it and told the Lord it was unfair as I had given her up and prayed that He would give her to the person of His choice. My roommate who knew how to deal with girls (as he had so many and gave each one a Thompson's Chain Reference Bible at no little cost), warned me that Noreen was interested in someone else who did not live in Cape Town. Noreen had told a group of students that her love was in another city. I was in fact over a thousand miles away playing golf with my father in Durban. My reaction was to pray and submit myself to the Lord and trust Him to work on my behalf. Later my roommate warned Noreen of my interest. Yet still I had done nothing. I had already acted badly by imitating her walk, as she would not walk upright. She was a bit shy because she was well endowed.

I applied to the Lebanon Evangelical Mission and told them of my call. They invited me to the home of one of the council members. I asked Noreen to go with me and went by train. Apparently, I gave

her a cowboy book as a gift. At the LEM meeting I saw boring pictures of babies and nearly died of embarrassment when the chairman spoke of us two as though we were a couple. I had told them discreetly that I was attracted to Noreen and asked how that would affect my application. Later when my father offered to send me to university the application was postponed until my studies were complete.

The students were told that there was to be a missionary conference in the September holidays at the oldest mission station in Africa, at Genadendal, that was celebrating 225 years of service. It is a Moravian mission, and the expenses of students would be covered. I put my hand up to indicate I would go, not knowing that Noreen had done the same and four of us went, two girls and two men. The other two would use the conference as a stop nearer their homes. Nothing happened on the trip out there. The African students came from Umtata and one, a Rev Telejane, said that they should have big families to fill their churches. He said that he liked hearing the one speaker from Rhodes University speaking on Ephesians but not a Dutch Reformed Church speaker because the latter's words went right inside. Dawie Pypers we met in person for the first time and he spoke about reaching non-Christians. The program was printed on sheets from the handset printing press at the mission station.

After a few days I asked Noreen if we could go for a walk. Nothing happened. I spoke about how I saw Christ in her, but my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth. I was mad with myself and asked the Lord to help me say the right words and keep my mouth working. I was scared because my previous behaviour might have given her reason for outright rejection of me. The next day, the last day of the conference I told the Lord He had to do something because if she got back to BI, the wolves would take her. After the final service I stormed up to her and told her I had to tell her something. We stopped near a water furrow and my mouth stopped

working again. Suddenly I said, “I love you.” I got such a shock that I had to tell her how God had been at work in my life. Then I heard her saying, “Do you want to hear my side of the story”? She told me how God had been working in her life and that it started when she started praying for me because her roommate had getting into trouble and they should pray for me. The incident had been in the dining room when the tomato ketchup failed to come out, so I hit the bottle and it spread all over the plate. I put most of it back with a knife.

Her side of the story was a revelation that God had been at work all the time unknown to me. We prayed under beautiful oak trees. The next day she started to exert her influence by tugging on my raincoat when I was arguing with another student. We went to the nearby town of Caledon and sat in the Anglican Church while a budgie flew around before we returned by bus to Cape Town. There her mother provided me with a good plate of food to seal the catch her daughter had made! We parted company for a week prior to the resumption of studies at the BI. We had to report to the vice principal and were made an official couple. He said he had no doubts about our relationship.

We went for our first walk down to the village. A man looked up from his flowers and said “if”. We laughed and agreed because of my height and Noreen being so short. We agreed to meet in the afternoon because I like my sleep. I bought deodorants and powder for the first time in my life. I paid more attention to my appearance. My parents were horrified by the news because I was involved with a girl and had no job. My father came to Cape Town on business and took us for a meal to the old Waldorf where Noreen had roast lamb and mint sauce. My father told me he was impressed with her and the family was once more at ease. He offered to send me to university as he had received three promotions in one year. I agreed provided he realised I still intended going to Lebanon.

The Enemy tried to disrupt our relationship through another girl but with the help of the matron the relationship was restored prior to my leaving BI and Noreen going to a mission hospital. I wrote letters every day, but they were held up at a depot until sent to the hospital. She let me know that a woman needed constant reminders of love, but all was forgiven when all the letters arrived in bulk. Later in January I returned to stay with Noreen's family at La Motte in the Franschhoek valley before enrolling at university. Neither of us was aware of the difficult courtship that lay ahead of us.

## 1966 - 1968

### Further Moulding of the Clay

I enrolled at the University of the Witwatersrand for a BA degree. I studied Biblical studies with a professor who had been expelled for heretical teaching but was afterwards reinstated by his church. In his lectures he questioned the deity of the Lord Jesus and took the view that the Bible was not the Word of God but said the Word of God was in the Bible. We disagreed for three years and I had to do extra study to reject his viewpoint and give reasons for my own. I was the only one in my class to get a first-class pass in the final year. Unlike my failures in school, I never failed a subject and sometimes did far better than my fellow students. I give the Lord the credit for that. I resolved never to study on a Sunday even though my important exams would be on the Monday. The Lord honoured that. My other subjects were geography, history, classical Greek, sociology, Afrikaans and Nederlands.

I was in charge of the spiritual side of the young people at our Wesley guild. They all saw a picture of Noreen I kept in my wallet and wondered how I could have such a beautiful girlfriend. I wrote daily letters to Noreen using pink paper, green ink and yellow envelopes with stamps and texts. I also gave money to another student to buy Noreen a bunch of violets every week with a little note to go with it.

My sister was not very encouraging about my exams. I remember her coming into my room and saying, "Don't you dare fail." A little about my sister, Glenda Mai, who was three years older than me and always did well at school. Later she became a personal secretary and worked for Anglo American eventually marrying one of her bosses. They had two sons. She wanted to send them to a good private school so she started her own antique shop. She was always short of money, as she wanted to send her sons to this private school. Eventually when we were in Lebanon, she borrowed

money from me, but this amount just seemed to grow until she realised it was quite a large amount.

I had to tell my parents to keep quiet about my results when the sons of the neighbours did not do well, and I passed. I told them they kept quiet when I failed so when I did well, they were to remain silent. I was still a lay preacher on trial in the Methodist church but found the comments on my messages to be very subjective and lacking in Biblical knowledge. My father sometimes came to hear me preaching and found my messages different to what he usually heard because they were usually the expounding of passages from the Bible and not topical sermons or on a single text. The Lord led me to join a group of men preaching on the steps of the Johannesburg city hall on a Sunday afternoon. One of them was a fellow student from BI days. I spoke to an African about his need of responding to Jesus. He came back the next Sunday to tell me that he had put his trust in Jesus. Then I heard that he had been faithfully taught the Scriptures but had never responded.

Later when I left the Methodist church to the sorrow of my mother, I asked if I could join a small assembly of open Christian Brethren that met in the basement of the YWCA. There I met Mr Harold Knocker, a converted Jew, who became a spiritual father to me and taught me the life of faith and introduced me to the lives of missionaries. We continued to preach together on the city hall steps as well as at another nearby place in the evening. In between the two meetings we would have tea. I know that souls were saved as people returned to tell me so afterwards. I also got involved in teaching poor children Bible lessons.

Golf never played an important role in my life although I enjoyed a game every now and then. At my old club of Parkview a pro-am was held but I could not put my name down, as both my wrists were painful. I asked the Lord to heal them and He did. On the day of the tournament, I went along to hopefully fill in for those that did not turn up. I joined a group of three as the only local player.

The best at every hole counted and we won it with 55 Stableford points. I have never seen so many long putts go in. The German pendulum clock I won still keeps striking away in our lounge having been to Lebanon and back.

Both Noreen and I valued the meals and fellowship we had with the Knockers. We all sought a deeper work of the Spirit of God and listened to two totally different approaches. Brother Burton from the Congo emphasised the fullness of the Holy Spirit and tongues while Brother Samuels, a converted Jew who had laboured in North Africa, taught obedience to the Scriptures which he seemed to know by heart. The latter would ask me if I had read my Bible that day and if I had had breakfast. How could I eat and not read the Bible? In a small assembly all the men must go to the Breaking of Bread and be prepared. I used to travel in with an ex-BI student from my days at Kalk Bay but he could not understand how I could still play golf on the Saturday and love Jesus. He did not like my use of the word “You” for God instead of “Thou” which I found was unnatural. He afterwards changed.

After the examinations, I worked as Father Christmas at a city store. Then the news came that the results were out. My heart sank so I cried out to the Lord, “Lord, Your peace.” In an application of the verse “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ”, His peace flooded my being. On checking on my results I found that I had passed - unusual for me and the family but I was thankful to the Lord. After the mid-year exams, I was given verses from Psalm 128 that were literally fulfilled later in my life. “You shall eat the labour of your hands; happy shall thou be and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine...; your children like olive plants.” That is what happened. Our adopted children had no connection with my wife, as olive plants are totally different to a vine.

The first year of separation was a very difficult one. Noreen was still at BI and I was learning new things at university. She heard

the expounding of the prophet Jonah that he went out of the will of God. Everything worked out for him. He found a boat, paid the fare and fell asleep. Nothing could have worked out better.

Noreen has a very sensitive conscience. She went to the BI because she believed she was called to the Belgian Congo as a single missionary nurse with WEC. Now she found herself in a relationship with me and I was going to Lebanon as a teacher. Everything had worked out well so she must be running away from God like Jonah. This brought great disturbance of mind. In the mid-year I went to Cape Town and participated with her in an outreach to a neighbourhood. She asked the Lord that if she was not in His will, for Him to take away my love for her. He did the opposite and I could not understand until she told me her prayer. When we parted all seemed well but soon, she was back in turmoil and we had to break up. I was glad because I needed to concentrate on my examinations.

I remember thinking that if my relationship with Noreen did not work out I was not going to get involved with another girl because it was money down the drain. I had already given my savings that only amounted to thirty-five pounds to help pay some of Noreen's fees at BI. My parents told me that broken relationships never work out. I thought I was now free and on the open market!

Reading in Hebrews, I read that "the just shall live by faith but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him". For the first time I felt the anger of God and was frightened. I told the Lord that I would keep trusting Him and wait for Him to restore our relationship. That very night a dear close friend having heard of the break-up, suggested we start going out. I had to say I had been warned by God to trust Him for the restoration. later discovered that the Lord acted so that Noreen did not get involved with another male at BI.

After my examinations and good results I wrote to Noreen and we both felt that the will of God was for us to be together. I went

down to the smallholding of her parents at La Motte for my holidays prior to my second year. A friend wrote to her and told her about an opening for a school nurse at the Johannesburg school clinic. Noreen applied and was accepted. On arrival she obtained her driver's licence and studied for her public health diploma. She proved to be the most efficient and diligent school nurse and the favourite of the matron because of her hard work. She stayed at the YWCA in its temporary residence and helped out before it moved to its present location.

Eventually she joined me in worshipping at the Christian Brethren assembly to the dismay of my mother. Noreen became a member of the family spending weekends with us, standing with the group in the open air and enjoying the friendship of Mr & Mrs Knocker and others in the assembly. Though few in number we had our problems but our joys. Our problems concerning the will of God still continued and a visit to a well-known minister only gave temporary relief. Eventually she went to a Christian psychiatrist that helped her, but the problem was not solved.

It was now 1964 and we continued to be involved in various ministries. Noreen sent some of her earnings to her parents that meant she could not save for the wedding. I stayed a student and never did any extra work. My problems with the professor continued and I was the only one in the class that believed the Bible to be the Word of God. The others agreed with the professor to get good marks. I saw my friends spend lots of time in the canteen with the girls. Once I was tempted but was convicted that if I bunked a class once it would happen again so arrived late but never repeated the mistake. The professors of one subject - Nederlands (i.e. Dutch) - used to drop hints throughout the year and those who were interested could prepare for the final exam. Every hint turned up and was a reason for my doing well. I also learnt better Afrikaans so that in the years that followed I was able

to preach in Afrikaans with help from the audience. Once more I passed with good results.

In 1965 we wanted to get engaged so I prayed that if the Lord wanted us to take that step He should give us a ring. Two days later we were given a ring and I thought that was too quick. So, I tried to ask for a delay but felt once more the displeasure of the Lord. We got engaged on Sept 30 - the anniversary of that special day for us at Genadendal, which means the Valley of Grace.

It was my final year at university, so I did an extra subject. During that year I met the student that had gone forward at the Billy Graham film but dismissed it as emotion. We chatted on the lawn in front of the library. He had spent a few extra years at university doing an engineering degree plus tennis. He acknowledged that I had changed and was not timid like I used to be. He told me to go my own way and he his and said that he might come to believe the same as me but not then. I was saddened by his reaction, but the Lord continues to work while we are sleeping as in the parable.

Dr Calvin Cooke became the senior lecturer and took us for Philosophy of Religion. I enjoyed his lectures. He was a spiritual man. I still treasure some of the lessons I learnt in his class. I especially remember the teachings of Otto and Kierkegaard. I passed my final year with majors also in History and Geography and applied to study at the Johannesburg Teachers Training College in 1966. The professor of Biblical studies told me that he did not agree with me but admired my independent stand. Many of his students admired him until one day I asked them if they had ever heard him talk about Jesus. There was silence and the bubble had burst. I even asked them if his message was on a certain subject and they agreed. A very learned man but with such little insight into the Scriptures.

He had taught that Jews came to the Father through Jesus when they died. I told him that that was contrary to Scripture and that

a person needed to know forgiveness and be holy as God is holy before they could be accepted by God the Father.

I remember a visiting speaker from Australia arousing the anger of the Jewish students who asked him if Jesus was the only way to God. He said that Jesus was the only way to the Father. I agreed with him but did not fully understand what he was saying and about thirty years later it became a reality for me.

The next year 1966 was spent at the teachers training college where I once more clashed with the subject head who did not appear to have an experience of salvation but taught teachers how to teach the Bible. We never saw eye to eye. I was glad I could teach other subjects such as history and geography. My friend Neil, who still worked in the railways, suggested that it was time I got married, as the time was right. I was not so sure. Noreen and I were good friends, but we had no money and I still did not have a teaching position lined up. Every time I visited him, he put pressure on me to take the plunge. He used to get embarrassed by the way I walked down the main street of the city eating chips soaked in vinegar. Later he saw Noreen and me doing it together. He knew I was not inhibited by the expectations of society.

One day I was collecting for a charity when the student that had gone forward at the Billy Graham film but then dismissed it as emotion came right up to me. He said, "Neville I want to tell you that Jesus is in my life". He said tears came into my eyes. He had a parcel of Bibles under his arm to give to workers at his business. Later he supported us when we served in Lebanon. He eventually found his way to the same Brethren assembly where I was baptised as a believer and was himself baptised there before the Lord called him to be a medical missionary.

