

Chapter 33

Ministry in the Valley

During my two years of weakness, I did have some meaningful times of ministry.

I was invited to teach at the weekly school at Lambrick Park, a large Brethren church in my home city of Victoria. I always take delight in such invitations as my doctrinal position and emphasis is known to be at variance with their leadership. They are of a dispensational persuasion while I am known as a 'conservative Charismatic', believing that the gifts and operation of the Holy Spirit are the same today as they ever were – and just as necessary. A W Tozer is reputed to have said, "Dispensationalism is more dangerous than liberalism: liberalism robs us of our message, dispensationalism robs us of our power". I believe in a 'second blessing' – the baptism of the Spirit, and that we do not receive 'everything' at the moment of conversion – any more than the disciples did when Jesus first 'breathed upon them' in the room where He first appeared after His resurrection, saying "receive the Holy Spirit". (John 20). It would be seven more weeks before they received Him in power at Pentecost. It is always a source of joy to me to have as my closest friends in Victoria, men whose spiritual background is in the Brethren tradition, whereas mine is in a Pentecostal tradition. They, as I hope I am, are men of bigger vision than that of our traditions.

I taught for ten weeks at Lambrick Park, 90 minutes each week, on the subject of 'release', the theme of my book *The Key in My Hand*. I would be asked to return the following year to teach the same material, with the added subject of the 'gifts of the Spirit'. As many people in that congregation were asking questions which the leadership could not competently answer, and as I was already accepted as a teacher, they invited me to teach that course, which, of course, I was delighted to do.

I was also invited to spend a weekend with men from the Reformed Episcopal Church, at Parksville on Vancouver Island. Again many new friends were made and contacts for future ministry.

In October we were able to take advantage of cheap plane fares to journey to see our many friends in Ontario. We visited Toronto and were hosted at Lorne and Sandy LeGrow's. They invited so many of our old friends from the late 70s and a wonderful evening was spent in reminiscing, laughing and eating. Then on to Guelph to see Hugo and Jacqui Jiminez, my dear friends from Anastasis days, whom I had married in Mexico City in 1995. That evening we were in Kitchener at the home of and Ruth Setacci. They had called together many of our congregation – and friends – from Hazelglen Fellowship for another wonderful evening. One highlight was a telephone call from Ron Smith who was unable to attend as he was out of town. When I told him how I considered him the reason for the establishment of that church, as he had taught us how to pray, he was choked with tears. Maybe I had never made that known to him before. The next day it was my privilege to preach again in my old church and to see, with delight, that the congregation remains strong.

In early fall of 2004 I received a telephone call from a young man in Lorrane, Oregon. He had been the youth pastor at Quiskeya Chapel in Haiti and had heard me preach on *Offenses*. He asked if I would come there for a weekend to teach this and other material. As this would give us an opportunity to visit Dave and Ellen Knippel in Portland again, we agreed to drive down to Oregon, taking two good friends with us. It was a wonderful weekend with lots of ministry in this rural setting. Shane and his wife Christie, would become a precious young couple to us, and we would have many times of good fellowship in future. They had a great love for Haiti and had adopted two little girls while living there. Two years after our visit and a subsequent trip to Oregon, Shane would begin a work on the same island of Dominica where Haiti has half and the Dominican Republic the other half. His work is called 'Mercy League' and seeks to provide a safe, self-sustaining home for Haitian orphans just across the border in Dominican Republic.

In the summer of 2005 I took responsibility for the preaching at a small First Nations Church on the Tsawout reserve. Their pastor had recently retired and they were wanting someone to take them on. The church was led

by a young couple of Salish Indians, Peter and Stephanie and their families. We so much enjoyed their worship and spirit, so it was with great delight we attended the services each week to teach the small congregation. Shortly afterwards, a young Dutch man and his family felt the call of God to travel across the Atlantic to minister to these precious people. Marco and his wife were from the same church in Rotterdam where our very good friends, Henk and Marta Hempenius are serving on staff. What a small world!

In October I was invited to teach each Wednesday evening, a series at New Life Baptist Church, Duncan, on the subject of *The Trinity*. This is the church where my son-in-law Rob would become the Assistant Pastor a year later. I always enjoyed these times at the church where the noted author Mark Buchanan is the pastor, and to get to know him personally as a friend.

One evening I received an interesting telephone call. It was from a lady in Courtney, three hours drive north of Victoria. Adele said she was from St George's United Church, they were planning to have some teaching on 'prayer' and she had been given my name as a prospective teacher. I must admit that when I heard the words 'United church' I immediately judged them as being liberal in theology, as much of the United Church in Canada has become. One wonders what John Wesley would make of the Methodist Church now, as it is a major part of the United Church! After a little discussion, I agreed to drive north the following Saturday to meet her and two colleagues who needed to interview me before they could make a representation before the church 'synod'! At this meeting I asked the three of them just what it was they were planning, but it was obvious they didn't really have any plans, as this was a new venture for them. I then asked them what they thought was the purpose of prayer to which they were again uncertain, so I said, "I believe prayer is God's gift to us so that we can learn to develop intimacy with Him." At this, the man present, Gary, became very animated. "That's what I want" he said, "intimacy with God!" My heart responded to this man and his desire to know the Lord more, so it was with eagerness I agreed to travel each weekend to Courtney, to teach however many they could persuade to come out each Saturday morning for three weeks. For the intervening few weeks Adele would email me telling of the progress – "I've got 8 – 9 - 10 signed up for the course" she would write with a growing excitement. To go to Courtney for a Saturday morning course one needs to leave Victoria on Friday and as it is such a long journey by car, I decided to travel up on the one train a day. This meant leaving Victoria early morning on Friday, returning by late evening Saturday or Sunday, dependant on whether I was to speak at the church service Sunday morning. This latter I ended up doing on two of the Sundays! I arrived at St George's on the first Saturday morning to be greeted by over 40 people, pens and note pads ready, for what turned out to be a very wonderful time together. We made some very wonderful friends over those three weeks, especially Gary and his wife Debbie, who entertained us the last weekend by inviting several others including my close friends Ron and Eunice Freeman (my youth pastor in Victoria Alliance Church) and Rev Bill and Joan Hodges (the Episcopal vicar for whose church I had conducted a men's retreat) for a wonderful meal preceded by a foot-washing refreshing as we arrived. What a special treat!

Shortly after completing those three weekends of teaching we left for our visit to Australia. It was the end of 2005 and I was still feeling very weak but managing to serve the Lord in whatever opportunities He afforded me.