

THE NARROW ROAD

Volume 4

Becoming Useful Vessels



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The Narrow Road Series

Salvation

Hear and Obey

The Power in the Word

Becoming Useful Vessels

The Pillars of Cloud and Fire

The Weapons of Our Warfare

Faith

Bearing Fruit

Questions and Answers

Purpose Your Heart

Fasting

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Fore-Word

Matthew 7:13-14 (NIV)

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But **small is the gate, and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**

John 15:7,8

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Revelation 12:10

For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down – he who accuses them day and night before our God. They have conquered them by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.

I would like to thank my wife and children for their support in the living out of these testimonies, and to my dear sisters in Christ Pauline and Caitlin for collating and editing these testimonies into book form.

I have decided to bring these to print as a legacy for my children, grandchildren and brothers and sisters in the Lord as a map of God's principles and testimonies of our journey here on earth.

I believe that in years to come as my relatives hear of our exploits in the Holy Spirit, and their hunger in God is sparked, they will want to know what secrets of God we discovered.

I believe that these testimonies will cause them to search for the truth.

- Raf

BECOMING USEFUL VESSELS

Recapping on what we've covered:

- 1) Purposing the heart
- 2) Hearing and listening
- 3) The power in the Word of God and the testimony of how to use it

These are all equipping and weapons for when we get out there and share the gospel.

Testimonies are really good to share, especially when we're ministering to someone and we don't want to be blunt with them about their problem.

We can use a testimony that gives them the keys for how to overcome their problem by sharing how someone else overcame the same problem.

Most people want to get right. Testimonies are a wonderful way of delivering a parable and of reaching people with the gospel. It's palatable to their ears and they will sit and listen.

We can share the gospel of how Jesus died and took our sin upon Himself and then rose from the dead. The key is to get people who don't know Jesus Christ to listen to us.

All of us have testimonies but we must analyse the lessons in those testimonies as it's a very simple way of sharing the gospel. People will receive it. They'll be open to us and will relate because a lot of the time we're speaking about things they have experienced or been through themselves.

Use testimonies a lot. If we haven't got testimonies, get some. We need fresh testimony every day.

For example, if we meet a woman with breast cancer, we can share a testimony about overcoming fear. Nothing brings fear into a woman like finding a lump in her breast. People look and say that if God can do it for someone else, He can do it for me.

When my Dad had prostate cancer and it went through all his bones, the only reason I had faith was because five or six months earlier I was working in Kapunda with an elder of an Adelaide church. His father had the same problem.

Everyone expected him to die – they were already dividing the inheritance. I was appalled. I asked how many in the family were born again.

He said the majority of them – there were three brothers and only one was not born again.

I said, “What about getting your Dad healed rather than dividing the inheritance?”

He said that that was impossible and he told me what the doctors had said. I told him I was going to go and see his Dad.

I jumped in the ute and told him that he may as well come too. I was going to see his father and bring some hope to the man.

We need to build people’s hope. Without hope the substance of faith has nothing to hang onto.

The man had prostate cancer but when we walked into his place, it was full of religion. He was a good Catholic man and he had big solid gold crosses, worth a lot of money. The house was filled with this sort of stuff. When I walked in I wondered how anyone could get past the religion to get this man healed – no wonder the family were letting him die.

I said to him, “Mate, I have an answer for you but you’re not going to like it. It’s going to cost you something.”

He said, “Are you after money?”

I said, “No. I don’t want your money. I want all these crosses out of your house.”

He said, “What!”

We’re talking Christianity. But Jesus was still hanging on the cross.

I said, “He’s not there anymore. Get rid of those things. He lives in you if you allow Him. You say you’re a Christian. You have prostate cancer. Get rid of them.”

He said, “No way!”

I said, “Well keep your cancer. I can’t help you. Now I can understand why your sons aren’t praying for you.”

I started walking out of the house and his wife said, “No, no. Don’t go. We’ll do it.” She wanted her husband alive.

She went to get a bag. I told her to test what I was saying by getting all of the religious artefacts out of the house.

She put them in a bag which she put in the shed. Immediately peace started to come into the house. I was about to leave but the Holy Spirit told me he still had one (artefact) and it was around his neck.