Towards the end of my studies, Noreen was told of a farm needing "house sitting" for two weeks in December. Should we get married? I got cold feet but went into the YWCA chapel to seek guidance and there was an open Bible there. The words I read

were, “Harden not your heart” and I felt the Lord telling me to go ahead. My father gave a contribution of \$300. The YWCA provided the hall free of charge as well as the waiters and the fruit punch. Ladies of the assembly as well as the Minister’s wife helped. The minister was the Rev Jack Cook who had led Noreen to the Lord and was the MC at her 21st. It was fitting that he married us and was the MC at our wedding. But the morning of our wedding I met a very tearful bride-to-be who had picked up a bug of some kind that seemed to indicate appendicitis. A visit to a doctor allayed those fears. My mother gave us an Austin Mini for our honeymoon. Neil from the railways was the best man who turned up late as he had had car trouble. Elise a fellow student of Noreen’s was her bridesmaid. John, also a fellow student, played the organ and Elva’s husband, Simon took a great number of photos.

I had to be careful how I spoke because Noreen’s divorced parents were there. I spoke about my best man Neil who had befriended me in the railways, advised me to go to BI where I met Noreen and kept on telling me I needed to get married. We got married on a shoestring. It was raining when we drove to the farm for our honeymoon.

We had the girls of the YW over soon on a visit and played Cluedo. With only a few days to go we did not have a place to stay so we consulted newspaper ads. We phoned about a bachelor flat but could not take it because we did not have the money for the deposit. Later the owner said she was keeping it for us. The bed was rather narrow for the two of us and there were “fights” in the night, as I felt rather confined. It was very convenient for our work. We both enjoyed going to Jordan’s in Rissik Street where I ate sausages, chips and salad and Noreen had liver, chips and salad for seven shillings and sixpence. During a visit to the Eric Hutchings campaign, the flat was broken into and many presents stolen.

I had a few car accidents with the Mini and learnt to pray and fix the car myself. I taught at Sir John Adamson in Rifle Range Road -

thirty-two periods of geography to various classes. I took the St 6 cricket team and was asked to take over the soccer team after their coach was burnt throwing gasoline on to a fire. I made position changes that transformed the team, and we won the league and excelled in the cup competitions. As usual I was always very excited, shouting encouragement to my teams. One of the students whose parents were in the assemblies later supported us with her husband.

When I left the school at the end of 1967, my father happened to play golf with the principal who spoke very highly of me and I think my father was proud of me for the first time. I still had an inferiority complex due to having lived with failure for so long.

We applied to join the Lebanon Evangelical Mission and were accepted in 1968. We paid our own way to Lebanon and paid a shipping company to pack seven crates of our goods to Lebanon on the Europa.

Prior to going we had our first taste of deputation and I was nearly sick on the SA Airways Viscount that bumped up and down through the clouds. We had our valedictory in Cape Town and the Rev Gordon led the service. He pointed out that I was called to Lebanon in 1960 and was only leaving in 1968 after much preparation. Boet was in Cape Town after returning from Thailand for a few months. He told my parents that I had no option but to be obedient to the call of the Lord.

On board the Europa we teamed up with Heather, another missionary from the Brethren returning to work amongst the prostitutes of France. She was tall and thin like me and passengers thought I was her brother. I said I was indeed her “brother” to protect her.

There was Yussif, an Indian Moslem from Rhodesia whose marriage had broken up who kept our company. We became friends and years later still received cards from him. He was shocked by the behaviour of the passengers as the women and men

seemed to throw off all restraints in their behaviour. We pointed out that they were nominal Christians. I explained faith in the Lord Jesus to Yussif for a long time. He considered his lifestyle superior to that of the “Christians” on board.

There were also priests of the Roman church returning to Italy. I had good fellowship with one who knew his Scriptures and was a spiritual man. Another like me played in the table tennis competition. I just hit the ball back. In the first round he lost to me and showed poor sportsmanship. Then I played a German young man who was far better but possibly he had too many beers. He could not explain why he lost. Eventually I lost in the final to a league player from the UK in three sets. Noreen and Heather got through to their final that Heather won. We helped Heather with her luggage when she left the ship at Barcelona and walked with her all the way to the station.

On the way to Italy, we stopped off at Luanda and visited the fort there, then Barcelona and finally docked at Venice where we had to pay again for our crates to be shipped with us to Beirut. We discovered that Venice was a place of hotels, smells and canals. We found it interesting but neither of us are good tourists. We prefer to stay at home than travel.

On the trip to Beirut on board the Ausonia, we met a lady who was returning to her home after a long time in SA. We called her Mrs S... and she was a big lady who came from Zghorta, near the cedars in the north of Lebanon. She told us that certain well-known Lebanese in SA picked olives for her family. She later told us that her forebears had “killed many Moslems for Jesus’ sake”. Certainly not the way to spread the good news of salvation.

We arrived in April of 1968 to be met by the field leader, Les. When he saw my beard from ear to ear, he said I should remove it as it gave the impression I was a priest. So off it came.

We were in time for the general assembly of the mission. Then they applied for visas for Jordan for us to study Arabic there. We

were turned down but sent to Jordan and on arrival there, were given visas by the Jordanians who later called us in, by their security branch. We told them that we had come to learn Arabic and that our final destination was Lebanon. We were told that we were not needed as Christians had been there for so long. We learnt Arabic at George Kelsey's language school. My behaviour put off our teachers as I used to put my arm around Noreen as we learnt and recited the Arabic patterns. One does not show affection in public. I used to walk around a lot learning my Arabic by heart as did so many other Jordanian students learn their English by heart in the streets.

Once I helped a Bedouin carry his parcels to his tent. His father asked for my passport that for once I had forgotten. I was told to go and get it. I told the man I had helped that it was a poor way to show gratitude after I had helped him. As I walked past the shops, I told them that the son thought I was a "jasous" or spy and they all laughed. I saw boys in the field behind our property using slings to hurl stones until there was a klunk when a stone hit a boy. One could see another David in action. Another time I joined in a game of football in an open field. A shopkeeper remonstrated with me that it was a shame for an old man to play with boys. A man over the age of 25 is considered mature and should walk slowly out of self-respect. To walk or run is to humble oneself. Another time when pelted with snow, I collected snowballs and hurled them back. It rained mud one day in Amman. A dust storm was followed by rain that covered the windows with mud. We were surprised to see snow in Amman, which is not far from the desert.

I learnt to bargain and often went into the city of Amman where I bought at all the refugee stalls. They sold the food that had been donated by the people of the USA and European countries. We enjoyed stewing steak from Ireland, oats from the USA, as well as butter from Denmark, pickled vegetables from Bulgaria, Tatra milk from Czechoslovakia plus fresh fruit and vegetables. We bought

fresh meat that was hanging outside the butcher in the street. We bought it while it was still fresh, before it was covered with flies. They would slaughter the animal in the street. One day I asked the cost of the eggs. The reply was that there was a difference between an Arab egg and a foreign egg. I laughed and said that a chicken does not speak Arabic or any other language it only goes “pok pok pok pokaah”. I was then told that an Arab egg was local, fresh and therefore more expensive. A foreign egg was from Lebanon and cheaper. I ate out on my own with the men. We sat on the floor and ate out of the same dish.

I liked the Persian lamb hats the men wore and started to wear one myself. This caused Brother Roy Whitman who was a missionary in Jordan for over forty years to don a kafiyyeh or Arab headdress. He looked like an Arab and spoke beautiful Arabic and was always looking for ways to present the gospel more clearly. He thought we had a great advantage because of the two languages we already knew. He had taught his bride Arabic on their honeymoon.

We studied Arabic in houses made of hewn sandstone and concrete with tiled floors - cool in summer but cold in winter. We discovered that though we spoke the same language as the Americans, it had different meanings. I called someone a silly ass meaning in our usage a donkey but discovered Americans have a different idea. They were shocked! Then we preferred to dress warmly but have fresh air. So, we opened all the windows and switched off the heaters. Americans switched on the heaters, closed the windows, and wore light clothes. A strange people! They eat only with a fork whereas we use a knife as well. We came to know so many Southern Baptist missionaries and others who were Conservative Baptists that I thought all Americans were Christians. I appreciated their zeal for the Lord. One was a surgeon who delighted in telling us how he felt that the solution to every

medical problem was to cut and how he solved problems in the surgery.

Noreen and I were invited to visit the homes of our teachers. I found the doorways to be very low as the Arab people are generally shorter. I sometimes would bang my head on street signs. Once we were invited to a home and received with the welcome “Ahlan wasahlan. Baytna Baytkum.” This means that we were with family and the place was easy for sheep to lie there, so we were to relax, and their house was our house - everything belonged to us. (To receive Jesus into your life is to give Him everything that belongs to you.) I then said, “Shukran jazeelin” which means “Thank you very much”. “Ana bididi hatha shezaad, hatha tawli, hatha kursi.” - meaning, “I want this carpet, this table and this chair”. The host protested that it was only in theory and not in practice. We all laughed. We went to a wedding of their daughter. She was miserable on her wedding day. It reminded me of Noreen on the morning of hers. But Nadia had to be miserable because she was leaving her family and setting up a new home.

I met young men who came from Moslem homes where there was more than one wife or mother and they said it was not good because there were always fights.

Tourists came to the Arab countries inviting trouble in their miniskirts and showing their arms in sleeveless dresses. To the Arabs they were all loose women.

Noreen felt the cold so I went to the souq (market) to buy her a second hand warm coat. I met a Palestinian who had worked for the British and who asked me to give him some money. At the time we had turned down receiving the mission’s allowance of \$60 a month and were living by faith not knowing where our money was coming from. I offered the man a large amount, but he told me that it was not enough and that he needed more. That made me angry and he got nothing. Once I was walking in the city when I

was touched in an unusual way. I knew instinctively that it was evil so walked briskly down the street before turning around in anger.

I met up with an Englishman called Mr Girdlestone who had been in Amman living on his own. He was an artist and certainly painted scenes of the area well. I used to go and talk to him and eventually got him a Bible and persuaded him to attend the English services. There was another Englishman; Mr Kemp, a missionary living on his own with his wife in the UK. I attended his art classes just to help him with his income. He saw yellow in the sky, but I saw blue. He could not teach me anything. He painted quickly and captured scenes well. I started painting as a break from Arabic. Later I asked him to paint a portrait of Noreen. I used the cardboard from butter boxes and watercolours but applied them like oils. The results were pleasing and when framed adorned our bare walls.

While walking in the streets learning Arabic, I felt I should give a New Testament to an Arab student. He received it with gratitude. Another time we were stuck in a traffic jam going into Amman. Two lanes were going in and two out. Then three lanes went in and two out. Then four lanes went in and one out. Eventually four lanes went in and none came out. There we were stuck for two hours. Four lanes came out to a point to be faced by four lanes going in. All the result of a lack of discipline and patience.

I met Abu Bishara, a man who ran a Christian bookshop in Amman. He had been in the Jordanian army and was known as a Christian. He said that once he was asked by another officer why he was not a Moslem. He replied because he was a Christian. He helped and encouraged me to press on in the faith.

Invited to the home of a poor family in the church, we eventually turned up. They prepared the Jordanian dish of Mansaf that consists of a large amount of rice topped with chicken or mutton pieces and over all that hot goat's yoghurt is poured. To me it smelt like vomit. I have a very sensitive nose. Noreen was used to

the smell having nursed for so long! I had to cry out to the Lord to help me swallow the food. I realised the chicken pieces acted like an umbrella over the rice. I lifted up the chicken and took the dry rice on to my plate plus a few pieces of dry chicken and lots of salt and pepper. Previously I had had to swallow twice as the smell made my stomach heave and want to throw up. At Bible school we heard, “Where He leads me, I will follow, what He gives me I will swallow.” Easier said than done.

Another time we were invited by Palestinians to their home in a refugee camp. It was just after the 1967 war. We were naïve and never thought of danger. We were well received, and they started preparing the food on our arrival. Once more it was mansaf but my strategy worked and I got through the meal without incident. A strange thing happened. An attractive lady took out her breast and fed her baby in full view, yet they keep their arms covered for the arm is a sexy part of the body. Noreen was eating away with her hands making balls of rice and yoghurt and started to put on weight. She started having health problems and it was thought to be psychological. During a quick visit to SA, her former matron told her that she had a hiatus hernia, which explained it all. During our visit we were given a gift by the Brethren missionary fund, which enabled us to buy a car in Lebanon.

We were joined by another missionary, Kathy, who stayed with us for some months. We bought a melamine dinner service that had six dainty cups and saucers. Kathy broke them one by one with profuse apologies each time. We still have that dinner service and use it daily but without the cups. We learnt quickly but Noreen had a head start because in Johannesburg, a Lebanese lady called Mrs Sutherland who had married a soldier she met during WW2, taught her Arabic. She expected Noreen to study intensively and it resulted in Noreen having a feel for the language. As in all things, Noreen became proficient in her use of the language to be able to take meetings, do Bible studies and speak “like an Armenian”

whose Arabic was not as good as the local Arabs. I found that over the years the Lord gave me liberty when I spoke to people about Jesus and their need of salvation in Arabic.

The first verse of the Bible we learnt was “Astatia kulla shay fil Masiah alathi yukawini.” “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”- as applied to the learning of Arabic. Our first chorus was “Sammamtu Anni, Atba Jasua-i” meaning “I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back”. Our teachers were Mary and Nadia. Mary was always saying, “Akh (brother) Neville be good”. Nadia asked us how one could know the will of God. She then went to a “Believers’ Conference” and came back engaged. The son of a priest who got saved approached her and said he would like to marry her. She prayed about it and at the end of the week they got engaged. They called their sons Martin Luther, Moody, Muller, Mackintosh. Years later we met her and her first son in our church in Lebanon.

At a party at Mt Nebo our teachers imitated me putting my arms around Noreen. During that trip we visited Macherios where John the Baptist was thought to be imprisoned. They found tablets with his name in cisterns. We saw the first excavations and the aqueduct and a stone ball used to break down the walls. We took pictures of a Bedouin camp. The man was busy threshing wheat surrounded by his many children and wives.

We fell in love with Jordan and the people and identified with the people who had been driven out of their homes and were living as refugees. We had a Palestinian lady make Noreen a Palestinian dress as a way of helping them with their income. Workers were needed in Jordan, but it seemed to the principal that people received the Foremost Call. Foremost being the name of the dairy company in Lebanon and describing the good and easy life there.

