

Mr. & Mrs. Abel

IN THE LORD'S VINEYARD

By

Priscilla Chrisostom

A brief account of the lives and the Christian ministry done by our parents at the Laymen's Evangelical Fellowship Centre in Machilipatnam, A.P., India.

To God be the glory

Mary Priscilla

author

For copies

The Laymen's Evangelical Fellowship

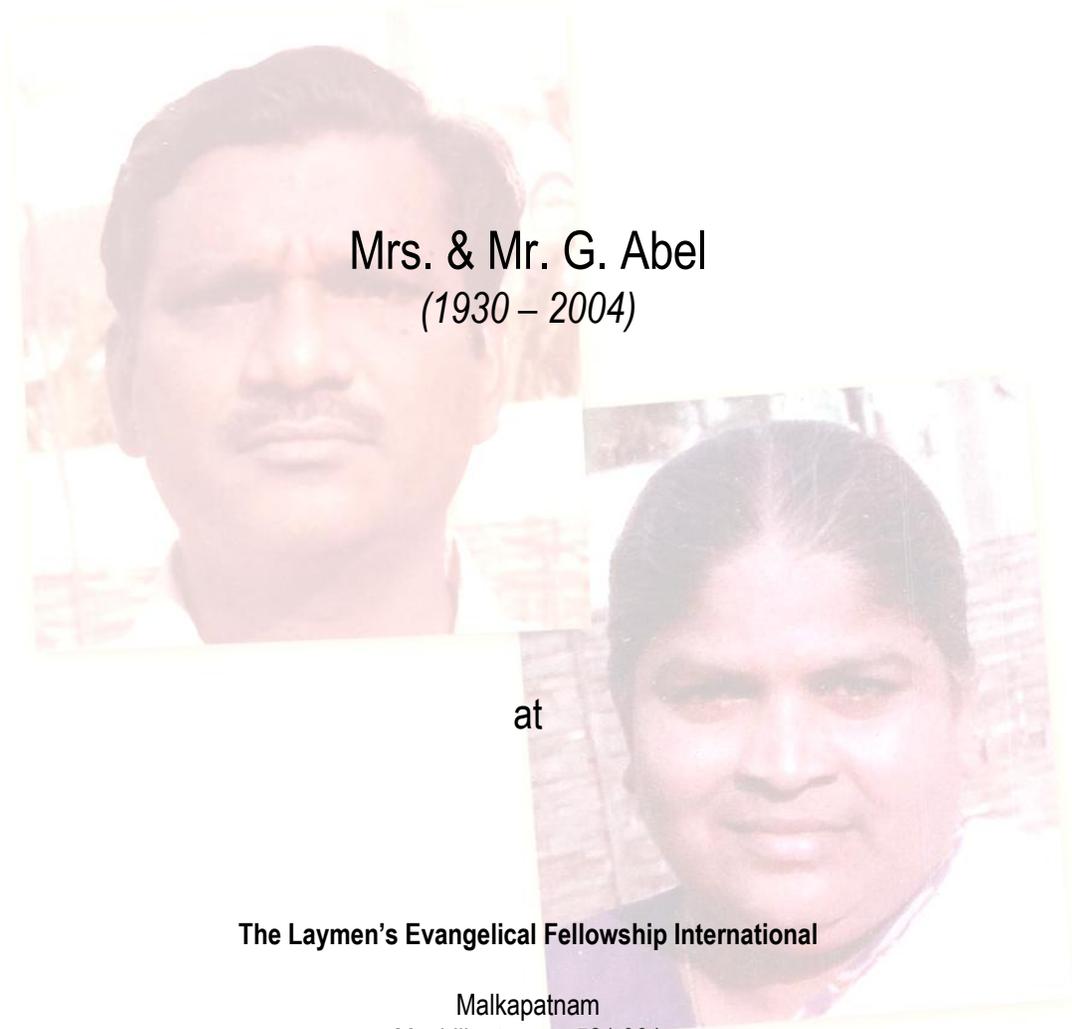
Malkapatnam

Machilipatnam - 521001

(A.P)

A brief account of the lives and the Christian ministry done by

our parents



Mrs. & Mr. G. Abel
(1930 – 2004)

at

The Laymen's Evangelical Fellowship International

Malkapatnam
Machilipatnam – 521 001
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INDIA

From the author

I tried to share through this book an account of the lives of our parents and their Christian ministry. The Lord helped them build their own spiritual lives and to proclaim the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ, when they surrendered their lives to the will of God.