The Holy Spirit said to me, "Scapula." The Catholics have a leather thong with a 'bizzo' on it. It was under his polo neck collar.

I said, "Are you an idiot or something? We're trying to get you healed. Don't you want to be healed? Give me that thing around your neck."

I couldn't see it but the Holy Spirit had shown it to me.

He said, "No! No! You're not having that."

I said, "Give it to me. "

His wife went and grabbed it from his neck. His pain left immediately that thing was taken off.

Then he understood. All of a sudden this man was changing his whole way of thinking. The pain had left him. He was totally healed.

The family started jumping up and down. He started to build a relationship with Jesus based on a daily living, walking, talking relationship and not religion. He was having time with Jesus and reading His Word.

I knew that if God could do that for him, He could do it for my Dad. I get my faith from one miracle to the next. I see God work. I can always encourage myself by reminding myself of what He has done.

I always have a testimony in my quiver to release to the next person because yesterday He did something fresh. It's fresh testimony. He hasn't stopped working. We do but He hasn't.

We don't look for the opportunities. Sometimes we think we're busy but dying to ourselves means getting out of our comfort zones and doing something for someone else.

Dying to ourselves means there's a discipleship that has to come into our hearts where we put our sleep, eating habits, sexual habits out of the way – things that we're comfortable with that we do as human beings.

We do things that we put out of the way to allow Him to grow in us. We fast, not for Him as He doesn't need us to fast, but for us. We're putting our flesh to death.

Our flesh has to die as it says in Romans 6 and 7 and even 8 where we start getting into the Spirit of God but first our flesh has to be put to death.

When we pray in tongues it does something. It executes the position that Christ declared us to be – dead to sin; put to death by the power of the Holy Spirit. That's why we pray in tongues.

We need to understand that it's only the Spirit of God that can put us into the place where He can put our flesh to death.

How many struggle when we pray in tongues? How many times have we set ourselves to fast, we pray in tongues and then do something and we expect that we are going to come out of it a lot better than how we went in - expecting to be seeing and hearing, discerning and walking in an anointing?

Have we ever gone into a fast like that? I learnt that I would come out of those fasts and seasons of praying in tongues ten times worse than when I started.

Do we understand what we're doing? We're edifying ourselves, building the spirit man and it's painful. It's a painful process. The gift of tongues is because He wants to deal with us.

He is actually speaking on our behalf, moving us away from the infirmities that stop us from growing. An infirmity is not a sickness. It's a weakness in our character, a weakness in our spirit, a weakness in the character that He needs to build so He can pour His anointing into us and it won't leak out at the time He needs us most.

Our character needs to be strengthened continually so that God can pour His Spirit into us. So that we can be vessels for Him, ready in season and out of season.

When someone is going to hell and we are the only ones standing between them and hell we need to hope that our vessels aren't leaking. The gift of tongues is the way the Holy Spirit can purge our spirits.

Wineskins – new wine cannot be poured into old wineskins. They won't hold the wine. New wine needs to be put into new wineskins.

The Holy Spirit is trying to change us into new wineskins. That's why it's so painful when we pray in tongues. That's why it's so difficult but if God can get hold of our mouths He can get hold of us.

James said that our mouths are the centre of spiritual warfare. The tongue is a tiny thing that sets the whole forest alight. It's a rudder on a ship that will turn the whole ship.

The tongue is such a powerful instrument. Is it any wonder that God wants to get hold of it early in our walk? He knows the potential it has to undo us or do us in.

He wants to build us with it. Edification means to actually build and the building process is not a simple thing. When builders start a job they first clear the land so they have a level site.

Sometimes they need to build up the footings and lift it above ground level. That means putting soil in and building the site up.

When the Spirit of God wants to build us He brings things in, generally His Word, to build us up. He brings something so He can build something that will stand in us for eternity.

We are not a temporary feature.

What He's building is going to last forever. The gift of tongues tends to do this, to do something in us.

There are diversities of tongues. One of them is to edify ourselves, to build ourselves up. We can switch that on and off at any time. We have been made the steward of feeding ourselves through that gift of the Spirit. This gift build us.

The building process is painful. We don't do it often enough – we get this gift and then forget to use it. God has given us this gift to make us the stewards of building our spiritual lives with Him.