We also visited Medeba situated on a hill and one of the oldest towns in the world.

We went to one of the best-preserved ruins of the cities of the Decapolis at Jerash. I disappeared down a hole, which turned out to be the barracks of the Roman soldiers near the forum and amphitheatre.

During our time in Jordan, we were joined by Dawie Pypers and his wife who stayed with us and also learnt some Arabic. He was well received by the Arab people who also appreciated his ministry. In SA he was involved in a mission to the Moslems and Hindus. OM workers also came to Jordan to learn Arabic. We did their washing for them and made friends. We saw them again many years later. OM at the time were learning by their mistakes. They would blanket areas with literature and then leave the country with the church having to deal with the problems. The church needed their zeal and concern for the lost. The people loved them for their practical concern and willingness to live very simply. Once the leader turned up with a large leg of lamb and cooked a meal in our kitchen as an act of gratitude for helping them. I still have very fond memories of our short stay of nine months in Jordan.

# 1969 - 1974

## Life in Lebanon

### Potter Continues to Work

In 1969 we were back in Lebanon and were given the use of an old house in Shemlan. It used to be the Bible Institute of Lebanon where many of the evangelical pastors were taught. The Baptists had a far greater seminary, but the principal of that college said that their students learnt well but those at the Lebanon BI were taught to think for themselves. As usual Noreen was able to transform the flat, in the old building without foundations, into a pleasant home. She covered up all the holes with pictures and ornaments and we had our clock won at golf to keep us company.

Previously in Jordan, Noreen was able to make a lot out of a little. Our chest of drawers was a filing cabinet. My paintings helped. We lived simply but well.

We continued with our Arabic study in Beirut, but it was not satisfactory and more classical and not practical enough for daily use. We travelled in the community bus that took us from Beirut to Shemlan in about an hour with stops and starts along the route. Once Noreen was asked if she knew Haifa. She said she did but should have said she knew about Haifa and not by experience. There was no bad reaction.

I was asked in Shemlan what I thought about Egypt. I used the wrong word in Arabic. I wanted to say that Egypt was forbidden to South Africans, but I said Egypt was mad or crazy to South Africans and the local agreed! Once we were walking in the main road near the house of the postmaster, which was also the post office. He invited us for a cup of coffee. We said "Laish la?" (Why not?) They did not really invite us and were only being polite. We should have declined. They brought the coffee immediately. That was a sign that our visit was at an end. A person needs to be urged to stay after saying no two or three times. Once a missionary in Jordan

was having a meal when they had a visitor. They invited him to join them, but he declined although he was very hungry. After eating for a while, they asked him again “You are sure you would not like to join us?” This time he said, “Yes, yes, yes.” Jesus waited to be urged to join the couple when they arrived at their home in Emmaus. He had made as though He was going on further.

We became friends with the locals who had had previous contact with the missionaries connected to the LBI. One was Huda who had an obvious faith in the Lord Jesus. She was allowed to teach children at the village church. She was married to a man much older than herself. The ladies there asked Noreen why she had married a man so much younger than herself. She is four months older than me. Later when I turned white, they asked her why she married a man so much older than herself and that made her feel good. Noreen never seemed to age, she has hardly a grey hair.

The other missionary families used to go up to Shemlan for their summer holidays with each family occupying a section and sharing the bathroom and shower facilities.

Eventually after a year when we had completed our Arabic study, we were asked by the mission where we would like to live. We preferred to live near the school where I would teach. We moved into a flat overlooking Beirut just as the foothills begin to rise at Hadeth, which also was the location of the high school. The rent was 2400 LL a year with the condition that the rent stayed the same. Just over 2LL equalled a US\$. Years later when the Lebanese Lira fell to 2000 LL to the \$ the same rent was being paid by many. The flat had large glass windows right across the lounge and dining room. At the rear was an enclosed porch. It had three bedrooms and was on the second floor of a four-storey block of flats. The landlord lived on the ground floor, his brother on the floor below us and a tenant on the floor above. In the basement lived his sister and brother-in-law from Cana in Galilee, called Yussif who made camel lamps and coat hangers for the tourist trade. Yussif wanted

me to paint him a picture of Mary's well at Nazareth. When he saw it, he gave us an olive wood set of camel heads for hanging coats.

Water trickled into a tank downstairs and was then pumped up to separate tanks upstairs - not used as drinking water. We either bought that in bottles or went to a spring in Baabda by car and filled twenty-five litre containers or went to the school but the school stopped that. We used water sparingly because sometimes it did not come at all. The plumbing in all our flats gave trouble and we were told that some of the Arabs knew how to build but not maintain buildings. Every rental was thus expected to decline over the years.

Ibrahim the landlord treated us as one of the family. Lor his wife was 16 when she married him aged 32. I called her Cinderella as he treated her as his daughter and not his wife. We spoke many times to them about the Lord. Lor we believe came to saving faith but Ibrahim, in spite of many narrow escapes with death, never responded believing that no one could be sure of salvation. He had a letter from the Pope framed in his lounge, a text from the Quran, a painting of mine and even me staying above him! He was born in Nazareth and that should count for the day of judgement.

I was always interested in trains and made a layout on the enclosed porch as a hobby apart from painting. The field leader saw the people on the stations and asked if they were my converts.

The mission gave us a load of junk as our furniture. We bought a washing machine and fridge ourselves plus other furniture including a rocking chair with a broken seat. All were delivered with many apologies except for the rocking chair that was considered to be too bad.

I painted all the furniture white, while Noreen covered it with material from the souq. We bought two maqads that another school was throwing away. These were corner couches with pine needles for padding. Noreen covered those too. Ornaments, copper tables and old copper briqs and pots and paintings of mine

completed the décor and when people visited us, they were very impressed that we turned it into an attractive home. We bought carpets from all over the place as money became available. Someone in SA saw slides of our flat and renovated furniture. He wrote “You have a better place than ours, but we do not care because we have a palace waiting for us in heaven.”

Ibrahim “burnt” plates of wood (pokerwork) for the tourist trade. I suggested that he produce texts of the Bible such as: “The righteous shall grow like a cedar and flourish like a palm tree in Lebanon” and “Yasua Almasiah hua hua amsan wal yawm wal illalabid”. (Jesus Christ, He is, He is, yesterday today and forever). The first one he gave as a present to us from his family and this new line helped him a great deal. I also got visitors to come to him and buy thus cutting out the middleman.

I taught at the Lebanon Evangelical School for boys. The new principal was Mr Colin White who was very strict, and the students respected him greatly. He was a great physics teacher and the school laboratory had better equipment than the American university. Students who went to university did extremely well. One actually obtained a perfect 100%. Mr White was a spiritual man, and I was struck by his meekness. He was willing to do anything, even work in the garden of the school, clean the windows.

The Whites had three sons, Steven, John and Nigel. All did well at school and university. Steven took his father’s place as the school principal. Nigel was involved with another school in Lebanon and John is in the UK involved in Christian work.

I was English speaking so was called upon to teach English and Bible. I learnt English for the first time while I was teaching it. I discovered the reasons why words and tenses were used. I showed films of Jesus and the book of Acts as well as Fact and Faith films from the Moody BI that were distributed by the Baptists. These were well received by the senior students. Teachers were often

absent for various reasons and I became quite popular because I took the class for a game of football. There were meetings in the break for those who wanted to grow spiritually. Every morning at assembly a short talk was given with a prayer and hymn. Two Bible lessons were taught every week.

We had a Palestinian teacher called Jamil Saffoury who was famous for many reasons. He came to faith in Christ at the age of 32 and never stopped talking about his Saviour. He, like all the people of the area, loved his food and we used to eat bowls of rice, baked beans, a little meat, in stews of many kinds at lunch time in the school. Like him, I loved yakhni (stew). He was due to get married but got cold feet and thought that his bride would not stand with him on street corners giving out tracts. She was in fact a spiritual woman who remained zealous for the Lord all her life. Jamil never lived that down and could never find a wife. I used to tease him because he was so prim and proper. One day he visited us in our home unexpectedly. It so happened that we were eating dried beans soaked and cooked. He ate the meal in silence but the next day told me that it was a shame that we had given him beans. I invited him to come to us for a meal on the Saturday and reminded him again on the Friday. He never turned up. That Monday I rebuked him with my tongue in my cheek for not turning up after we had gone out of our way to provide him with a special meal. He was most apologetic and turned up again unexpectedly that evening. Guess what we were eating? Beans! Again, he ate in silence but the next day told me that when a person has beans for breakfast he is an amiir (prince) when he has beans for lunch he is faiir (poor) but if he eats beans for supper he is hamiir (donkey). I think that was the only time we ate just beans.

One day Jamil asked if he could come to the school camp in the holidays. They were run on Scripture Union lines with the emphasis on a good time, sleeping out in the open, playing games, hiking up to the cedars and a time to hear God's Word and how to grow in

Christ. We realised that if Jamil came, he would never let up in his zeal in speaking to the boys. Often his English lessons became Bible lessons, but many men today know they came to faith in Christ through Jamil. I told him that camp was not an easy place for people who were not prepared to rough it. He was always so well dressed. I told him that we had to dig the toilets. He told me to dig the toilets while he did the preaching. I told him that if he was not prepared to dig a toilet, he could not do the preaching. He never came and possibly to our loss.

Jamil did not come with the teachers on a teacher's outing but gave out tracts in Beirut. A man came up to him and asked to see the author of the booklets. He took him to the author who led him to the Lord. Later Jamil linked up and lived with OM workers. He appreciated their zeal and love of the Lord Jesus.

One time I was the leader of the camp and I dug the toilet through rocky ground. I decided that I would not want to dig another, so I dug at least six feet down. Planks formed the place to stand or squat and it was then enclosed by poles and hessian cloth. It was so deep that no one used it because they were scared they would fall in. I never used it either. One day I was asked what I did. I told them I went up the river and wherever I found patches of clean white sand I would use the area. They said that explained what happened when they collected buckets of "clean" white sand to cover the stony floor of their tent. That night their tent smelt like dead dog!

We all gave talks before splitting up for Bible lessons. Apparently, I challenged the boys with the questions, "Do you have eternal life and how do you know?" The eight-year-old John felt although he was the son of a missionary, he did not know the answers and that night gave his heart to the Lord. Thirty years later I discovered that when he gave his testimony to a teacher. Another young student who was so short they called him Namli (ant) came to faith in Christ and asked the Lord to help him play

chess against all the good chess players in the camp. One by one as they lost, they could not understand it until he got into the final. By then he realised that winning was not that important but discovering the power of prayer.

I cannot play a musical instrument but am able to pitch a tune at the right point, so I led the singing at the camps without the help of music and sometimes at the assembly hall in school.

Because of my Geography major I was asked to teach it in English. I tried to make it as practical as possible and contrary to the way it was taught in Arabic where the students learnt everything by heart and then forgot it. They hated the subject. Years later my students could tell others what they had learnt. A teacher told me that through Geography I had taught his son to think. One day his son asked a university student various things about glaciers and the student had to admit that my standard of teaching was better than the university.

I was years later asked to teach History in English. My students seemed to enjoy the subject because I was able to make use of videos. One day a student told a cousin about the period between the two great world wars in the form of a story. Some even went on to take those subjects at universities overseas. The students studying History and Geography in Arabic envied my students because their grades were higher, and the emphasis was on understanding and not memorising. I had a method that of bonus marks which could result in 100% but the school's computer gave them 99. One day I caught a student whispering to another in my class. I then told him that he was telling him to ask me a question about Jesus so that we could waste time on some side issue. He called out, "Mr Holmes you are a prophet." "No," I replied, "I was also once a student."

Some of the senior students were making a model of a hovercraft for a science exhibition. Trouble is it would not work. The mother of one said she was praying for them. Her son replied that her

prayers did not work whereas Mr Holmes' prayers did. I gathered them together and prayed that the Lord would put an idea in their minds why it would not work. Suddenly one had an idea and it worked and they won first prize. I called out to them who they should thank, and they replied God.

One of my hobbies was the pursuit of steam engines. Lebanon used to have the longest Abt rack railway system in the world as the train climbed over the Lebanon range from Beirut to Zahle and then on to Damascus. Generally, the Lebanese ridiculed the train because it was so old. The locomotives were made in Winterthur in 1886 and after. The coaches had lost all their glass windows and the seats were hard. I heard it ran at a loss of 20 million LL or nearly \$10 million a year but it kept on going because so many depended on it for their living. I went on this journey on a number of occasions before it was totally destroyed in the civil war. Often I was the only passenger unless we went as a group on a Saturday outing that lasted the whole day. It took five hours to cover 50 km.

When we returned to SA on deputation, I made my own slide tape of the work. It was called STEAM IN LEBANON.



Beirut was the location of the Girls' and the Blind Schools. Leaving Beirut station which was a quaint French style double storey cottage, the train threaded its way through the city to pass through Chiah the area of our home church before arriving at

Hadeth station where there was an avenue of Jacaranda trees along the track in front of another quaint cottage station.



Hadeth was the site of both the Boys' School and our home. Today the Hadeth Baptist church can be seen from what is left of Hadeth station. The train then slowly, very slowly climbed to Baabda the site of the President's palace before ascending to Jamhour the present home of the LESB&G, a co-educational evangelical school. Then the train travelled a flatter stretch of the line before arriving at Chouit where it cooled down under trees, took in more water and the loco was greased.



After moving to the other end of the train, the engine had to reverse back up the mountain passing Kahale that has the Home of Hope which cares for street children. Eventually it arrived at Aley a mainly Druze town overlooking Beirut but at least 3000 feet higher.



Once more the engine moved to the other end of the train before the long climb up to Bhamdoun. This station had a few lines but only one seemed to be used. Until the civil war it had a mixed Christian, Druze population but was also a popular destination of Arabs from other countries. Mosques were built by them to build up their credit with Allah and as places of worship.



After taking on another tank of water the train would ascend still further before arriving at Sofar.

This quaint Victorian cottage station surrounded by trees is usually covered in snow in winter and one particular house in the village covered in snow looks like a fairy palace. Like Aley, it is a summer vacation area with the higher altitude resulting in low humidity. It overlooks a large valley in which Hamaana is situated. Near that village is the Hamlin hospital where Noreen taught for fourteen years and where I was asked to teach the children stories



in Arabic, the nurses English and sociology and do personal work amongst the patients who came from all over the Middle East suffering from TB. Noreen also visited the elderly. When our children became part of the family I had to baby-sit while Noreen taught. One picture shows Noreen holding Jeanette as she taught the students because when one adopts there is no nine months waiting period.