After changing his life, the Lord disciplined our father as a student to learn from the lives of the great men of God and to seek the prayers and suggestions of God's children. It is amazing to see how God used the song of an ordinary preacher to change the life of our mother, who was literally waiting on the road to catch her bus to go back to her village to skip attending the meetings!

After their marriage, God taught our parents to wait and rely on His promises in every issue of their personal lives and ministry. The Lord led them together step by step through the various stages of their ministry for about 30 years, to become spiritually strong and humble servants of God. Many of the people who were led up to the Lord in the ministry of our parents, in turn, became soul winners. The Lord used our parents mainly in the youth ministry, though it included other areas. In those days we used to have a fresh batch of students added up to the church membership every year.

It was in early eighties, after the home-call of our father, when Wesley (*my brother*) went to visit Mrs. Santhosham and Mr. John (*our father's aunt and uncle, who led him to the light of the Lord*), that Mrs. Santhosham expressed her desire to put in printed form an account of the life and the ministry of our father for the first time. Later, Mr. Jeevanandam (*Mrs. Santhosham's younger brother and a good friend of our father*), expressed the same desire: but the idea did not go any further with our not showing much interest.

During the years that followed, many people who came to our house, used to ask for the messages given by our father on cassettes. But since we did not have good quality recordings, we were unable to offer them; so, we thought of putting atleast those messages into printed form in a booklet, but that did not progress.

Twenty two years after the home-call of our father, our mother continued her ministry with greater responsibilities and challenges, until she was called to eternal home in 2004. During that time, many new people who started attending church had hardly had any idea about the ministry done there earlier, and this made us seriously think publishing this book. Finally, we could no longer postpone this project when our mother too was called to heavenly home.

This book was originally written and published earlier in Telugu. Now we translated it into English with a few changes to reach English readers too. We are sure that this book dispels the doubts of those who do not trust the changing power of the Lord Jesus Christ and his faithfulness in our day to day life.

I thank Mrs. Premalatha, my colleague and retired lecturer, for her help in translating this book into English. I thank my husband, John Chrisostom, for his support all through. My sincere thanks to the 'Amulya Christian Press,' for its great work in making this project a success. Finally, I sincerely thank all those others who helped to make this project a success.

We trust that this book meets the need of those who have a desire to know more about the faithfulness of the Lord in a practical way. Any suggestions for improving the quality of this book would be greatly appreciated.

May God bless your lives for His glory,

Mrs. Priscilla Chrisostom

May 12, 2014

A note from the author

Even though this is an account of the lives of Mr. & Mrs. Abel and their ministry, it was the Lord who did it all using them as His instruments when they surrendered their lives to His will. My aim and focus is to glorify God and His power, but not them or any other person.

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MR. G. ABEL

1.1. EARLY LIFE

Our father, Mr. Abel was born in *Davuluru*, a small village in *Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh*, South India. They were eight children to their parents - Mrs. & Mr. Samuel Ganta. He was the second male child and the third in the order. Right from our great grand-father's time it was a Christian family and they used to attend Baptist church (*known as Canadian Baptist Mission*).

As they were growing in the village the young boys of the family had no fear of God although his father was a very strict disciplinarian. He gradually got attracted to the atheistic philosophies!

Enacting in dramas was one of my father's hobbies in High School. He had such a liking for it that he enacted in a drama even on the evening before writing one of his school final exams; and this made him do poor in his studies.

After completing his high school studies he joined a polytechnic to study a diploma course in civil engineering in another district. That was the first time he was away from home - staying all by himself: and this liberty made him watch movies, smoke cigarettes, and do bad friendships as he liked.

1.2. EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

My grandfather (*Samuel Ganta*) had a younger brother (*John Ganta*), who was a high school head master. Both Mr. John Ganta and his wife, Mrs. Santhosham believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and had a beautiful family with their eight children.