1 Corinthians 14:4 "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself. He who prophesies edifies the church."

That gift of speaking in a tongue is given to us to edify ourselves. We are made the steward and we are responsible for building our spirit man and allowing the Holy Spirit full reign.

Our job as pastors and leaders in the Kingdom of God is to show people that they need to turn themselves over to the Holy Spirit for this to happen.

My whole job when I'm not ministering to people who are unsaved is speaking to saved people and helping them turn themselves over to the Holy Spirit so He can have His way in them.

We become very effective in the things of God when we can turn ourselves over to Him to do it.

Some people wonder what their job is in the Kingdom. I want to share this so we may actually know who we are. Paul said that he was revealing mysteries,

divine revelation, the God of glory living in us. God in us was the divine mystery that Paul was revealing, the revelation he was sharing.

That Jesus was now able to live in human vessels. God had come down to make His home in human vessels.

1 Corinthians 12: 25 "that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another."

That's why we're all family. We rub up against each other, we annoy each other, we build each other up, we love each other – a family.

1 Corinthians 12: 26 -27 "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually."

"You are the body of Christ" is speaking to us corporately. We are in the body of Christ. We are all a part of the body of Christ.

"...and members individually." This is not only talking to us as a corporate body but also as an individual. This brings responsibility.

1 Corinthians 12: 28 "And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues."

This verse speaks about the functions in the body of Christ. Every function in the body of Christ is encapsulated in that one verse. The eight functions of the body are in that one verse.

We all fit in there somewhere. If we want to be effective and bring people into the kingdom, we need to be able to teach them where they are going.

This lowly gift of tongues that we were talking about in Romans is right at the very bottom of these functions in the body. All of the preceding functions in v.28 seems like a job description until we get to "diversities/varieties of tongues."

This seems to be out of place. Is "varieties of tongues" a job? What does it do? Is it a job? It is.

We've been made stewards to edify ourselves so it's a job of sorts. In churches we see different teachings and moves – the apostolic move, the prophetic move, the latest flavour of the month.

God is trying to show us something here. We have job descriptions. We need to know who we are before we tell some else where we've been and what the Kingdom is like. If we understand this verse we'll see our part in the body.

When a baby is born and it becomes an engineer - was it born an engineer? When a ship's captain is born, was he born a ship's captain? No. They were born as babies. When we come into the kingdom of God we come in as a baby.

A brand new Christian. It's called a born again experience. We are born into the Kingdom.

We're given a baptism in the Spirit, we get a deposit of the Holy Spirit when we come into the Kingdom.

It's like in Australia, children were given bank books and the bank would always put a twenty cent piece in the book to open the account for them.

The children would get a deposit and then they had to keep filling it. I believe that's what it's like with the Holy Ghost. We are given a deposit when we're born again and then we have to fill it. We have to start to be filled with the Spirit and overflow.

An apostle is not born an apostle. Nor is a prophet or teacher. Pastors and evangelists are not in this list. Remember every function is in that scripture.

But there are gifts of miracles and healings which qualify the positions of the pastor and the evangelist. The gifts of miracles and healings become the qualifications.

These are job descriptions for everyone in the Body of Christ. We don't grow immediately we come into the Kingdom and become a pastor. We don't grow and become an apostle the minute we walk into the Kingdom of God.

But we can ALL speak in tongues the day we walk into the Kingdom of God. Tongues is at the very bottom: you can't build a building from the top. You have to build from the bottom up so tongues becomes a foundational gift. It's the gift that everything gets built on.

Remember we're reading this so there would be no schism or splitting in the Body, so that when we bring people into the Kingdom we'll know exactly what we're bringing them into.

We can share with them, invite them to come and pray for them to be filled with the Spirit of God who will build them and grow them.

Evangelism is a two-part thing. It's not just bringing people in, it's also growing them. It's bringing them into a place where they can be fed. So we have these gifts which we don't understand fully but without them we can't manifest Jesus Christ in us.

This foundational gift of the Holy Spirit of God is foundational; it's right at the very base and it grows everything else.

Church splits: we've been given everything by God but then we mess it up because we don't have the understanding of what God wants us to see.

Church splits are a sad thing. God gives us His Spirit to lead us and guide us and He makes us a steward to build or edify ourselves through this gift of tongues. It says "diversities of tongues."