On the eastern side of Sofar, the village of Aindara was situated. Ain means spring and there are many villages in Lebanon situated along the spring line where clear fresh water pours out on beds of clay after sinking through areas of limestone. A young boy playing in a field picked up what he thought was a pinecone but instead was an old hand grenade. It exploded removing his right hand and eyesight. Eventually arriving at our Blind School in Beirut he came to faith in Christ. He asked that his village be told the same message. After meetings there was no response, but one young man called Nabiih read the gospel of Matthew and came to faith in Jesus. He then went to Bible school and university and became the pastor of the Aindara Baptist church. Because I happened to be at the hospital about half an hour away, he asked me to teach classes English. Sometimes Jeanette went with me. I later preached many times in his church in Beirut.



Leaving Sofar the train reached the top of the Lebanon range at Mdeirej. There the train waited until the train from Zahle arrived with its empty goods wagons but sometimes an open truck would have a flock of sheep for the market in Beirut. At Mdeirej the drivers would change so that they returned to their homes. Near Mdeirej were snow tunnels so that the train could keep running in the winter. The altitude is 5000 feet. The train now started to descend into the Beqaa valley which is very fertile and produced large quantities of vegetables, flowers and hashish. The train





crossed the beautiful, masonry Jalala Bridge before arriving at Chtaura halfway down for more water. It then left for the last, long stretch to Zahle. Much of it is flat along the Beqaa Valley floor. Zahle is a large Christian town situated around a strong spring and visited by many tourists on their way to Baalbek famous for its ruins. After two hours the train made the return journey.

There was a golf course in Beirut but to play there would have cost a quarter of our income for a month. I discovered that the same price was for either one game or one day's golf so an American from the assemblies called Frank and I played 54 holes of golf in one day to get our money's worth. I suffered from cramp thereafter for a short while.

We went to various churches, as it was the policy of the mission that workers should identify with the local evangelical church in the area. We went to an Anglican church in Shemlan where the minister was David Penman, then went to the Synod or Presbyterian church in Aley where the minister was Radi Haush. Later we found a Brethren assembly. They soon discovered that I was a bit of a heretic, rejecting some of the Schofield approach to the Bible. They were narrow in outlook.

Some of the ladies wore no makeup and dull clothing but come Monday they wore make up and attractive dresses. As time went by they became narrower in their beliefs. Eventually we left and linked up with Bible Baptists. There I preached sometimes before we joined the Hadeth Baptist church, which had a pastor from the Southern Baptist seminary. But it had its beginning in the home of Christian Brethren from Haifa that started in their house in Hadeth. As it grew, they moved to a nearby building and became a Baptist church.

Mr David Tleel who became a close family friend was one of the founders of that church. He was also the head of the society called the Lebanese Evangelical Society, which took over all the work of the mission while the missionaries continued to play an active role. Hadeth Baptist moved to a house and has since been replaced by an incomplete, four storey building. The pastor is the Rev Ghassan Khalaf. We have always admired them as a family and respected him for his humility and gracious spirit. In spite of many moves and periods outside the country, we looked upon Hadeth Baptist as our home church although we told them we could not be full members as we were still in fellowship with our Brethren assemblies in SA.

Noreen's anguish over her being accused by the Evil One that she was out of the will of God continued all this time even though we were married, in Lebanon and God had given her a place of service almost immediately on our arrival in Lebanon. It became so bad that I told her that unless the Lord gave her the victory we would

have to return to South Africa. I of course sought the guidance of God all through this conflict because I could not get the victory for her. Then I felt that God would give the victory, but we had to give Him time.

Mr Douglas Howell had started Christian bookshops in Lebanon. He was on his own as his wife and children were back in the UK. We invited him around for a meal every week and went to the same assembly as he did. There was a brother there who used to pray using the words, “Laka Hamd Laka Shukr” meaning, “To You be praise to You be thanks” as a start to his next section of prayer. Eventually I counted the times he said them and told Mr Howell. The record for the number of times rose to nine then ten then eleven. Not very spiritual on my part but I believe that public prayers should be short. Douglas Howell gave us a book token from his shop and we bought “The Spiritual Man” by Watchman Nee. It consisted of three books and that Christmas vacation I read page after page to Noreen until we came to this teaching.

Young Christians think that the guidance of God is instant. It is not instant, but He unfolds His will for our lives one step at a time. They then think they must make a promise to God to serve Him in a certain way at a certain time and a certain place. When His will unfolds in a different direction then they think they have gone out of the will of God and have a warped conscience or fear they cannot please God because of where they are and what they are doing.

This fitted Noreen’s case completely and it was the beginning of the end of the years of conflict and turmoil of mind. She had to resist the devil daily and shelter under the blood of Jesus. Eventually peace of mind returned as well as the joy of the Lord. All this took place before we adopted Jeanette.

The longest trip we did in our Austin1100 was with the Anderson family to Damascus, Homs, Palmyra and Hama. The men shared a room and the women a separate room to cut down costs. We went

to Straight Street and Ananias's supposed residence. We saw houses on top of the old Damascus walls which would explain why it was easy for Paul the apostle to be let down in a basket. We saw domed houses without windows where shepherds stayed in the cold nights. I enjoyed Palmyra in the Syrian Desert. The ruins were situated next to the mud-walled oasis town of Tadmor with many palm trees and delicious watermelons. It was once ruled by Queen Zenobia who rebelled against the Romans resulting in the destruction of the caravan city. There were large buildings that housed the corpses of wealthy families in a sort of filing system.

Getting up early, the desert was shrouded in mist and gave a mysterious feel to the place. The hotel asked us to leave the next day because we did not eat in their dining room but ate instead our own food in the rooms. Then in Hama where there are giant water wheels we stayed for one day and had a meal on the banks of the Orontes River. Boys dived from the top of the wheels into the river while the wheels turned and lifted water into the aqueducts. The next day we went to Krak de Chevalier the largest Crusader castle in the Middle East and the best preserved one. Noreen nearly fell from a great height. Later we heard a tourist was killed there. We drove back to Byblos only to find the hotel wanted so much for the night that we returned to Shemlan.

We had little to show for our first six years of service in Lebanon and Jordan, but eternity will reveal what the Lord accomplished. It was rather a long period of service before long deputation in South Africa. As I wrote previously, I used the slide tape set of Steam in Lebanon to talk about the work. The sounds and noise of the train were genuine. Many never forgot to associate me with trains.

## 1974 - 1980

### Potter Makes Radical Changes

We were not required to get personalised support at that stage and so did not make that a matter of prayer or a priority. We received many small private gifts at the time, which Noreen could not understand. I was given courtesy of the course at Parkview because of my calling and very soon I was having rounds in the mid-seventies. It was as though the Lord gave me back golf for a short time knowing that I would have to give it up again.

We returned to Lebanon in August 1974.

Early in our sojourn in Lebanon we had tests done and were told that it was unlikely that we would have children. We put our names down to adopt with the provision at the time that the colour of the child was similar to our own because of the policy of our government. I prayed that the Lord would not give us children who were not going to heaven. Three times we had the possibility of adopting a baby. The first was an Armenian baby yet to be born but I had a strong conviction that we were not to wait for it. Another time we actually handled the baby, but both felt it was not for us. There was a third opportunity but once more we felt the Lord closing the door. So, when we returned to Lebanon in 1974, we had decided the Lord did not want us to have children.

During our field assembly we received a phone call to go to a certain hospital. The Lord spoke to my wife through the Scriptures that we should not adopt a Lebanese Arab baby. He said nothing to me. When we got to the hospital there were two baby girls. One a month old and physically perfect and the other a week old with deformed hands and toes. The former looked up into the ceiling, but the latter had a little smile, Noreen said it was a wind. I told the social worker in charge that we needed 24 hours to pray about it but that we would take the child with the deformities or nothing. Noreen was sure of her choice because the month-old baby was

Lebanese Arab whereas the other child was Armenian. I had to pray seriously because of the deformities. I told Noreen that I felt we should adopt the week-old baby and she too had peace of mind about her.

Then I spent six weeks getting fourteen documents, which had to be legalised, verified and authorised, because the baby that we proposed to call Jeanette Nadia was legitimate and needed her own Lebanese identity document and passport. I employed a lawyer and we went to and fro from one government department to another. One place the govt official kept me waiting till the end of the day and told me that I would have to go elsewhere to get a signature but if I paid him, he would do it for me. Eventually we were required to get another extra document releasing the baby into our care by the parents but without them knowing who we were. While we were waiting, Noreen happened to notice her ironing board. The lettering said Jeanette. It was the Lord's way of encouraging us. Eventually she came into our home but her stay in hospital and her birth had to be paid for.

Then we realised why we were given those gifts in SA. Jeanette was raised on S26. My mother was opposed to adoption, but my father delighted. We sent them tapes and slides of Jeanette Nadia. Soon after receiving Jeanette into our home we visited Dutch CB missionaries called the Bruwens. Suddenly we heard the sound of gun fire and when we arrived back home young men were standing around looking very tense. A busload of Palestinians had gone through a Christian area near to where one of the Christian leaders was attending a service. Someone fired a shot, and the bus was then riddled with bullets leaving many dead. For years, the Palestinians had been arousing the anger of the Lebanese by demanding to see identity documents whereas they were guests in the country. Of course, we identified with the Lebanese. I need to make this clear that those that took up guns claiming to be Christians had no knowledge of the Lordship of Jesus. Those who

loved the Lord Jesus would not fight and were despised by the “Christian” fighters.

They later came from our area and looted the laboratory, library and other equipment of our school because it had taught Moslem and Palestinian students without prejudice. It was an excuse because they sold everything to other schools. All of Colin White’s careful interest in the education of Lebanese young men was blotted out in a few days. For years he had built up the equipment by importing it from the UK. Shops in the city had the same treatment. The nearby government tobacco company was also looted. One enterprising group of gunmen manned a roadblock nearby our place and took ten percent or more of every load looted by others as they passed by. Most of the Armenian community did not get involved in the fighting but stayed in their enclave.

We had a Palestinian camp surrounded by Christian suburbs. It was called Tell Azater meaning the Hill of Thyme. More likely the Hell of Thyme because it was eventually totally destroyed and blown up. We were glad we were not in our area when atrocities were committed by the victors. A Christian enclave called Damour had the same treatment and those that did not escape from there by boat had the same treatment both in the treatment of the civilians and the levelling of the area. Jamil Saffoury escaped in a boat. He kept on witnessing wherever he went until one day he was lured away. He was found with his head blown off. It was a great shock to us. It reminded us of Antipas, My Witness, My faithful one, as recorded in Revelation.

We all had narrow escapes during the war. A bullet found its way into Jeanette’s room and bounced off the walls landing on the mosquito net covering her. I was shot at hanging out the washing. A bullet hit a pillar where I normally lay on the porch.

Noreen had a large piece of shrapnel landing at her feet. I was harnessed to wash and clean Jeanette’s 12 dirty nappies every day. There was no electricity at times because of the Lebanese civil

war that started that year. So, it had to be done by hand. Our neighbours felt that we should not have a child with deformed hands but as time went by, they realised she was a bright little girl with a will of her own. One said she ran around like a quail. (We heard later that the other baby girl at the hospital was developmentally challenged.)

While Noreen taught the nurses at Hamlin hospital, I kept Jeanette company. One day I went for a walk around the hospital and saw beautiful wild cyclamen flowers. The hillside nearby had a Bedouin camp, and a shepherd came out and made strange sounds. The sheep stood up all over the hillside and started to follow the shepherd. I heard later of two flocks mixed up at a well and one of the shepherds making his own sounds and only his sheep separating from the other flock and following their shepherd. Jesus said that He was the Good Shepherd, and His sheep heard His voice and followed Him.

Jeanette had her first birthday party, and the sound of machine gun fire could be heard not far away in a nearby suburb. It happened so often that we got used to it and it did not trouble our sleep. Fighting in the civil war became more intense until we were all evacuated out of Lebanon to Cyprus in 1976. While we were there, we heard that both Noreen's stepfather and my father died in April of that year and so we returned to SA to comfort our parents. We returned to SA via Athens but did not have a visa for Jeanette who was travelling on her Lebanese passport. It was a weekend, and we knew not where the SA embassy was located so we prayed and walked until we saw a consular address of a foreign government that kindly contacted our embassy. The staff then told us where to go and made a special effort to issue Jeanette with a visa.

On arrival in Johannesburg, we had to adopt Jeanette again as a South African. It was noted in the documents that her colour was similar to ours. My mother had been opposed to adoption as she

said the baby was not of our flesh and bone. After seeing Jeanette and enjoying her, she said that if we adopted again we should adopt another Armenian!

Once more we were given some extra gifts. We did some deputation before returning to Cyprus. While in Cyprus we kept urging the Mission leader to allow us to return. He kept on refusing until he eventually gave in on condition we stayed under the authority of Dr Charles Nuccho, the superintendent of the Hamlin hospital in Hamaana in the mountains where Noreen had taught since arriving in Lebanon. After only a few days I managed to get down to our flat to clear up the rubble and broken glass. I went into Beirut through a guarded passage and saw our car without the front and rear windscreens. When I started it using a borrowed battery the engine sprang to life.

I was called on to teach English as the school was short of teachers due to the war. A shell landed in the school giving us all a fright, but the students had gone home. In only six months we had had eight changes of address. Jeanette was disturbed because I had left the family three times. Twice a week we went up to the hospital in Hamaana, where Noreen was in charge of the nursing school for a while.

Around Christmas we were near the hospital that gave us Jeanette. We decided to remind the social worker that we were still in the country and would like to adopt another child preferably a boy. The social worker saw Jeanette as bright and lively. Little did we know that there had been a baby boy in the hospital for three and a half months. A soldier from a guerrilla group wanted to take him but was persuaded that he had to be legally adopted. Yet he had a gun. The social worker later told us that a boy who had been born September 14 at 11.30 am and had been then in the hospital for over three months, would make a perfect brother for Jeanette.