At that time they had an old cycle which, no one was using; and our father went to their place to borrow and use it. After going there, during their usual family talk, our father got into an argument with his uncle and aunt over the importance of the spiritual matters in personal lives. Our father tried his best to argue that there was absolutely no need of them. But his aunt, Mrs. Santhosham, being a very strong believer, counter argued that the Lord Jesus Christ alone could save the heart of a sinner and she tried her best for a long time to convince our father. As the interesting argument continued between our father and his aunt, our father asked her if the other gods cannot do what the Lord Jesus could do. And his aunt replied, No." Our father was not happy with her answer: first - as he believed in atheistic philosophy, and secondly, that the argument that Jesus alone saves sinners did not sound reasonable to him!

Then his uncle intervened and asked our father to try praying in the name of any god he would believe in and see if that god would save him from his sinful desires and habits. He also asked our father to finally try praying in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and see if he could save him. Mr. John ended by saying that none else other than the Lord Jesus Christ could save any person from his sinful nature. Then our father became curious as his uncle's argument sounded reasonable and challenging to him.

As Mr. & Mrs. John asked our dad to kneel down for a word of prayer before our father could leave, our father attempted to utter a few words of prayer - just to show his respect for his uncle and aunt. But as soon as he did so, the spirit of the Lord came upon him and he began to realize and confess his own heart's condition. As the prayer continued, our father started confessing all his sins even while he was praying. With all his previous beliefs and philosophies in mind, this was a very different experience for him. After finishing the prayer he left that place but the spirit of God began to work in him; so he began to set things right both with men and God. The Lord started becoming dearer to him as his life began to change, and all his friends and his neighbors began realizing it as well. From then onwards, he could neither smoke nor go to the company of bad friends. It was then that he realized that both his uncle and aunt were right when they were talking and arguing with him about the saving power of Jesus Christ. Without giving up, he kept in touch with the Lord's children while keeping his close relationship with the Lord - with solitary prayer and reading the Bible, which ultimately became the basis for the Lord to use him in his later days. Thus Mrs. & Mr. John Ganta were not only our father's uncle and aunt, but more importantly, they were his spiritual parents too.

Then Mr. and Mrs. John introduced our father to the Laymen's Evangelical Fellowship, which was run by Mrs. & Mr. N. Daniel in Chennai (*then known as Madras*). It was there that our father became a more disciplined Christian in his life and got all his basic training to be an evangelist under the guidance of Mr. N. Daniel.

1.3. FIRST STEPS

After finishing his studies our father went to Machilipatnam to work in a public works department. Even though he was a stranger to this place with no relatives of his own, he was warmly invited by Mrs. & Mr. G. S. Nathaniel, who were residing in a small Christian locality (*Anandapeta*) at that time. Nathaniels gave him a small room in their house and he was well taken care of in every way like their own family member.

It was then that our father started a small prayer meeting where Nathaniels and a few others started attending for Sunday worship and other services. Other family members of Mrs. Nathaniel, and especially her mother (*Mrs. Kundanam*) also had a high regard for our father.

1.4. GOD'S CALL TO HIS MINISTRY

As a student in the polytechnic, our father, after finishing his classes in the evenings, used to go to be alone with the Lord in prayer. This habit of spending time alone in the presence of the Lord continued throughout his life. Once, when he was a student he went with two of his friends to a hilltop to fast and pray for about three days. During that time he asked the Lord to show him the way he should take after finishing his studies. Soon he had a dream in which God's will for his life was revealed. He got up in the morning with joy that filled his heart: as he came to know in a dream that he would work for two years after completing polytechnic and enter into the full-time ministry of the Lord's service as an evangelist. He did not reveal his dream to anyone but started praying about its fulfillment.

After finishing polytechnic, our father got a job. When he was working, he started praying without ceasing that the Lord's will might be fulfilled in his life. As he waited on the Lord for His appointed time, one day he realized that it was time for him to resign his job and work as God's servant in His vineyard. Not depending totally on his own dreams and perceptions, he took it to the notice of the senior brothers – Mr. N. Daniel and Mr. B. John, both of whom were well-known God's servants at that time, for their prayers and confirmation. After much waiting on the Lord, they confirmed that it was really time for him to enter full time ministry as an evangelist.