There are four different types of tongues. We group them all together, apply the same rule and that's why we end up with such a mess in the Body of Christ when it comes to the teaching on tongues.

The only tongue that we can switch on and off is the one that edifies us. The other gifts of tongues we cannot turn on and off. But we become a willing member. We cannot switch them on or off – He does it.

One of them is to edify people in a public meeting where someone speaks in tongues and someone brings the interpretation. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is what brings people out to speak in that tongue for the edification of the whole body.

We still pretend that we can turn it on or off when we want to - sometimes we have a thought come to our mind so we think we'll prophesy it by speaking in tongues but nothing manifests because we aren't allowing Him to do it – we're still edifying ourselves.

Not understanding what that function is. What about the function that gives us a brand new language in another country – we can't turn that on or off.

What about the function that brings us into intercession – we can't turn that on or off either.

Some intercessors do turn it on and off but they are still only edifying themselves. He is the only One who can do it. Intercession is when He puts us in the place of someone going to hell and He puts us right in the way so we actually stop and avert them and bring them into the Kingdom.

When He does that, when He starts getting us to pray like that, it is a privilege.

We don't understand this gift of tongues. We're born again. I'm a Christian who loves the Lord.

We need to understand these things. It's a foundational gift because He puts everything into line in the Body by His Spirit.

Too often we put people in charge of things in church because they are highly skilled administrators and then we wonder why a split comes.

Too often we look at the talent in the natural and build the person because of that – not because the Holy Spirit has said to raise them into that position.

We see the fruit of it. But God wants to build something on the inside of us. He wants to pray on our behalf. What's so special about this gift of tongues?

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 14:2 that he who speaks in a tongue doesn't speak to men but to God for no one understands him but in the Spirit he speaks mysteries.

In the Spirit he speaks mysteries. What sort of mysteries? It reveals the path for our life. It reveals our position in the Body. It reveals how we grow.

We can get good or bad administrators but I'd rather have an average administrator filled with the Holy Spirit. We can have good helps.

There are people overflowing and willing to help but everything they touch is a disaster and yet they are very capable most times.

I would rather have one guy who is trying because the Holy Spirit led him to it and brought him in. Then I know that it's God at work.

What about gifts of healings and miracles? The qualifications of pastors and evangelists. That's what qualifies them in the kingdom of God.

People qualify them differently – a piece of paper qualifies them. But God wants to qualify them in a different manner. He already has it written down.

He has His plan, His rules. He says to allow His Spirit to put us into place and grow through the ranks. We grow as a child from level to level.

We're not born prophets or apostles or teachers.

I'm not a teacher. When we started meetings we would have people come in who would have ten pages more than the book, more than I ever understood. I said, "God, I'm intimidated. What do I do here?"

He said, "Just teach what I've shown you. You shock the living daylights out of them."

So I would. If He can do it with a simple person like me, He can do it with anyone. We're intelligent. We can apply things. We can do things.

Don't let the Word become a dead Word. Let the Spirit take hold of us. Let Him speak to us on a daily basis.

I can remember waking up and saying, "Lord, there has to be more to this walk." I didn't want to get into church politics or Bible College. I came out of the world and I was a street-wise man.

I knew business and how things worked. I knew how people manipulated things and I would look and think that church has as much of this as the world has so I wanted to be kept out of that.

He brought me into something that was real. I wanted the reality, not the sham or make-believe stuff. I didn't want anything that wouldn't get me anywhere but it would just fill space and time. There had to be more.

We have to be relevant. I look at this Centre (YWAM, Fiji) and I know that someone has given their lives over to establish it. Someone has decided that they were going to live for Christ and do something that would show, that would manifest, that we're going to be able to preach and teach and reach other people. We're going to grow the Kingdom. The Kingdom is people.

It's not an 'airy-fairy' thing. The Kingdom is building people. The Kingdom is bringing people in and releasing them from the works of the devil.

There's a cost. It's everything. It doesn't just cost our tithes but it costs our lives. We come into the Kingdom and it costs us nothing but from that minute on it costs us everything.

We've either given Him our lives or given Him half. We can only walk down the road where we've given Him half a life for so long because it splits and goes in two different directions. We can't keep walking on two roads as they get further and further apart.