When we were called to see the baby, he was wearing the clothes the soldier had bought to take him away. When we saw him, he had brought up, had severe cradle cap and unknown to us had been lying in wet nappies so was in pain from a crimson bottom. I asked the lady for 24 hours to pray about him. If the Lord had not wanted us to adopt him then he could have left long before we arrived. When we saw him, we realised his appearance was not important but whether God wanted us to adopt him or not. The Lord made it clear to both of us in different ways that we must take him as our son. Jeanette had asked the Lord Jesus for a baby brother over a month before and what a prompt answer. So, Paul came into our home on January 4th, born on Sept 14 with a sister called Jeanette born on Sept 15. Once more we had to pay for his stay in hospital and I had to get legal papers for him. This time we used the Armenian evangelical court that was more sympathetic than the court that dealt with Jeanette. It reduced the legal fees and even gave us a talk on being parents. Within a week all his papers to legally adopt him were ready and he became legally ours on January 14. I then had to get his identity document and passport.

When he came home, he had very severe diaper rash that caused pain and him to cry. When all expensive medications failed, Vaseline restored both head and bottom to normality and he became a very affectionate son. We found he was quite alert. He was also fed on S26. He loved food and would eat away in good Arab style using bread as a scoop to put food in his mouth later on.

In appearance Jeanette and Paul were thought to be from the same biological family and twins. They got on so well together that other students were amazed that brother and sister could be such friends. In Lebanon I took them for walks with Paul on my back and Jeanette in the pushchair. A photographer snapped us for a magazine and later gave me a large photograph. He said that only

a foreigner would do that for his children. I suppose the men left that task to their wives.

Early Saturday morning I would get up and make a mixture of olive oil and sesame seeds and thyme to take to the local bakery where I would use flat loaves made of raw dough to make our own mana'ush for the family. I did all the buying and bargaining in the family and often got bargains for the whole mission. During the civil war that lasted for seventeen years, although we were only there for nine of them, I used to scour far-flung shops. Many will tell you that I was able to buy large quantities of imported tins of baked beans at a quarter of the price, Danish tinned bacon, Norfolk stewed plums etc. One day Douglas Anderson paid Lebanon a visit and went to five different families for five different meals and had stewed plums at every venue. All were proud of Neville's latest bargain! I enjoyed the buying because I could exercise my Arabic and get into conversation with people.

When the fighting became too close for comfort, we moved to other localities in the mountains eventually having to move up to Broumaana and stay in an old house with high ceilings and primitive kitchen and bathroom facilities but reasonable for the summer vacation. We found our way to the "icebox" previously rented by David and Doreen Holmes. David taught in the same school. The Lord has a sense of humour putting a David and Doreen Holmes with a Neville and Noreen Holmes in the same school! Why the icebox? It had no tiled roof and was built of cement blocks on stilts. In winter we had snow lying on the flat concrete roof and cold winds circulating under the floor. We froze and eventually lived all in one room to keep warm. I travelled down with the children to school each day.

During my walks in the area, I noticed how people threw away new things they were given for Christmas that they did not like. A nice handbag and shawl for Noreen, a photo album. Noreen was ashamed that I brought them home but not ashamed to use them.

While we were in Broumaana, I bought an old Peugeot 504 fuel injection and fitted the radio. It would not start. After prayer I felt I should remove the radio and it started. I often had to resort to prayer to resolve mine and other people's car problems. I often prayed before handing my car over to a mechanic. They never learnt at a proper school their trade but learnt from their father who learnt from his father. If they made a mistake it was always the fault of the car. They never acknowledged the error of their ways except one man a Mr Ijbeili who realised what they had done and rectified it without extra cost.

I learnt the lesson of praising God in advance when one is going through trials and facing problems. Ps 50:23 "He who offers thank offerings honours Me and prepares the way for Me to reveal the salvation of God". My car broke down four times in one day. I remember asking the Lord, "Do You expect me to praise You for a car that keeps breaking down? OK. I praise You that it keeps breaking down." The thought came to check the float chamber. There I found a piece of cork and the problem was solved. Praise the Lord.

Indeed, it is a difficult thing to give thanks in all circumstances but he who is thankful does not complain. So, in all the unexpectedness of living through a civil war, and teaching when there was a lull in the fighting, we were learning the truths God wanted to teach us. If there was no fighting, there were so many holidays for the different religions and we often had four working days every week with lots of long weekends. Time to talk to people about Jesus and give literature. Once after some snow the principal who lived in the old house in Broumaana stopped by to take me to school, but I said I would follow. It started to snow after he left, and I was late but would not have missed the pleasure of the silent falling of the snow. The school had moved to a wholly "Christian" area.

I filled my car with Billy Graham's book "Peace with God" (translated into Arabic), as well as New Testaments and gospels. I gave many people lifts and spoke to them about the Lord as well as giving them at least two books. A nun once said how much she enjoyed the trip and thanked me for the literature. One night I saw a car like mine broken down in no man's land. The driver waved to me. He had a puncture and did not know where the "afriit" or jack was. I took off the tire and replaced the other with difficulty because it was dark and the area was wet and muddy. He offered money but I refused and gave my usual literature. He thought I was either a foreigner or a priest.

We could not give our children what they deserved for their birthdays and Christmas. One family gave away a large amount of their toys as they returned to the UK. We hid these away. Our children were very excited by what Father Christmas brought them. He, we said, was pretend but Jesus was real. We asked them if they were sure that was all he brought them? Had they looked under the couches? There were unbelievable things for both of them. Jeanette was given Barbie doll's clothes, accessories and it was once more a demonstration of the goodness of the Father.

About the year 1977 I started suffering from what people later called M.E., which resulted in my losing energy very quickly by 10 a.m. and caused me to become impatient and irritable. Later it was found that in response to an intake of sugar my body would produce too much insulin causing me to become tired and drained of energy. This got worse but I carried on teaching. When I was informed about my condition, I started to avoid sugar and cold drinks. One day I discovered that red grape juice made all the difference. It would clear out my body and I felt normal for the first time. I suppose my wife would say her husband was never normal. One of our teachers to explain the word eccentric asked them if they knew Mr Holmes who usually wore a balaclava in winter. She then said I was a good example of eccentric. Yet I was

just myself and did not live my life according to the expectations of others.

In 1978 we went on holiday to South Africa and shared about the work. We stayed with Noreen's mother while in Cape Town and during a walk I saw outside an Anglican church in Plumstead the text, "Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit". I told Noreen about it and we decided to go to a mid-week meeting. They welcomed us and we told them we were missionaries returning to Lebanon. One of the congregation, a man named Harry, had a vision from the Lord in which he saw Lebanon as a sore spot like a volcano which was about to erupt. That was fulfilled as the civil war there resulted in awful massacres that the people are trying to erase from their memories and history books. He warned us about returning, and that it would be difficult. We told them that to return in our own strength without the empowering of the Holy Spirit would be useless. They agreed. They asked us if we would like them to pray for us. As a group they laid their hands on us and prayed.

## Clay Working *With* Potter

Neither of us felt anything but from that time onwards the Lord worked in and through us in a new way. Before we used to work for God and ask His blessing but then we started to work with Him and allow Him to lead us. My preaching and method of evangelism in personal work changed. I found too the Lord was able to clearly guide through His Spirit. The seal on the event was when we returned to Cyprus. Jeanette went to play across the road with another little girl. When I went to fetch her, the mother asked me if I was a missionary and if I believed that Jesus was God. I acknowledged both. As a JW she wanted to argue but I was not interested and told her that I would show her how to come to know Jesus as her Saviour. The next day she again wanted to argue but I refused to be drawn in and instead I wrote out a prayer for her if she wanted to be saved from her sins. Two weeks after we had returned to Lebanon, we heard that she had come to faith in Christ and had found the Person she had been searching for all her life. That was a new me. Previously I would have argued and achieved nothing. Now I was relying on the Lord.

Unfortunately, my testimony in SA that it was in an Anglican church that God had blessed us became a warning signal to the narrower Brethren assemblies to have nothing to do with that man as he went to other churches. They do not realise that as members of an interdenominational mission or fellowship the name of the church is not important. What is important is whether they follow and love the Lord Jesus.

While we waited in 1978 to return to Beirut, I wanted to stay busy. So, I went to the mechanic that the mission used in Limassol called Bedros - an Armenian - and asked him if I could work for him and learn how to repair cars. I told him that I did not want payment. So, I stayed with him for six weeks. We worked a lot quicker than usual. He used to go out to get spare parts and drink coffee. I told him to just get the spare parts and forget the coffee

because work had to be done. We cleared his floor and took on work that had been waiting for six months. We even repaired a missionary's car and got it ready for sale. He wanted to give me something at the end of the month and I refused. Later he and his wife heard that our flat had been looted and he came to me and said that they wanted to share in our loss and their gift was not for work done but as unto the Lord.

Just before leaving the island for Beirut, I preached a message on "One another" and afterwards another Armenian gave us a gift. They were the first gifts given by locals to us and they covered our losses in Lebanon. Sometime later I visited Bedros in his garage. A young man in the street - who was an athlete and had cracked his leg - died while recuperating in front of his TV. Another young man came hobbling up to me and I asked him where he would be should he also die. He had no answer, but I had the joy of leading him to Christ. I told him to tell someone. He used his crutches to walk to someone from the Assemblies of God who had been witnessing to him for a long time.

When I returned in 1978, I found that our flat had indeed been looted. I surprised the militia men by arriving back before they could remove more items. As the windows had all been shot out, I replaced the glass with corrugated iron sheets and covered the wooden windows with transparent plastic. I made the place habitable before I was joined by Noreen and the children. The shell and rocket holes had to be filled in. My stores of canned goods had been stolen but those I had tucked away had escaped their attention. Electricity was something else. Our particular line was down so I climbed the tall pylon and used a loose hook up to join our wire to one that still conveyed power. It was known as Shirikit Holmes - the Holmes Company.

I did foolish things. One day, rockets were being fired at our area and I observed them passing our building from our kitchen window. One hit only about a metre from my head and I am still here to tell

the tale. Another time I wanted to move our car to behind our building as it was exposed on the open road. I felt the Lord saying that the parking of the car was not important but trusting Him was. So I left the car but told the Lord that He was responsible. The next day a mortar shell landed on the roof of the porch of the house behind us. A girl was killed, and the cars nearby lost their glass and petrol. We still had a car to leave the area.

One day I went to pick up a neighbour in an area of Beirut taken over by the Palestinians. I wanted to park my car outside his building but was thought to be an Israeli spy. I was forced to leave my car at gunpoint and beaten up in a basement. Then they went out and I followed them. The UN soldier was useless and would not get involved. Thankfully, the wife came out on her balcony and I called her to help me. I told them her husband worked for Fatah. When she confirmed their inquiry, they offered me a cigarette and then five packets. I do not smoke. As I drove away, I told the Lord that if I arrived in eternity that day, I would have got there sooner than I expected. We found that some Palestinians treated the Lebanese just as they had been treated in Israel. They took over their homes and acted as though they were the masters of the area.

A Lebanese man in our area said that I was not a foreigner because the foreigners all left. He said I was one of them because we had stayed and suffered with them. We became experts in war sounds. A swish, swish meant it was a mortar and going over head. We used to hide in the inner passage of our flat. 155mm shells exploded in front of us from the mountains. Mortars and rockets were fired at us from the front.

All types of heavy machine gun bullets exploded in every room except where we lay. Our neighbours were all sheltering behind sandbags and drinking Arabic coffee and smoking in a small room. We stayed in our exposed flat and the landlord told the neighbours

that we trusted in Jesus. They asked me how I knew when to leave. I said I used the “CIA”, which meant “Christ’s Insight Aid”.

Noreen was concerned about the fact that we were using electricity but without paying for it. When I approached an official of the power company, he asked why I wanted to pay as neither he nor anyone else paid. Eventually we gave the money to a believer in Jesus to pay our account on our behalf. Later when everyone else was levied and fined, they excluded us. It pays to be honest.

In 1980 we returned to SA and felt under pressure not to return to the field unless we had 100% personalised support. Many would support while we were in SA but once we returned to Lebanon it would be out of sight out of mind. So, I had to talk to elders and churches and individuals about supporting us monthly. I tried for three months but nothing happened until I cried out to the Lord and told Him I had done my best but without any response. When I asked Him what I should do, the answer came very clearly. “Nothing but trust Me and I will fill your mouth with laughter.” I said that from then on, I was going to enjoy deputation and leave the raising of our support entirely to Him. From that moment onwards individuals and assemblies agreed to support us monthly.

When I left home (which was my mother’s home in Johannesburg), I would phone back with weekly increases of support resulting in over a 100% support figure. When asked in Lebanon how I did it, all I could say was that the Lord did it and I did not have a method. About two weeks before we returned to Lebanon, my sister of 45 phoned to say she had cancer. I told her that she needed to know Jesus as her Saviour and in her garden, I led her in prayer. She told her son what had happened on his return home from school. So, the Lord filled my mouth with laughter. Three years later Glenda died of cancer but not before some overzealous pastors of a large church told her that the reason why she was not healed was because of her lack of faith. I think she

thought she would recover because she kept borrowing money from my account to buy paintings or things she liked. I do not think her husband was aware of her source of income to cover her and her son's needs.

Every time I did deputation in SA I also visited loco sheds to take photos of steam engines or spend hours taking rides with mail trains that stopped at all stations. One System manager told the officials to treat me well. I was able to point a ganger to the Lord. He worked on the track checking its condition. His name was Hendrik Oliphant.

On a train the passenger is there with you for a long time without being disturbed by others. I rode in the cab of a 25NC from Modder River to Orange River and discovered the driver was one who loved the Lord. At Kloofeind near Bloemfontein I led a station foreman to the Lord. That same day I spoke to the guard of a goods train that I was travelling on when he failed to flag the engine driver to stop at Kloofeind and we went through it leaving me watching my car recede. The guard had to drive me back to Kloofeind. He said he had never done that before, but it gave me the opportunity of speaking to him about the Lord.

We had so many faithful friends who looked after me and later us while on deputation. I always remember Ms Skinstad in Johannesburg who did all the hard work while others were in the limelight and Claudine in Kimberley who always arranged many meetings and gave me lots of time to chase steam engines. Thomas in Cape Town one year lent us his VW Beetle for deputation and he and Yvonne ran for years the MECO office in Cape Town at their own expense. The Lord knows all about that and the efforts of so many others. Hylton bombarded us with meetings in schools and churches but years later we met those who had been challenged by what they had heard and seen.

Once more while on deputation I had the opportunity to play golf. I played with two Baptist ministers one of whom asked me

where I worshipped. I told him Rosebank assembly. He was surprised as he thought I was a Baptist. He then proceeded to tell me about the return of the Lord Jesus and was most surprised to hear I was in total agreement. Later at the 13th hole he took the lead and told me that if my doctrine came right, my golf would come right. I kept quiet because the game is only over at the 18th. There I beat them and told them that if their doctrine came right their golf would come right! One of them replied that where sin abounded grace did much more abound!