But the financial situation of our father's family was not at all encouraging at that time, with my grandfather dying shortly before, and as the burden of the family – particularly, the last three was partly on our father's shoulders. As he spoke to his mother about his intentions to resign the job to live totally on faith and not a fixed salary, my grandmother was not favorable. Looking in the worldly way, my grandmother was absolutely correct in her reasoning. But our father fasted and prayed that the Lord might make the way clear if it was really His will. And the Lord cleared the way and enabled him to yield to His will, and he resigned his job and entered the ministry as a full time evangelist on behalf of the Laymen's evangelical fellowship - in the same place (*Machilipatnam*), where he started his evangelistic work earlier!

During those early days of his ministry he was strengthened much by the prayers of several senior evangelists like – Bro. N. Daniel, Bro. Joshua Daniel, Bro. Witson Paul, Bro. B. John, Bro. Rajaratnam, Bro. B. Bhushanam, Bro. G. B. Solomon, Bro. Jayasingh and several others.

MRS. G. PADMA ABEL

2.1. *EARLY LIFE*

Our mother was born in a Hindu family on June 15, 1936 in Vennanapudi, a small village in Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh. Her mother was cultivating a small piece of land for their living. After finishing her primary education in Vennanapudi she went to Gudiwada, a town close by, to continue her High School studies.

Coming from a Hindu family, our mother followed their Hindu beliefs, traditions, and religious customs in Gudiwada. As she did not pass her school final exam she moved to Gannavaram to do Secondary grade teacher training program – staying with her maternal uncle and his wife. But her aunt believed in the Lord Jesus Christ even before our mother started staying with them. It was at that time that her aunt told her about the love of God and about His provision and plan in sending Jesus Christ into this world to save every human being. It was through her aunt that she came to know about the Laymen’s Evangelical Fellowship.

2.2. *ACCEPTING JESUS CHRIST*

It was during those days that her aunt encouraged her and other young ladies to attend a revival meeting held in ‘Edpugallu,’ a small village near Vijayawada. Our mother, being a fanatic Hindu lady, though attended the meetings in obedience to her aunt’s desire, did not like sitting in the meetings and hearing the word of God. She eventually packed her clothes and crossed the road to catch the bus to go back to her place. As she was waiting, she heard a melodious Christian song sung by a great man of God, Mr. G. B. Solomon, with all his heart. Bro. Solomon sang that song thoroughly meaning it and with a heart filled with the love of God. When our mother heard it, she somehow felt it so appealing to her heart and as a result, she changed her mind and went back to the meeting. As she started listening to the word of the Lord, the Lord touched her heart and she began to repent and confess to Him about her spiritual blindness for not realizing that He was the Lord of her heart.

As she waited in prayer, she had a vision in which she saw a white screen - in the centre of which there was a dark black spot. As she watched it wondering as to what it had meant for her, the spot slowly faded and finally disappeared. It was at that time that the Lord revealed to her as to how she used to force Christian students put ‘Bottu’ on their foreheads, who hesitated to have it. She then began to confess about it and other things the Lord had shown her. After three days of fasting prayer she felt that her heart was as light as a feather as she started experiencing the joy of the Lord in her heart. She gave up all her previous Hindu religious rituals and practices by herself. Praying for hours together and reading the Bible became her regular habit. During that time our mother started spending time in prayer with a group of young women, who had freshly come into the experience of salvation like her.

In 1956, she attended her first Annual Retreat of the Laymen’s Evangelical Fellowship in Chennai and got baptized. It was at that time that she changed her name to Padma.

MARRIAGE – SEEKING THE WILL OF GOD

Our parents' marriage was an arranged marriage: that means they did not have any friendship with each other before marriage. Since both of them were believers of the Lord, they knew that the Lord would have the best choice for each one of them - to get united with, which might bring glory to His name. When it was time to settle down in married life, both of them started praying for the will of the Lord and for its fulfillment in their lives – independently without having any reservations in mind.