God wants us to understand that He has given us the most precious gift He has. He says don't grieve the Holy Spirit. Why would He say that? Because He's precious to Him. He's a person. He's a personality. He gets wounded. We've all wounded Him at times. God doesn't want us to wound His Holy Spirit but to give over to Him.

He's a gentleman. He won't take ground – He wants us to give it. And He'll help us to achieve that. He wants us to come into a place where we'll be so effective that every time we walk somewhere change comes; the spiritual atmosphere changes.

The revelation of the Word of God brings a change in our hearts. If we allow the Holy Spirit to take hold of what I'm sharing, we will see seeds start to grow.

The parable of the Sower: Mark 4: 12 "so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And *their* sins be forgiven them.'"

He was quoting out of the book of Isaiah.

V. 13 "And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"

Just above that in v. 11 it says "...To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God..."

"Say, "To me!" To me it's been given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God.

In Corinthians it says something similar – that we've been given the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues to reveal the mysteries of God.

1 Corinthians 14:2 "For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries."

He speaks parables, testimonies and teaching couched in something graphic that we can get hold of.

Jesus spoke in a parable. The parable of the sower. Whatever seeds are sown have to grow, good, bad or indifferent. The Word of God tells us that every seed will be reapt in the End Time.

Some to glory, some will be burnt up. But every seed we plant through our mouths and actions – what we've done in our lives – is going to grow somewhere in our lives. The parable of the sower: the sower sowed the Word.

Mark 4: 14-15 "The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts."

We need to understand that as the Word is being sown, Satan is alongside wanting to steal it, to rob the people. My greatest fear is that I would get taught a doctrine that would take me off track, a doctrine that sounds good but would not take me into the things of God.

There are many of these floating around the Kingdom today. We need the Spirit of God. We need the Word. We need those working in conjunction to keep us on the straight and narrow.

These mysteries when they are revealed will do that, will keep us going. It's a mystery of our lives, something we need to understand.

Mark 4: 16-17 "These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble."

The most important thing is that the Word of God goes into us, becomes effective and starts to work.

Mark 4: 18-20 "Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes

unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

We can relate the thirty, sixty and hundred fold to the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. They are all good ground.

We must keep on going because there is more. We have to apply what we get as we go and put it into practice so we can get the next thing that God has for us.

Then we can grow into the Kingdom principles that have been given to us and the functions in the Body. We can grow from being an administrator to being a miracle worker, from being a miracle worker to a teacher or a prophet or an apostle.

Isn't that the goal of God for all of us – to fit us into the functions that He has called us to. Paul talked about milk and meat. The “meat” is to do the work that He has sent us to do.

At the well Jesus met the Samaritan woman and asked her to draw him water to drink. She said that because He was a Jew He shouldn't have been talking to her, a Samaritan and a woman.

Jesus said that if she knew who she was talking to, He would give her living water and she would never thirst again. She perceived that He was a prophet and He said He was.

Then He told her to get her husband. She said she didn't have one and He said that she was correct and acknowledged her honesty. He told her that she had had five husbands. She wanted to know how He knew that.

Remember Jesus was man yet He was God but He left His deity up in heaven. He came as a man. It was His vehement cries before God that saved Him to show us the way.

Hebrews 5:7 “who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear”

He was heard because of His godly fear. He was God but He was man. He decided to put His Godliness aside to come and pay the price.

He got tempted as we get tempted and yet He was sinless so that He was the perfect sacrifice for our sin.

Yet there He was, walking on the dusty road to Samaria where He arrived at a well and said to a lady that she had to get her life straight. She'd been married five times.

He told her to go and get the one she was with now. She went and got the whole village. She told them that Jesus had told her whole life to her. That's evangelism.

Was Jesus a teacher? Or an apostle? He allowed the Holy Spirit to take Him right through. He was teaching us our position in the Body so that from that position we can become effective.

He was teaching us that we need to hear what God is saying, that we need to be open. Then He told His disciples when they came that He had food to eat that they did not know.

The Word that went into Jesus brought great fruit. It brought our salvation. He was the living Word. But He came as a man. He came just like us. He came in the flesh.