Another time I teamed up with a Baptist minister and we won a Lightbody's sponsored tournament winning a voucher for clothing. The sponsor was delighted that those who needed it most, won. The same minister said he would never be a missionary because they did not pay enough. Many Baptists supported us in our work, but some ministers preferred to send support to those that saw many turn to the Lord unlike the Middle East where it was one here and two there.

On deputation I made a point of spending time with the student from my school and later university who became a medical missionary. We used to play golf together and he said I could have been a great golfer had I not gone to the mission field. I had to confess that the Lord had caused me to play better than ever before just in the time I was on deputation. I remember how I prayed that our game with others would result in us speaking of the truths of salvation and we all had a very blessed time, sharing about the Lord.

On our return to Lebanon, although we had more support than was required we had allowance cuts due to the finances of the fellowship going through a lean period. As a fellowship all suffer and not just those whose level of support was not that good. We were once more back in our flat in Hadeth and I was teaching at the school which was using the Church of God facilities. There was no playground, so I played football with the boys on a vacant lot

near the school. One day Mr White the principal asked me to paint a series of scenes from the Bible for the Christmas program of the school. I should have been honoured but I discovered that others who had initially agreed to do the paintings pulled out at the last moment, so he was scraping the barrel when he asked me. An artist needs to have feeling for a subject. One cannot just paint without entering into the subject. I prayed about it and the Lord seemed to infuse me with power and the desire to paint. He did the same for Bezalel to construct the sanctuary in the wilderness. It was a series of scenes in the life of Jesus displayed on a board to the left and right but with no real sense or purpose until the final one was put into place, which was the empty tomb and the stone rolled away. Then it became clear that the scenes in His life formed the central white form of the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

United Nation soldiers came to help restore peace to war-torn Beirut. On an outing to Byblos, we met some British soldiers and one of them shared my interest in steam trains. Later I went to visit the British contingent at their location near our home and invited one of them called Mike to our home for a meal. He had never read the Bible, so we spent hours speaking to him about his need of Jesus as his Saviour. He realised what he had to do, which was either to say yes to the Lord Jesus and turn his back on all he had been taught before or do nothing but not know the Lord. We found that his group had no Bibles and so we were able to get eleven Bibles for the unit from the Bible Society for those that asked for one. One of them read aloud to the others. Their chaplain in his behaviour was just like a soldier in his habits and conversation. There was apparently not one who personally knew Jesus as his Saviour. Later Mike wrote to us from the UK to tell of his having found salvation. Later I met the US marines who also came to help. Quite a number of them knew the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. Through a missionary from America a meeting was held for the marines.

Jeanette and Paul were students at the school where I taught. Paul was on the top floor in the KG class. One day shelling started without warning. Mr White, the principal, took the children down into the basement. A 155mm shell hit the roof penetrating the area where Paul used to sit. Months later we heard that people in Tasmania had been praying for the school at that time and Mr White had done the right thing once more. Sometime later he was very depressed with the burden of the school and his sense of responsibility for the welfare of the children. At any time, shelling could take place. I reminded him how he had done the right thing and that people were praying for him. I told him that the next time he could rely on the Lord to help him to make the right decision. The next Monday I could see the burden was gone and he was his usual joyful self. Every now and then car bombs would go off destroying an area. Once after one nearby car bomb, a teacher suddenly had an urgent call to go to the toilet leaving his students laughing at his fear.

We attended our Arabic service at Hadeth Baptist on Sunday mornings but then went to the Arab Baptist theological Seminary started by the Southern Baptist in the evening. I once preached there on the fact that God is always angry and expounded the prophecy of Nahum. I felt that books of the Bible should be explained and not left out because people found them difficult to understand.

I ran a Bible club at break times at the school to teach the boys to lead Bible studies themselves. Years later I met a young man who told me his story. After school, his love for the Lord cooled. He was given a job in Saudi Arabia. The plane was late in departure and got more and more delayed on the way. Next to him a passenger asked why he was going, and he replied for a certain company. The passenger said that company always put up its people at Hotel Cleopatra. On arrival at his destination there was no one to meet him as the plane was six hours late. He asked to

be taken to Hotel Cleopatra where he asked if they had a reservation for him and they handed him his key. In his room he got down on his knees and thanked the Lord for not forgetting him even though he had gone his own way. He told me that he had immediately got himself a Bible and that his faith had become much stronger through his living there.

I met a man in the queue in Cyprus and although I had not seen him since student days immediately said his name and he recognised me. He told me he had come to faith in Christ at our school in Ashrafieh.

In 2002, I received a phone call from a former student who said that he had wanted to thank me for seventeen years. His name was Anis and I told him that he probably was phoning the wrong person. He was adamant that I had hounded him day after day giving him tracts and speaking to him about Jesus until one day, he took a booklet home, read it and gave his life to the Lord in 1984, the year we left Lebanon. He said he was the only person in his family to come to faith in Christ. Once more I told him that he was thanking the wrong person. It was God that was pursuing him. He agreed that it all started with the grace of God and grace had kept him.

One day on a visit to Lebanon during the twelve-year period we were in SA, I entered the hall of the school now located at Louaseh near Jamhour. A large, young man bounded up to me. He asked me if I remembered him. He said I had taught him the Bible and Jungle Doctor stories and because of that he was in full time work with Campus Crusade. The Lord graciously revealed from time to time how He had used us.

## 1980 - 1996

### Clay Prepared For Another Use

On returning to Lebanon in 1980, the Lord told me to open a US dollar account but at the time the dollar was falling. I resisted for some time until eventually I submitted and changed 60% into dollars. The currency continued to fall, and I became upset. However, the conviction came that I was not being obedient. I had to change it all. This I did. Later while Reagan was president of the USA the interest rate on the dollar rose above 17% that meant that we gained monthly. The exchange rate then was 4LL to the \$. When fighting resumed in 1984 the LL (Lebanese lira) fell to 6.5 to the \$. I felt that the Lord told me that whatever I gave Him He would give us three times as much, so we gave our church in Hadeth 10% of their debt on the building.

We were being shelled from the mountains East of us and from the other side of the Green Line in front. We stayed on and Noreen felt that she had had enough. Our car was exposed in a nearby street but was left there in response to guidance from the Lord. One day early in the morning I had complete release within my spirit and felt from the Lord that we should start packing to leave Lebanon. We left not out of fear, nor because we had endured so much shelling but because we believed the Lord wanted us to leave. Noreen got out the suitcases and packed them with all our sentimental things. At about lunchtime we went for a visit to foreign friends nearby. There used to be a lull in the shelling at about 10 every morning so that people could buy the fresh fruit, vegetables, bread and meat for the day. I suppose the gunmen needed to have some sleep before they resumed.

Later at about 3 p.m. a mortar shell came over our building and struck the roof of a porch under which a young lady was sitting. She later died. Cars lost their gasoline and glass, but we still had a car to leave the area. I left our flat to offer our car to a friend

at a cheap price and so was out. Noreen told our children to make their own sandwiches, as she was packing. They wanted to argue but she insisted. They had just completed their sandwiches, had left the kitchen and were sitting on the enclosed porch at the rear of the flat when a rocket hit above the kitchen door, went across the kitchen and exploded through the other wall. Everything was destroyed. The taps were turned on and nothing could have survived. Above me is our antique office clock that still ticks away with its face scarred by shrapnel. The kids were screaming their heads off but that is because glass fell on them, but they were unharmed. Smoke and dust filled the flat and Noreen felt it was the end. I arrived to find the children being carried out.

We packed up our car but could not find my passport. Eventually we found it and drove out of our area avoiding fallen electric cables and cars strewn across the roads where they had been hit. We arrived at the Baptist Seminary, which was in a secluded area far from blocks of apartments. We were given a room and had our first good night of sleep for a long time. We made arrangements to leave Lebanon by ferry. We gave the gift we had set aside to our church and took the rest of our money in a dollar draft to Cyprus. There we stayed for about a month until we received a call from the SA council asking us to be the Deputation Secretary. We left our savings behind in a blocked dollar account as instructed by the Lord and returned to SA to stay with my mother. I felt that I had to first do deputation the rest of the year before finding a house and living in Cape Town.

Recently I asked a man for a quote to redo our kitchen cupboards. He came round and then I showed him some of the artefacts we brought from Lebanon. He asked me if I was a missionary and told me that in 1984, he had heard a missionary speak on a parable during a lunch hour meeting in his bank and that through that message, he was called by God to missionary

service. I was the missionary and it was gratifying to hear of positive results from that time of deputation.

I asked the Lord to give us a house in Cape Town as the interest rates were so high we could not afford a bond. I was sitting in my mother's lounge when I felt the Lord telling me to take a walk down our road that led to a cul de sac. I protested but felt the conviction very strongly. Later when I got to the end of the road a runner came to a stop and massaged his legs. I asked him if he was winning and when he replied yes, I asked him if he was winning the race of life. He gave a vague answer later, when I asked him what he would say to God to get into heaven. I explained the way of salvation and we prayed. He later gave clear evidence of a work of grace. A week or so later when I asked the Lord the question as to how I could know whether He was leading me, He asked me who told me to walk down the road. And the problem was solved.

After deputation in the country, I travelled to Cape Town on my own to look at houses. We wanted a house that had character, was north facing, had three bedrooms. a good-sized kitchen, a view of the mountains, a reasonably sized garden. I soon came across a manse for sale that had just come on the market. With the help of a cousin of Noreen's, Basil Twine, I put in an offer. Basil also provided paint and painters for the outside of the house. The offer was accepted but I did not have any money available and asked if I could pay half the deposit the one month and half the next and it was accepted. Then I returned home and showed a picture of the house that became our home for the next 12 years. I was warned by the Lord not to touch the dollars in Cyprus and soon afterwards was advised by the accountant there to change them as they were falling rapidly. I did nothing. Reagan was re-elected and the dollar strengthened rapidly.

In 1984 the SA Rand fell from over 90c to the dollar to 48.3c which meant that our rands had almost doubled. I needed to pay the church the cash for the house and when I asked the Lord for

the date of instructing Cyprus, I was told Thursday. I waited on the Monday of the next week for the money to arrive. I left the bank at 3 p.m. and told our prayer meeting that the Lord had let me down for the first time in my life. An elder said that the Lord had not failed me but there would be an explanation. The next day we phoned the bank. They informed me that a large amount had arrived in my account just before the bank closed at 3.30 p.m. I was able to pay the church cash for the house and when I worked out how much I had gained by listening to the Lord's instructions over the year, I found that what we had given to the Lord in Lebanon was multiplied by exactly three times as much, as promised. I used to wake up in our home and marvel that we owed nothing and had no bond.

I worked hard on the house replacing the rusted steel window frames with wooden ones. Once I saw how one was done, I did the rest myself. Then I broke up the floor in most of the house and laid tiles that proved cleaner and healthier. I removed the cast iron bath single-handedly and with advice tiled the bathroom and replaced all the amenities required.

During my deputation in 1984 I asked the Lord that He would use me to lead people to Himself. This He did strangely through contacts I made with railway officials and passengers. I was a steam enthusiast and spent hours taking photos of steam locos and riding in the guard's van in pick up goods. Often people discovered the way of salvation was so simple.

On deputation, I used as my Bible material, the many parables that were explained with greater clarity through our experience in Jordan and Lebanon. At one Christian guest farm I was sharing a parable on the beach and was asked to share again in the evening. The subject opened the way to many churches. Deputation is not easy unless the churches can be offered more than talks about the opportunities of service. Our experience in Jordan and Lebanon helped me to understand other passages in the Bible as seen

through their culture. I dressed up in my galabiyya and lay on many communion tables to show how Jesus sat and how He would have eaten. The principal of the Bible Institute, where I studied and met Noreen, said that I had lain on the communion table, stood on a chair and asked if next time I would swing from a chandelier? As a result, many were introduced to looking at the Bible through a culture other than their own and I was invited again and again to churches to speak in both Afrikaans and English. I would embarrass Jeanette when I arrived to take her home wearing my Arab robes. We made large quantities of majeddera, which is a stew of lentils and rice and had Arab evenings in churches.

The enemy of our souls knows our weak areas and often attacks those again and again without warning. He comes in disguise and often we do not discern his tactics.

I was asked to arrange the deputation tour of SA of one of our workers. She would be accompanied by a fellow worker from another country. They needed a vehicle for the tour. When I prayed about it, I felt the Lord telling me to offer one of our small two door cars. This was turned down by them, but I felt the Lord said that it would be used. Off they went until they arrived at a city where the local worker had a breakdown as a result of suffering from reactive depression due to serving in the tension of Lebanon. The arrangements for the tour were still in place. Every meeting took on average five phone calls to arrange. The other worker was a stranger to SA that was experiencing unrest at the time. Should anything happen to her I would feel responsible. I felt that I had no other choice than to accompany her on deputation. No one on the local mission council advised against the tour. I prayed and asked the Lord that He would help me to treat her as my sister at all times. Noreen was very unhappy.

We went from city to city and the worker made many new friends and was well received. She had come from a non-Christian background and her testimony was one of God saving her in spite

of herself. I made arrangements that where possible she stayed with other families and I stayed elsewhere. I treated her at all times as a sister. Then one day while I was on my own in another house something happened to me that had only happened once before when I fell in love with Noreen. This gave me great anguish of spirit and I cried out to the Lord for help and explanation. I felt Him saying, "You do not understand now but you will understand hereafter."

The tour continued without incident. However, on arrival back home with my family the battle continued within my heart. I knew that marriage was until death us do part. Divorce is not an option for a Christian. The Lord warns men in the prophecy of Malachi to guard their spirit because it is there that the battle is won or lost. I thought that what happened would be fulfilled should Noreen go to be with the Lord. I wrote to the worker about what had happened and of course it greatly disturbed her. Noreen and I had to deal with the issue. Just as I had trusted the Lord during her spiritual battle over guidance and the accusation of the devil, so she had to trust the Lord for victory in my life and the restoration of my love and commitment to her. The battle lasted for at least seven years and called for vigilance on my part and living one day at a time in obedience to the Lord. The children knew nothing of the spiritual battle although years later I told Paul so as to warn him that his marriage would also come under attack.