It was then that some of the senior brothers of the church prayerfully proposed the other to each one of them. Without jumping to any conclusions basing solely on their interests and likings, they sought the prayers of other senior evangelists and those who led them to the Lord.

After much prayer, the senior brothers confirmed that it was God's will for their lives. Then, when the proposal was brought to the notice of our maternal grand-mother, she was hesitating to give her only daughter to our father, who did not have a job at that time (*he resigned his job a little earlier - obeying the will of the Lord for entering the full time ministry*). After a little bit of counseling and explaining things by the elderly people, she finally gave her consent.

At last the marriage was arranged to take place in 'Vanukuru,' (*a small village close to Vijayawada*). Surprisingly this village was neither related to our father nor our mother. Since some revival meetings were arranged at that time there at the home of Bro. Bhushanam, the marriage was also arranged to take place at the end of them on June 15, 1956.

It was a simple wedding solemnized in the same small temporary structure where the revival meetings took place before – with bamboos and Pal marina tree leaves. The cloth for our father's wedding suit (*simple cotton*) was given by one of his friends as a gift and was stitched by a local tailor in Machilipatnam. The cost of the suit with the stitching charges was thirty rupees at that time! And our mother wore a simple white sari. Some of the relatives and friends from both sides attended the wedding. Though it was expected to be hot in mid-June (*as it was summer*), because of the prayers of God's children, the climate was cloudy and cool on that day. Our parents were overwhelmed with Joy when Mrs. & Mr. G. S. Nathaniel, honored them by attending their marriage and welcomed them with their flower garlands and bouquets to their home in Machilipatnam.