Jesus Christ appeared to us in the flesh two thousand years ago to show us how to walk, to pay the price so we may be able to walk.

We get saved and filled with the Spirit but what do we do with it? We have to sow our lives into the Kingdom.

For some it will cost everything but we need to give it while we have it to give. Give our lives while it's our choice. Don't let the devil come and rob us with a sickness or something else where we have no choice and life gets stolen away.

We have a time span to do the work. We have to live like tomorrow is the last day. We need to determine in our hearts to bring in the harvest that He is after.

This is what brings glory to the Father but we will not do it without His Holy Spirit.

Religion can't do it. Over the years I've seen what religion will do: it starts off excellently but then deteriorates to man's rules and then the life goes out of it

and there's no fruit. Our lives are more valuable than that. We were bought for a price.

This story is for someone who has been suffering major rejection. Do we realise the price that was paid for us? It was the precious blood of the Son of God. The most precious commodity this world has ever seen and it was paid for us. That makes us precious.

In some of the islands like PNG they still deal with cows and pigs. If someone wants a good wife they have to have two or three cows according to the tribal custom.

On one of the islands there was an ugly woman. Her father didn't think he'd get even half a cow for her. Top price on the island was two cows for a really good-looking woman.

One day the richest man on the island came past and he saw this ugly woman but he saw something beautiful in her. He went back to her father and said that he would give him eight cows for his daughter.

The father said, "What!" This was unheard of. The maximum for cows was maybe three, the top price ever paid for a bride on that island.

But there was a rich man who said he wanted to marry this man's daughter and he would give eight cows for her.

That woman, who was the ugliest girl on the island, within a month was the most beautiful woman on the island. The price that was paid for her denoted how she felt about herself. She started walking and talking like the most beautiful woman on the island.

She actually became the most beautiful woman on the island because she realised the price that was paid for her.

Rejection has no place on us because we've been bought for a price and no one can match that price. We are special. We are special in God's eyes. We are special in our brothers' and sisters' eyes. We are special because the price that was paid for us can never be matched. It's priceless.

We are priceless possessions of Jesus, shining jewels in the hand of God being offered up to the Father. Eternity and all the angels look on us and think how special we are. The blood of His Son has bought us. But we walk around like we are still worth one and a half cows, or even half a cow.

We have to realise who we are. We have to allow Him to work. We need to let Him minister through us.

People have to see who it is who lives in this body bag. The only reason we have a body bag is so that we can recognise each other and be carriers of Jesus.

He's put his Spirit into us and we carry Him around in this bag of bones. If we don't give ourselves over there is still too much of us. If we understand who we are we'll be able to share it with someone not saved.

I love seeing God at work. If we don't know the basics we'll never see the 'more' of God. We need to understand the basic principle of who we are so that we can walk in authority with God.

Not meek and mild, 'tread on me because I'm a Christian' – that's not Christianity, that's religion, that's self-righteousness. When God saves people, they have a personality and character and sometimes they're sweeter than Christians. They have more 'go' than the Christians because they've had to live in a 'dog-eat-dog' world but Christians try to take that character out of them immediately they come into the Kingdom of God.

That's what God has brought them from and their character is what will attract others to Christ so why change them. Just let them change the things that really count – anger, bitterness, unforgiveness and immorality.

Help them change those things so that they become vessels of honour and they start to shine. Don't change their character. Someone can't minister to surfers unless they are a surfer.

Someone can't minister to miners unless they can talk miners' language. Builders like to have a builder minister to them because he can relate. Doctors need doctors to relate.

They all have their set characters and formats but the dynamic that changes them all is the Holy Spirit and Jesus in them. That's what makes us all the same even though we carry it out differently.

We need to resolve in our hearts to be effective.

We need to set our hearts, purpose our hearts that we are going to be someone who is different for God.

We want people to say that they remember when we turned up because everyone around us was healed. And that people came to the Lord when we turned up.

That's the mark I want to see when I get up to heaven. That I made a difference here on earth. That more people have populated heaven because I was on earth. That's the will of God for all of us.

We've been so busy putting people in compartments eg. this one's an evangelist. But the giftings are the Spirit of God working in anyone who gives their heart to Jesus Christ.