I went to see a minister who told me that I had exposed myself by going on the tour with that worker and the Lord could not protect me as my action had dishonoured him. Another said that it was possibly a warning to me to be more watchful and careful. It has never happened again although I once acted foolishly on deputation by what I once said. Deputation for a married man far away from home over a long period of time is not wise because a husband and wife should not be separated. Yet because of the nature of our work and the need of the wife to be a mother to her

children, the husband has to be away. We have now been married fifty five years and are glad that we still enjoy the companionship of each other.

We are growing old together. Noreen is efficient, organised, loyal, a woman of principle and a real homemaker. She is my friend, companion, lover, a wonderful mother of our children with lots of ideas to enrich their lives. As her husband, like the Middle East, my life is organised chaos and thus I really enjoyed living there but I am Noreen's friend, companion, lover and fellow pilgrim in our following of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nearly always I buy things that she likes because we have the same tastes in what we like about our home and life in general. She has a very subtle way of getting things done. She makes valid suggestions, but it results in a great deal of hard work for me!

Too many of my friends and others we know, have had a divorce and married someone younger than themselves while abandoning the wife of their youth. Jesus said very clearly in Luke 16:18 that he who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery and he who marries her who is divorced commits adultery. People try to explain His stand away, but they will have to answer to Him one day.

Nine years after we had returned to South Africa, a friend suggested I write a book on some of my messages and after working on it for three months I gave the material to him to set it out, but he did not do a spelling check. The book was "The Father Ran" and I had three thousand copies printed. I was told by the manager of a chain of Christian bookshops that the book would not sell. She reckoned without the Lord.

Shortly after receiving the finished article, I visited a minister who asked me to take his place on Radio Pulpit. I accepted and went to the local studios to record twelve messages in three hours without the use of notes. An extra session was on our time in the Middle East. There was a tremendous response. All the expenses

of the book were covered within six weeks, which was an answer to prayer. I recorded my name and address on the back cover and received orders from all over the country. A call from an Afrikaans man resulted in him translating the book into Afrikaans and we produced 2000 copies. Before returning to Lebanon in 1996 the English edition was reprinted. We heard of many people being blessed, their questions answered, whole chapters being read out as sermons because it was written the way I speak which is concise and blunt. It was the Lord's doing. I cannot take any credit.

During our period of twelve years in South Africa in the home office, our support continued to fall as people and supporters felt that we were not really missionaries anymore as we were not on "the front line". Because we did not want to be a burden to the work, we asked the mission if we could leave the pool and live off that which came in for us. That meant covering all our own expenses of the office, medical and education of our children. The Lord faithfully looked after us for those seven years. We all had to learn lessons of faith. The children wanted to go to a school in the wilds but we did not have the money, so we prayed about it. A brother in Christ turned up with a little more than the amount required because the Lord told him to do so.

Another time Paul was selected for a cricket tour. He said he needed R320 but then it was changed to R500. We did not have the money so I told him that we should pray about it. His outlook at the time was that prayer was useless and one only prayed when there was no hope. We asked for the money by Friday as we needed to pay on the Monday. Paul suggested another way out of paying off monthly. I refused and said if there was no money then no tour. On Sunday I preached again at a church quite far away on the parables. It was something they had never heard before and they gave us a gift of R500 towards our expenses. I told Paul on our arrival back home. He told me that I had not done it, but the Lord had.

Our children went to Plumstead High School down the road. Prior to that they both went to John Graham Primary. Jeanette befriended Mary Ann and they became best friends. Jeanette led Mary Ann to the Lord. David who was Mary Ann's brother wanted to date Jeanette, but she replied that when pigs grew wings and could fly, she would go out with him. Later David came to faith in Christ in the army and when he asked Jeanette to go for a cup of coffee, suddenly pigs grew wings! Jeanette and Mary Ann matriculated together, went to Teacher's training college together, got married in the same year. Mary Ann was Jeanette's bridesmaid. Jeanette had a son and daughter, and Mary Ann had a son and daughter. David and Jeanette lived in our home followed by Mary Ann and her husband Grant.

Paul also went to teacher's training college but after nine months said he did not want to be a teacher. He went as a gap year student to the UK and eventually landed up teaching biology to A level students and coaching sport at Hurstpierpoint College.

We were given a small coupe on our return to SA in 1984. It was hand painted in some places and the children were ashamed to ride in it. We needed a better car. A call came from a garage about a possible car. I nearly bought it when a call came that a customer wanted to sell his car, a Mazda 626SLX, full house. The garage owner gave me a quarter of the price and it was ideal for our work. The children were no longer ashamed. I learnt to carry out our own repairs and the garage owner allowed me to use his facilities without charge.

We learnt that auctions were the best places to furnish our home and obtain transport. The danger is that one could be carried away. There are two such auction places nearby. We bought our unusual bookshelves there, our carpets, display cabinets and possibly about 90% of the all the furniture at a fraction of the new price. The American embassy provided us with the best from America when their furniture was sold there. I no longer painted

pictures in South Africa as the artists were so good and their paintings went for such low prices. Our house became like an art gallery with works by well-known artists for a pittance.

We bought a Honda for my wife there and a BMW 316i which turned out to be a mistake. It had only done 19000km and was three years old. I paid much more than I expected because Paul was with me and liked the car. I used it for three years only on long trips and sold it for more than I paid but it had only done 38000km. It was a mistake because wherever we went there were raised eyebrows. Fancy a missionary driving a BMW! Too good or too expensive! Paul's only regret was that Dad never allowed him to drive it. I am glad because I later discovered he used to drive the Honda at great speed down a certain road to hold the record for the highest speed attained. We bought Paul Beach buggies which were modified VW Beetles. He had a bright green one followed by a red. I drove them myself. I used to wear a bright red balaclava to hide my features and white hair and old men thought I was a young man breaking all the rules of the road like driving the wrong way down one-way roads.

The twelve years in South Africa went by quickly. We were able to return to Lebanon a few times in those years and maintain contact with our friends and fellow workers on the field. It did not seem possible that we could return as Paul had to complete his studies and we needed someone to take our place in the mission office.

Then one day Paul and I were playing golf and I told the Lord that if He called Paul into His service even though it was the other side of the world, I would release him into His care. Within a short time, Paul was on his way to the UK, Jeanette had completed her studies. Missionaries, who were having trouble with their son's education and needed to remain in Cape Town, offered to take our place.

## 1996 - 2002

### Clay Reused in Lebanon

We had the problem of raising our support all over again. It did not start off too well. When we re-joined the mission pool it was found that seven years previously the mission had paid me one cheque too many and therefore would not give us anything for our first month back. Sometime later Al and Bernice gave me a private gift which made up for that “failure” by the mission. In the past when we felt the home office of the mission let us down, the Lord would rectify the situation. Once it only raised the cost per kilometre after the long tour of a visiting speaker was over - but a set of new tyres was given en route.

After sharing our proposed return to the Lebanon with the elders of our assembly they informed us that the assembly could not give extra help. I was saddened because they were looking at their limitations instead of to the Lord. Noreen wept because their actions showed no concern after years of practical service on her part as the Sunday school head. We went to George along the East coast of South Africa and arrived at a Christian hotel. The manager had agreed to arrange meetings for me and was given plenty of time. He passed it on to another who did the same. No meetings were arranged. I told the Lord that it was a waste of time. One day I went into the lounge and sat with my back to the large window overlooking Victoria Bay. A lady of 84 looked at me and thought that I was an old man. Suddenly she said that a young man told her the year before that she had to be born again. She asked everyone what it meant and where had he got the idea. I took a Bible and sat next to her. She thought that I was not an old man but a young man in his mid-fifties. I read John 3 and pointed out that a person could not come to Christ by reason or logic. It had to be a work of the Spirit of God. I gave her other Scripture references and left her. The next day I found her reading all those verses. I told her there was a chapel in the grounds. We went there and I

explained the way of salvation. Then we prayed together, and I told her to tell someone what she had done. She told everyone in the hotel. She said that she used to be troubled by the term “born again” but she was no longer troubled but thrilled. I gave her a copy of my book and told her that I was preaching in the local Baptist church the next morning. That Sunday she was there and heard a message on a parable. She thought it was the best message she had ever heard but of course she had been born again. So, my not having meetings led to the salvation of a soul. At Athens airport I found out that she was being used as an example that it is never too late to trust in the Lord.

I went to other cities and slowly our support level rose. We knew that our flat in Lebanon was rent free so that helped to reduce the amount we required. Individuals in our local assembly said they would support us. I asked the Lord that all their gifts would amount to R1000 a month. Eventually that amount from our assembly was sent in for our support. Our previous home assembly in Johannesburg never increased their support but the one where I was baptised became our largest single supporter. Eventually more than half of our support came from either CB assemblies or individuals - Baptists, DRC, Anglicans, AOG friends made up the rest.

During 1996 prior to our return to Lebanon the Lord acted in ways to provide for our future and the needs of our children. We felt we needed to provide a house for our daughter in the future. My wife had driven past a house near the church that displayed a private sale notice. I visited the place and had a chat with the owner who wanted R235,000. I wished him luck and returned home. We prayed about it and asked the Lord what we should offer for the house. The figure was R200,000 cash which we did not have. The man asked me to make an offer and eventually accepted it. We had to find the money and after prayer I was told that I need not worry but every time there was a need it would be met. At the

same time the book was re-printed, and those expenses had to be met. Each time a payment had to be made, the money was available. We used all our savings plus the money from the sale of the cars including the BMW. We were still a lot short, but all was paid before we left. A family in full time service rented the place at below the market rental rate. Since then, the house's valuation has gone up by 400% and our daughter could not afford to buy a house at the current prices. She and her husband are in Beirut serving in our place.

On our return to Beirut in 1996, we were left at a flat in Mansourieh where we had never lived before. We were left alone because they said we had been there before so would know how to settle down and organise our affairs. The downstairs pump did not work. It pumped water to the roof tank. I called on the God of Elijah to help me as I knew nothing about pumps. I stripped it and put it together. Nothing worked because there was no electricity. When it returned the pump worked and we had water. I had a dream that I would not need to look for people but that they would come to me - and that is what happened. The pressure to do something about reaching the lost was gone. I had to learn to trust the Lord to use me in His own time. As I walked about and did my normal business I came across a travel agent who thought she knew the Lord so I gave her Josh McDowell's book "More Than A Carpenter" - MTAC - which translated into Arabic is called Najjaar wa Aathama (A carpenter and greater). She started reading it and said that it was about Jesus and she knew Him. I told her that Jesus had not changed her life so she should read it through. One day she said that Jesus did not want her because she had prayed but nothing had happened. I told her that I thought that was because she only wanted to give a part of her life to Him and He wanted all or nothing. We were going over her complaints when the phone rang so I left. Later in the week on my return she was full of the joy of Jesus.

Nearby our home there was a shop that sold Persian carpets. As I walked past the shop, I noticed a man with an open Bible in front of him. I asked him why he was reading it and he replied that he was looking for the truth. I asked if I could help him and for six months, I regularly visited him and explained the truths of his need of salvation. I gave him MTAC, which he might have read but gave back to me without comment. Later I returned it to him and told him to read all of it, as it would show him the way to the Lord. Sometime later I talked to his son in the shop and his father could not keep quiet and gave me all the right answers. When I asked him why he could not shut up, he took out a prayer that he had written which came from the book and unknown to me he had given his heart to the Lord and now could not keep quiet. I had bought presents for other people and felt that I should buy something for Noreen. I bought a Persian rug at a reduced price from my new brother. Later he sold a carpet for \$3000. Noreen so liked the rug that she asked for another. He gave me a similar one for the same price and said he was making very little profit but the next day sold another expensive carpet. That was after a long period of no sales. Later the shop closed, and I never saw him again.

We stayed in the mountains in an empty flat and went visiting during the holidays. We went to Shemlan to visit old friends of the missionaries, a lady and her two daughters that went to our school. I asked the mother about her spiritual state and told her to read John 3 and we would return the next day. I explained it to her and wrote a prayer out for her if she wanted to trust Jesus as her Saviour. Then I spoke to the daughter and told her the ABCD. I said that she had been at our school for so long but had never trusted Jesus herself. Of course,

A stands for Admit that you are the sinner for whom Jesus died.  
B for Believe that Jesus the Son of God died for you personally.

C for Commit your life to Him totally as your Saviour, Lord and Friend.

D for Declare your faith to someone that you have given yourself to Him to follow Him.

We discovered later that both mother and daughter had put their trust in Jesus. She then phoned her sisters in other countries. They asked her to pray the prayer over the phone and followed her. She told me the prayer was “magic”. I replied no because only Jesus can save people from their sins. The lady of the house told me to talk to a Druze young man working for her. This I did in Arabic and gave him MTAC. A month later I saw him again and talked to him encouraging him to read MTAC. Another month passed. The lady said I should meet the young man as he had changed, and she could trust him with her business. He was all smiles and had given his life to the Lord. He went along to a meeting run by OM and took his cousin who also responded. Then about eleven members of the cousin’s family responded and are meeting with that small church. I mention these examples just to point out that it was in ordinary circumstances that contacts were made and that it was entirely the Lord’s doing. All that we have accomplished is a result of the work of the Lord.

Another who sold haberdashery came to faith in Christ. I gave him MTAC and followed this up with the JESUS video.

One day my daughter wanted to visit a fellow teacher and I went along to look after her as the streets were without lights and unsafe. I sat at one end of the lounge while she chatted at the other. In walked Khalil, a brother-in-law of the teacher. He had delved into the teaching of the JWs, the Mormons, the New Age and came to talk to me. I told him about Jesus, and it resulted in us praying together. His sister-in-law said it was a miracle. Then the Lord healed him three times without him asking to be healed. His head was in constant pain from boxing and his back bent over and crippled. He could hardly see out of his eyes. The Lord healed

him so that he no longer had pain, could walk straight up, and could see normally. Later he was baptised in a nearby Baptist church and returned to his wife and daughter in Canada.

A Czech family sent their children to our school. The oldest son Daniel said that they did not believe in God because communism had controlled the country for 50 years. He must have been surprised by the emphasis on the Bible, chapel every morning and a Bible lesson every week. Once he told me that he could not follow Jesus because the rich man was told to sell all and give to the poor and follow Jesus. He could not do that, as he was a student. I told him that Jesus said that to the rich man and not to him. In assembly I tried to get the message across with simple illustrations and keep it to a maximum of eight minutes. I once offered the assembly two dollars or 5LL. No one came to collect it until a believer in Jesus responded and all thought we had arranged it. The next time ten years later I again offered two dollars or 1500LL. A teacher told a student to go and get it. Everyone thought it was just an illustration and not to be received as a gift. Of course, I was able to apply it to them that God was offering the gift of salvation, but they needed to receive it.