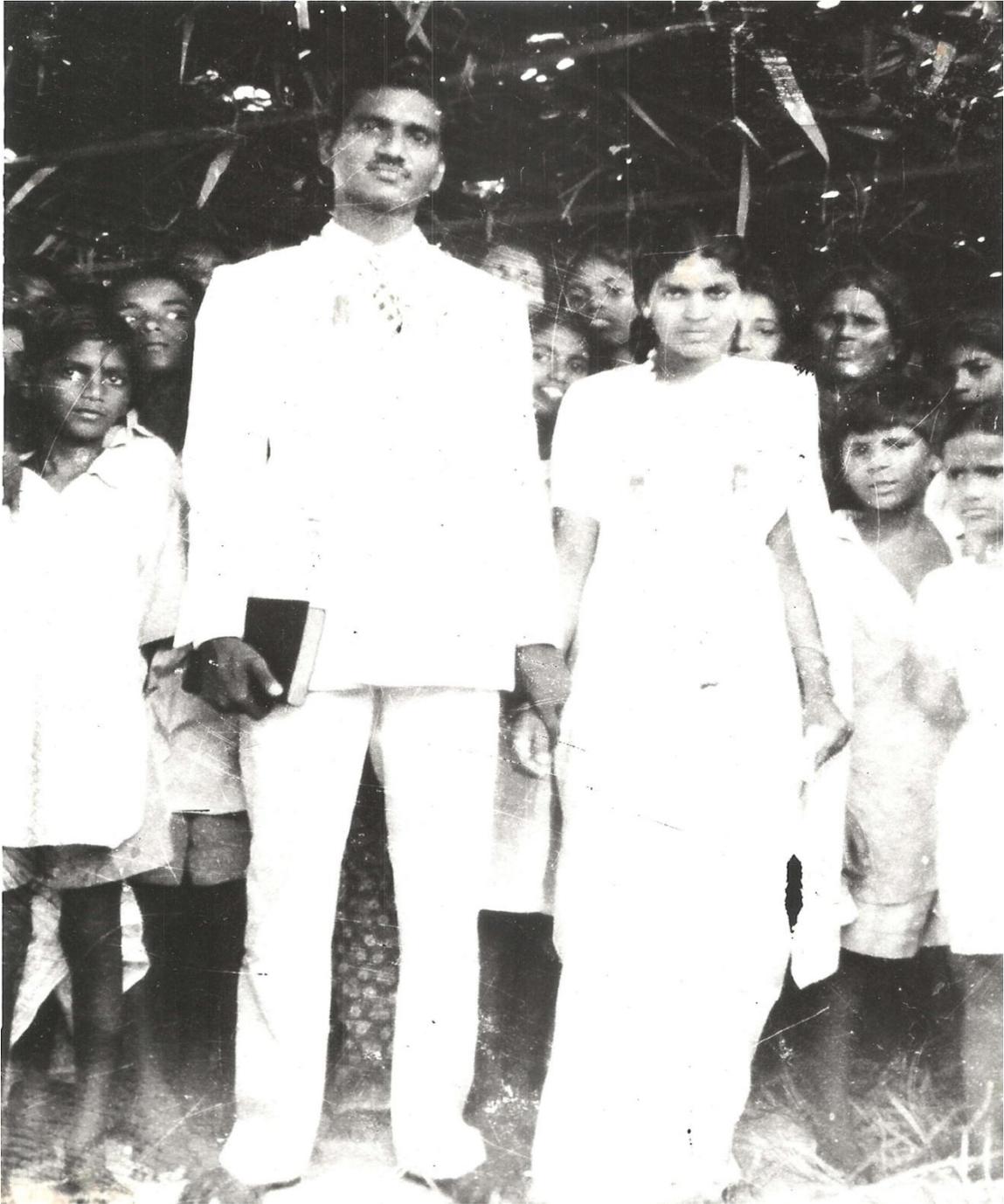


Figure 1 Wedding picture of Mr. & Mrs. Abel

FAMILY AND MINISTRY

4.1 HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Soon after marriage our parents started their family life in Anandapeta in Machilipatnam, where our father started his evangelistic work. They moved to another small rented house in the same locality and started conducting prayer meetings. Some of the people from the locality and of course, Nathaniels attended the services.

Soon our mother was no longer a new person in the locality but a familiar lady. Days passed by swiftly and soon they were blessed with their first child (*me*).

4.2 CHANGING THE WORSHIP PLACE

As our father was not happy with the limited work he was doing at that time, he was asking the Lord in prayer to show him grace to win more souls, in particular – the young people in the town. As he kept on praying and waiting on the Lord, one day he had a dream in which he saw a deserted piece of land. In the morning he got up wondering as to what the dream may have meant! A few days later he had to go on a road in Malkapatnam (*another area of the same town*) on a bicycle – when he saw the exact place which he saw in his dream.

The land was full of thorny bushes and all kinds of garbage. When he enquired about the ownership of the property he came to know that it belonged to a Muslim gentleman in that locality. After much prayer, he approached the owner and asked him if he could rent it for building a small temporary prayer shed. When the gentleman asked our father the rent he was ready to pay, he replied ‘five rupees’ a month! Since the owner was not satisfied, he rather liked to keep it vacant. But our father kept on praying. As the days passed by, one day the owner himself called for our father and asked him if he was still interested in renting his land. Our father said yes, but humbly repeated that he could not pay more than what he had offered earlier. But this time the owner agreed to give it.

Just before renting the site and constructing a small prayer shed our parents moved to Malkapatnam to reside, as both the localities (*Anandapeta and Malkapatnam*) were on the opposite sides of a large town. So they moved to an old rented house, which was located a few yards away from where the prayer shed was supposed to be constructed. And all the prayers (*including the Sunday worship*) used to be held in that house until the prayer shed was ready.

There were rumors that a dead elephant was once buried under the rented ground and no one was in favor of hiring or buying it because of superstitious beliefs. Our parents did have neither money nor enough volunteers to get the job done. So, for several weeks they worked on the ground doing the cleanup. As the place was a junkyard it was full of broken glass and tile. When our father figured out as to how much money he had had with him, it was ten rupees! And no one ventures to use his faith for constructing a temporary structure with just ten rupees! It did not take him long to start

the work with that amount, when at a time, he himself was living on faith even for eating his own daily meal!

After prayerfully laying the foundation stone they had no other option left except looking to God for all their needs on a daily basis. Many times, the wages to be paid to the workers used to come just before the workers finished their work for the day.