I believe that people have to come from the bottom and work up. I believe that it's all the Spirit of God being able to move in us and take hold of us and use us.

It's going to cost us. But if we die something will come to life. The principle of the wheat: one grain in the ground is dead but all of a sudden a stalk comes up and it's full of grain.

It's a prerequisite that we all need to come to. It's a painful thing but if we allow the Spirit of God through that gift of tongues to edify us we'll find it's the most painful process we've ever been through. But at the end the fruit will be wonderful.

It's painful only because we want to hold onto the things we don't want to give up. Painful because when He wants it He'll start to put things on our conscience.

I've been in fasts and I've come out of things in the Spirit where I've thought I'm going to come out a lot better because I've done this one thing. I've thought I'm going to be more holy and righteous and I'm going to be walking and have lightning flashing from my face but the reality is so different.

I felt terrible, the things I hadn't dealt with kept coming up, just like that sower in the field. Those seeds keep coming up.

Every word that we speak and act upon is a seed that's growing in soil. Every seed is coming up. A farmer always prepares his field. There are always stones and thistles or weeds in a field. When he starts to turn over the soil the stones quickly come up to the surface. When the sower sows the Word, it has to go into good ground, into a heart that has been prepared. In that heart, in

every heart there are either stones or thistles and these are the things that God tries to work out of us.

He does it for a reason – because He wants to use us. This teaching is about us becoming useful vessels who are walking in the gifts and becoming people who are effective. People that the Holy Spirit can grab hold of at any time and pour His Spirit through us.

We will leave a supernatural, indelible mark on this earth. Doing something with God will always leave a supernatural mark. Every seed, everything we've done has fruit, whether it be good or bad. The good fruit will come up but so will the bad – this is in the parable of the tares where both wheat and tares come up together.

Jesus explained the parable of the sower. He said some seed will be sown on stony ground. The stones are going to come up. Some of those stones are the things in our hearts that the devil puts his finger on the minute we want to step out and do something for Jesus. This happens with everybody. The devil's job is to stop us from getting there.

It's very real. He has a plan to destroy us. Jesus has a plan to lift us up. Don't be unaware. Be alert. There are stones in our hearts that need to be dealt with. They have to be pulled out of the soil so that the seed can grow.

Mark 4: 15 – 17 “And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.”

Tribulation and persecution are two of the first stones that the enemy will put his finger on when God is wanting to use us. Stuff comes up and it becomes a stumbling block or we slip and think that we can't overcome this. It touches our emotions.

Our emotions are not programmed by the Word of God so they don't count for a lot. Our emotions are programmed by our flesh so we have to learn to disregard our emotional response. Let the Spirit of God put these things to death.

This is why we need the Holy Spirit. When tribulation or persecution come when we start preaching the Word of God we often 'pull our heads in.' We think this is too hard and want to give up.

We have an outreach near Adelaide that we recently started but we keep striking opposition through the local council. I thought I would do what I wanted to do anyway, regardless of the opposition. I wanted to put a food van out where the surfers were on the coast.

Every Saturday they would have competitions and about three hundred surfers would congregate on the coast. It was a harvest field.

These guys need Jesus. I kept striking persecution. Nothing does more work in us than when persecution and affliction start to rise up.

Our reactions dictate how far we've gone in the things of God. Sad to say, I hadn't gone a long way because my instant reaction was that I had tried to do it the right way.

All of a sudden something snapped in me and I thought, "Blow them. I'm going to go and break the law and do it anyway."

The chances were that I would get a couple saved as they would try to close me down. Not such good logic but determined, fully determined in my heart to do that. I'd spoken to the Lord in prayer and told Him that I was sick of it and would just go and break the law.

I'd been praying about breaking into this area and if I couldn't do it the right way I was prepared to break the law and do it the wrong way but get something done.

The Holy Spirit said, "Raf, if you're going to break the law, you'd better know what law it is that you're breaking."

Remember, I'm getting persecuted by these people but I thought I'd better find out what it was that I would be doing wrong and what the consequences would be. We need to know the consequences of what we do wrong.

So I went onto the internet and found pages of council bylaws relating to preaching in the streets and getting licences to be able to share the gospel freely.

They called preaching 'haranguing' and local council now had enough power to stop this. I was really 'cheesed off,' really annoyed.