I obtained a photocopy of a cheque, written it out to me for a million dollars and photocopied it again. When a student read it out in assembly, I asked them what I should do with the money? Buy a Ferrari, a new house, etc. I said I would go on living the same way as abundant possessions does not lead to abundant life. There is in every one's life an emptiness that only the Lord can fill. That same day I showed a teacher the cheque. As a result, he came and sat next to me and asked if I was going to buy a new house, a new car etc. I asked him if he would like me to give him a gift of \$20,000. Then when I told him it was just an illustration for a talk, he immediately moved away and sat elsewhere. I was saddened that money made me important and attracted friends, but lack thereof drove people away.

One day Daniel completed a Bible lesson of mine with very spiritual answers. I spoke to him afterwards and said that they were the answers of a Christian who loved Jesus, yet I knew he was not one. He replied that indeed he was because after Christmas he realised that there was an emptiness in his life and in his room, he had put his trust in Jesus.

I prayed and asked the Lord for a fresh message for assembly the next morning. I remembered an illustration in a book, which I afterwards realised came from MTAC - about the lady that appeared in a law court before a judge who later on turned out to be her father. I asked if there were many ways to God. Contrary to expectations I told them that there were many religions and many ways but when they died, they would meet God as their judge. However, there is only one way to the Father and that is through Jesus. I asked the Lord for further clarification. The principal of the school was very strict, and the children were scared of him. At three in the afternoon, he was without tie and jacket and in would come some of his eight granddaughters who would tell him their stories and he would be all smiles. They never ever knew him as the principal but only as Grandpa. In the same way because Jesus has taken our punishment and sin, we will only know God as Father and never as Judge because the Father has given all judgement to the Son. For me it was a revelation. No wonder that thirty years before, that Australian had taught that Jesus was the only way to the Father. I realised that I would only know God as Father. Unlike my earthly father He would know my needs in advance. Jesus did not need to speak on my behalf because the Father Himself loved me. As my Father, He could deal with me differently because my sin had been dealt with as well as my punishment and I would only know Him as Father. Not to be likened to earthly fathers who have little time for their children.

I was asked to be the Field leader but only accepted because Noreen would help to shoulder the burden. She did all the work, and I got the credit!

Jeanette came to stay with us for a few weeks on her way to the UK to work. I did not like the idea of her going there on her own. I said she could stay with us for nothing and save what she earned through her teaching. The principal thought she was a great speaker and teacher and offered her a position should she return to Lebanon. David, her future husband, visited Lebanon and was offered a post at another school.

We attended two services every Sunday morning. An African English service in a Baptist church and then went to the other end of Hadeth to the Arabic service. I was once asked to preach at the African service. I dealt with a parable and it was well received. The African leaders, Peter, Charles and Dixon asked me to teach them the Bible. This I did preparing notes for them on every book of the Bible and meeting on the tops of buildings, exposed to rain and the elements with mosquitoes eating us up and large pots of food being prepared by their wives. They were not that organised and often would not arrange a speaker until the day before. I would be asked to preach at very short notice. Once I was sitting in a pew when I was asked to preach the message. The Lord blessed and souls were saved. Peter said he never understood the parables until he read my book. Once I was able to help a closed Christian bookshop sell its good commentaries and it helped some of the African people. Peter and Charles are in Ghana pastoring churches and need encouraging.

We returned to Cape Town December 1997 for the wedding of our daughter Jeanette to David her friend of five years. While we were there Paul brought Debbie, the daughter of a missionary who had been in Iran, to see us. I came under strong conviction that I had to speak to her about Jesus. In our lounge I asked her if she was a Christian. She tried to convince me of her faith, but I told

her bluntly she was not a Christian. She accepted that and said she was not prepared to follow Christ unless she did wholeheartedly. She visited us again and I pointed out to her that my questioning of her the first time was not my doing but from the Lord. She replied that she had not stopped thinking about it. Paul had convinced her that young people should not sleep together until they were married. She returned to Cape Town and Paul took her in his vehicle to Hout Bay and spoke to her for five hours. He kept bringing her back to Jesus. She went home that night and phoned Paul the next morning and asked to see him. Later she had lunch with us and told me in the garden that she had thought about the decision she had to make. She realised that if she came to Christ, she would have to give up drinking, dancing and smoking. She then realised that Christians were happy people who did not do those things. She said a change came over her and she realised the obvious thing to do was to give herself to Jesus. I told her about reading her Bible and prayer and she said that her father did and taught that and all that she had learnt from him had new meaning. She never told her parents until they came to Cape Town. Their hearts were filled with gratitude to the Lord. She and Paul went on a long Safari to Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe doing white water rafting and watching animals in the wild. Later Paul followed her to Scotland but on his birthday, she told him that she felt the Lord did not want them to get married. He was shattered and came to be with us in Lebanon.

Paul had so many closed doors and disappointments in his life that I cried out to the Lord to bring some happiness into his life. Of course, we realised later on that the Lord was bringing him to Beirut. Paul said he was fed up with girls and the next one the Lord would have to bring to him, and she would have to make the first move.

There was a young American girl called Betsy and I once spoke about Paul to her. Later they met casually and neither showed

interest because she was not well at the time. Paul was sitting with his mother in her health room at the school where she was the school nurse when in walked Betsy who said that she was Betsy and suggested they go for a walk. Both had similar stories to tell. Within a month they wanted to get engaged. He wanted to see her parents first. That meant father had to pay his fare to Ohio. He needed a visa and flew to Cyprus where out of 45 applicants only one was granted and that to Paul. Her parents were in agreement. Paul eventually went back to Cape Town to apply for a fiancé visa that was very difficult to obtain. He was approached by the Sports Science Institute about the possibility of doing their diploma and degree in Sports Science Management. He sent me an email stating there was something I needed to pray about. I wrote back that whenever he sent me such a request for prayer the bottom line was money. Betsy suggested that he ask me directly, which is what he did, and we gave him all we had in our account in Cape Town. He was thus able to get both a diploma and degree and bring all his previous training under one definite qualification. With the help of a friend of the family, Cynthia, who took him to the embassy, he was able to get his fiancé visa. Later in April 2001, we went to Ohio for the wedding. We were glad we took extra dollars with us because when we got there Paul and Betsy were not able to rent an apartment as they had no credit rating but if a certain sum was in their bank account they could do so. Before we left Lebanon in 2002, we shared with them our Lebanese savings to help them buy an apartment of their own.

A Moslem divorced his wife and left her with two children. She came to our school and found that Colin White dealt with her with compassion. He allowed her to bring her children to our school and pay what she could. She wondered why a man of another faith should treat her so kindly. She started going with a teacher at the school to a Baptist church but later came to our church. She came regularly in fair and foul weather. One day I met her in the street

and gave her a copy of MTAC. She read the Arabic version and put her trust in Jesus. Later she gave her testimony of salvation.

When we left Lebanon, she took Noreen's place as grandma to Joshua and looked after him. She later was given a post at the school and continues to train to improve her qualifications. Her children are bright and enjoy the school.

I mention all this because our return to Lebanon for the last six years had an impact on so many lives. That of David and Jeanette and Paul and Betsy apart from those in Lebanon. We returned with grateful hearts in 2002 in August, believing that our work there was complete.

While we were away in the Middle East, all my family members died one by one. My mother outlived them all. She was an outstanding woman who played and taught the piano and organ. She cared for an asthmatic son through many difficult years and tried to protect him but had to discover her own need of Jesus. She played the organ and piano for her church, but this only happened after I went to Bible College and left for the Middle East. She did not like me speaking to people about Jesus and upsetting them. She was opposed to my going to the Bible Institute, to our leaving for Lebanon, to our adopting, to our return years later to Lebanon but each time discovered that the Lord's will was best for me. She gained a wonderful daughter-in-law in Noreen and the best grandchildren she could have wished for. She did not want to talk about her own personal need of salvation. Noreen eventually wrote out a prayer for her. We do not know if she prayed it, but she changed and when I packed up her cottage, I found her open Bible. Eternity will reveal all. When we were told about our inheritance, we gave the children and the Lord their rightful portions. We were glad we were able to be involved in the building of the Baptist church in Hadeth. A strange thing then happened when the Receiver of Revenue found another account of my

mother's that no one knew about, but which covered all we had given away.

Nothing changed when it came to looking for bargains. I once bought three strings of pearls from Tahiti in Bourj Hammoud for the three ladies in my life. My wife, daughter and daughter-in-law at a price that even horrified the agent. As one gets older, giving is much more fun than receiving. Strange thing is that when one is young you do not have the money and need it but when you are old you have enough and do not care for it. I am not very economical. Noreen will tell anyone that there is something that really upsets her. When I wear new clothes there is always a car to be repaired or a place to be painted. I am quite content to wear the same clothes for long periods of time. She is now my valet and suggests what I should wear. I do not worry about my appearance whereas she is careful about hers. I could live in a desert without water, but she must shower every day and even use cold water in winter.

We have always lived a simple lifestyle. Never bought a new car though we have had some close to new. We like good furniture, good paintings, and tasteful décor but not ostentatious living as we have nothing to prove. We both are prepared to allow the Lord to give us that which we need.

About a year before we left Lebanon, I was told by the Lord to take our money out of Lebanese Lira which was earning 10% and place it in a foreign currency, I chose sterling. As the months passed, I felt the Lord had misled me. In the last week before we left Lebanon the dollar dropped in value and sterling rose giving us an extra \$2785 more than had we left it in LL. We got to SA and the rate then was R10 to the dollar or R17 to sterling. We were able to carry out repairs in both houses. Money was not a problem as 10 to the dollar was a very good rate. I bought a 1300 Toyota for less than the price of the Renault 19 I sold in Beirut and an Old Mercedes 230E for \$2000. The week we arrived back I obtained at

an auction our oak lounge suite for the price of junk I sold in Beirut and a king size super mattress and base which has done our back problems a great deal of good.

We returned to Lebanon in 2004 for the birth of our granddaughter, Abigail, and spent three months visiting friends and speaking to people about the Lord.

Nothing has changed for me, as I am still totally dependent on the Lord for guidance every day. For years we put up with old dark cupboards in our kitchen. We asked the experts for quotes to redo our kitchen and I had no peace. When I prayed about it, I was convicted that I had not consulted the Lord. The suggestion came that I should do it myself. I had never made a cupboard in my life. Noreen was dismayed when I told her of my guidance from the Lord. I repainted the kitchen, obtained light oak furniture and a bright tapestry and completed the cupboards in eight days. Every step was bathed in prayer as I asked for help and ideas. Noreen now enjoys her kitchen. I give all the credit to the Carpenter from Nazareth.

I bought a Honda car at an auction but after putting everything right and we both liked it, I was told by the Lord I could not keep it. It was bought by a recent widow who had asked that week for a car she could afford, preferably a Honda.

Our current ministry keeps us occupied. Noreen visits the elderly, takes Bible studies and meetings. I have joined a golf club as a five-day member to reach retired men who have no knowledge of salvation. Two men have come to faith in Christ, one a man of 82 and another a young man of 20. One day a complete stranger gave me a Taylor made golf bag worth \$200. Paul keeps me supplied with clubs that have brought enjoyment. Nearby is a golf driving range with opportunities to speak to people about salvation. I spoke to a stranger who was watching those hitting balls. We spent over an hour speaking about the need of salvation. We both felt it was by divine appointment and we prayed together.

A few days later I heard he was telling everyone that he was saved, and that Jesus is alive.

Some of our children (Jeanette, David and the two grandchildren) are returning for five months of deputation before returning to service in a difficult area of Lebanon. They need those who will be raised up by the Lord to pray and give. They needed a car and in our Bible study group I heard of an old car for sale. I spent time getting the car roadworthy. Though over 20 years old it has only 83000 on the odometer but I saw it as the Lord's provision for their short stay with us.

I know that I owe everything to the Lord, my salvation from sin and a lost eternity, my life, my wife, my children, my possessions, money, houses. He owes me nothing. My desire is that I will bear fruit in old age (and continue to improve my golf which is not important but a means to reaching the lost on the golf course.)

# 2002 - 2020

## Clay Reused

### In Similar or Other Ways

Retirement - not a spelling mistake but the period of actively making Jesus known in Cape Town. Looking back over about fifteen years there is little to record.

Every day normal life apart from visits to the auction. Our present car was the result of being convicted about going to the auction on a Wednesday only to discover our car would be auctioned on the Saturday. It has served us well. David and Jeanette and family have left Lebanon and moved into their home at 68 Evremonde Rd. It became Jeanette's property in 2020.

I continued to get invitations to speak at churches and retirement places. Souls have been saved by the Lord. Of all races and origins. Bibles have been given to various people who speak different languages.

2019 while eating at Cattle Baron, a UK couple Jon and Marcy, were sitting so close to us I could not but hear they loved the Lord. They printed Christian literature. I sent them my material and Noreen's poems which they printed and sent a few copies of each to us. Since then, Noreen is busy with her life story which Jam has offered to print.

I have been diagnosed with aortic stenosis. I cannot run or walk quickly. I can continue to work in the garden provided I do it lying down.

About 13 years ago I felt God calling me to serve Him elsewhere, but I was to leave it entirely to Him. Not to do anything but to continue to trust Him. The years have flown.

I look forward to once more making Jesus known. Life without Jesus is meaningless. In the meantime, I have to help Noreen in various ways because of her struggling with pain in her back and

joints. Thankful we have each other as we grow older together. She is busy preparing the story of her life for JAM.

To God be the glory great things He has done. Hallelujah.

What a Saviour. To whom I owe everything, life, salvation, calling, family.

Potter still at work but finished article's shape not revealed!

A potter uses clay to form useful items. God needed clay in the form of JNAH to serve Him in Lebanon in 1968. The clay needed training. He needed a wife and children.

On arrival in Lebanon the training continued with Arabic studies and the learning of the culture of the people which is so similar to that of the people in the Bible.

Two children were adopted, which is unusual as locals did not do that. After the family narrowly escaped death in 1984, they returned to South Africa and served for a further 12 years, preaching the message of the Bible through that culture.

The Potter is still at work. The clay remains clay as the Potter continues to mould it for further use. Eventually the daughter and her husband served in Lebanon for 14 years.

This is the record of a lifetime of working with the Lord.



JAM Publishing is run by Jon and Marcy Emerton producing Christian books, tracts, and articles. For more copies of this and other publications, please contact them at [jon@jampublishing.co.uk](mailto:jon@jampublishing.co.uk).