Finally a small shed was in place without the planned mud-mortar walls. It was then that our mother together with a few others took up the job using the raw material (*like clay, sand and other ingredients*) and constructed the walls. After days of toil the walls on the back and roadside were in place, while the other two sides were covered by bamboo trellis. Finally, the small shed was a simple structure with Pal marina leaves and bamboos used as roof: it had a few wooden windows without any shutters! Immediately the services were started in the shed. The property had a hand pump to fetch the ground water, without electricity and protected water supply. The compound had fencing with bamboo trellis and a small gate, which used to be kept locked after the church services were over.

Even after the construction of a small prayer shed our parents had hard times even to pay the rent for the land on time; and some times, the rent used to be due for several months. But the Lord made the owner not to make our parents vacate the property at any time. Later all the dues were paid off, and our parents could always maintain cordial relationship with the landlord.

Mr. B. Israel was an elderly man (*actually our father's teacher when he was a boy*), who used to encourage much the young people in the church. He was very jealous for the Lord. Though we do not have any idea as to how our father and Mr. B. Israel got reunited later in life, we knew that Mr. B. Israel was there when the prayer shed was constructed. He was a very prayerful man and never used to compromise when it came to living for the Lord. His wife too was a very helpful and understanding lady. Their son, Isaac used to help playing the drum in the church service during those early days. Mr. B. Israel helped our parents with his wise and prayerful suggestions besides preaching in the church when my father was not there.

A couple of years later my first brother John Wesley was born. With the arrival of the second child the needs of the family grew even more. But the Lord helped our parents to cling to their faith for each and every one of their needs.

Time went by quickly and the last child, Emmanuel, arrived in the family 3 years later.



Figure 2 The first prayer shed constructed in Malkapatnam, Machilipatnam

4.3 EARLY FRIENDS & FAMILIES

4.3.1 MR. DAVID

Mr. David was an engineer by profession and his wife was a doctor. We have little idea as to how they came into contact with our parents, but they stayed in Machilipatnam during the late fifties and early sixties, during which time they were of great help in the ministry. They had a daughter and four boys who were older than us.

Mr. G. S. Nahtaniel's family, Mr. M.G. Sundara Rao's family and Mr. Ch. Aseervadam's family were the few other families from those early days, besides a group of young people who came to know the Lord as students in the ministry of our parents.

4.3.2 MISS. A. E. HYNY

There should not be anyone in Machilipatnam who does not know Miss. A. E. Hyny. She was a missionary lady from Finland who came to Machilipatnam, in India to work among the orphan children – remaining unmarried. After arriving in Machilipatnam she came into contact with my parents and developed a good regard for them, and our parents too had a high regard for her sacrifice, faith and ministry.

4.4 LESSONS OF FAITH

In the ministry of the Lord, particularly in the beginning, our parents had to learn many lessons of faith, a few of which are mentioned here –

4.4.1 EXERCISING FAITH IN REAL LIFE SITUATIONS

Having no fixed salary for the work they were doing, our parents always had to look to the Lord - for meeting their basic needs - even eating their regular meals. Many times they had to sell things like - old newspapers and empty bottles etc. at home for a small price to buy rice and vegetables to cook their meals for that day, which again left them look to God in faith for their following meal!

When my brother Wesley was born, my parents were really in a bad financial state of not even having a few home-made diapers (*just small pieces of cloth, which are recycled after washing and drying in the Sun*). Our mother used to say that she needed to walk long distances frequently as a pregnant lady as they could not afford even paying a few coins to a rickshaw puller to move around in the town.

On one Christmas day they had nothing to eat (*even their regular meal, not a special one*)! Since they were called to serve the Lord depending completely on faith, they never used to talk about their physical needs with others but only to God in prayer. As they were praying that day, they heard a knock on the door and they opened it. And there was a man standing with a frame of a scripture verse from the Bible, which read – **“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7.** The man handed over the frame to them with an envelope with a small amount of money in it, which was just enough to buy their food for that evening! That man told our parents that it was a gift from A. E. Hyny. Our parents thanked the man and asked him to convey their thanks and Christmas greetings to the missionary lady. When the man left they went inside and praised the Lord for sending their meal for that evening. They thanked even more for the most appropriate Biblical verse at an appropriate time.