I thought, "Well Lord, if I can't do it the right way I'm going to do it the wrong way but at least get something done for the Kingdom."

But God had other plans. Right at the bottom of these bylaws were the exemptions, including Police who were doing it in the line of duty. It happened that we got the local police Sergeant saved at one of our tent meetings.

He phoned me and said that he was now the officer in charge of drug and alcohol education for the whole coast. He wanted me to help him.

He was looking for community bodies to work in conjunction with the police force to educate the people. He couldn't pay any money but he asked if I would consider doing it. And he wanted to use our food van to do it with.

God opened a door. All of a sudden I had a legal way of outreaching. We've been going for about seven weeks now and it's a most fruitful ministry; people are getting saved.

Healings are breaking out. The roughest, toughest dudes on the coast are giving their hearts to the Lord and being softened by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Persecution and affliction came. There were two ways of handling it; I handled it wrongly but God had grace on me. I realised that I had stones in my heart that I still needed to deal with.

The stone of persecution and affliction was something that I liked to fight against. It was in my character. I had grown up fighting and it's very hard to get that out of your character but it was a stone that God needed to get out of me so that the enemy couldn't touch it when God wanted to use me.

That's why we need to deal with the stones in our hearts – so that the enemy can't touch us when God wants to use us.

Some of us will get past the stones of persecution and affliction; some of us are really strong in the spirit. We're prayerful and persecution and affliction don't affect us. We can push it aside and keep walking through it. But the enemy has another plan. He says that if we get past that then he will do this:

Mark 4: 18-19 “ Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”

Here are three more stones. To deal with cares, cast them on Jesus because he cares for us. Don't have care in your heart. The only thing that qualifies us to be devoured by the devil is having care in our hearts. Don't let the cares of this world pull us down.

We need to keep our peace at all cost. The cares are the way the enemy will try to rob us. Cares bring us into the place of being qualified for devouring. It's a stone in the heart that we need to deal with by the power of the Holy Spirit and put it to death, the place where Jesus declared it to be - dead. Dead to sin.

We're supposed to be dead to sin. These things have to be put to death by the power of the Holy Ghost so that we can be effective servants of the living God.

When we go out into the world we will start to see the miraculous. We need to deal with these things so that when the enemy comes and tries to stop us and rob us of our own healing he will not succeed. The Spirit of God wants us to deal with things in our hearts.

The cares of this world, persecution and tribulation are things we run away from. We don't want to face them. We might try to gloss over them, get past them as best we can and some of us might even overcome by the Spirit of God because we've got to that place.

Then the enemy has a different plan – he wants to 'get' us by giving us something to run to like the deceitfulness of riches. People run towards them, not away from them. Everybody wants to have money. Everybody has been tainted by that at one time or another. The devil can grab people like that.

What about the “lust of all things” – the other thing we run to, pleasures. We'll run towards pleasures. The devil has plans to trap God's people in every area. He wants to trap us in an area where we can't move when God wants to move us.

That's why it's so important that we clean up. The heart is something that God is starting to reveal to His people. He needs the heart brought before

Him. He can't pour out His anointing to the measure we want unless we 'patch the holes up' so it doesn't fall through.

That means building our character, dealing with the stones in our hearts so that we don't react wrongly when the Holy Spirit wants to use us. When He wants to do something and we have a religious spirit or we think it's a persecution to us or we have a care that will stop us or we start worrying eg. about the political situation – there are cares that take us away from the solid core of God's work which is to bring souls into the Kingdom. To get people saved and stop them from going to hell.

It's not a difficult thing to work out what God's will is. It's set, just like the law of gravity. He's into restoring the world back into His Kingdom.

We are the chosen vessels and we need to deal with these things so He can use us.

Final-Word

If the testimonies in this booklet have impacted you, it's never too late to begin your own journey down the Narrow Road with Jesus.

Please feel free to read this simple prayer aloud:

Lord Jesus,

I believe that You died on the Cross for all my sin. I believe that You rose from the dead.

*Please forgive me for all my sins. Make me clean.
Please come into my heart, save me, heal me and set me free.*

*Write my name in Your Book of Life.
Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Be my personal Lord and Saviour.*

Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, welcome to the family of God and a new life walking every day with Jesus.