In those days we used to use firewood for cooking our meals. And one day, it so happened that our mother neither had any more firewood left for cooking the meal the next day, nor any money to buy some with. She waited until the evening to see if her prayers would be answered, but they were not. Having no other alternative, after we children went to bed in the night, she went on her knees in prayer to make her humble petitions made known to the Lord. She wrestled in prayer much of the night and went to bed. She got up in the morning knowing that there was no firewood left.

But she was still praying in her heart about her need even while attending on the children’s needs, when she heard a knock on the door. When she opened the door there was lady (*a close friend of our mother*) with a heap of firewood on her head: And this lady would have never carried a heap of firewood on her head in her whole life - being the wife of a Government officer, with herself being in a respectable position in society. Our mother could not believe as to what she was looking at! Her

friend told our mother that she could not sleep the whole night before - as she had been prompted in her heart again and again to carry a heap of firewood to our mother! Our mother graciously helped her to relieve her weight on her head and told her with a thankful smile that it was the Lord who prompted her in response to her request for firewood, which she badly needed to cook the meal for that day! Both the ladies shared their joy with a word of prayer and a nice conversation.

On yet another time they had nothing left to eat. Just as usual they prayed to the Lord to meet their basic need. It was dark in the night and there was a knock on the door. When my father opened the door, there was a relative standing with the rickshaw he came in waiting in the street. The relative stepped inside to ask as to how our parents were doing and pulled out a small amount of money from his pocket, kept it in our father's hand and said that he should leave immediately. When our father asked him as to why he had come to the town and what made him go so hurriedly, the relative replied that he had an urgent work to attend and should leave: Of course he left! Our parents were filled with joy for the answer to their prayers. Their eyes were filled with tears of joy for the way the Lord stood by His promise yet another time.

At another time, it so happened that they were left with some rice in the house without any vegetables to cook the curry with. (*In the area where our parents lived, they eat boiled rice with curry, or soup made of Dal*). Now they have rice to boil but nothing to make the curry to eat the rice with. At that time my grandmother arrived with a packet of 'Turdal' to make soup with. A bitter gourd creeper grew up by itself without intentionally planting it in the back yard, and there were some bitter gourds to make curry with to eat in the evenings. So it eventually became a routine - eating rice with 'Turdal' for lunch, and rice with bitter gourd curry in the evening for several days. Our mother got tired of eating them and prayed to the Lord to give her some meat to eat the rice with, as He provided the children of Israel in the wilderness. Then, one day some of the boys who used to stay in the hostel and attend our church services washed their plates outside after finishing their meal and going back to their dorms. Soon some of the wild cranes came there to eat the rice grain from the washed plates. When one of those boys hurled a stone at them, one of those cranes fell to the ground. He eventually brought it to our mother and our mother graciously praised the Lord for obliging her prayers and enjoyed some meat that evening.

When I was little, I developed a small tumor under my ear. When the doctors examined it, they said that some Radium treatment was necessary! When our parents heard it, they were gripped with fear. But being people who always believed in the Lord, even for their day-to-day needs, they brought home this to the notice of an elderly evangelist, Bro. John, for his spiritual counseling and prayers. Bro. John strengthened them and said that the Lord would heal me without Radium - but with His own treatment! He eventually applied some coconut oil on the tumor and prayed for a few days, and the tumor disappeared automatically without the need for further medical treatments.

On another occasion, as a little girl, I was suffering from both chicken pox and blood motions at the same time. I eventually became very weak and when our father took me to a doctor, even he was worried about my condition. He then prescribed some medicine but asked our parents to be vigilant about my condition. After returning back from the hospital our parents started fasting and praying for me, as they normally used to do on all situations like this. After continuing their prayers for two days our mother had a vision in which she saw an old lady going around our house looking for an open door to enter in to harm us children. The old lady, she saw in her vision told our mother that she was unable to enter our house as it was sealed by prayers! When our mother woke up, she realized that I became sick because of the attacks of Satan. I soon became normal and healthy.

When Wesley was a little boy, he once suffered from a high fever. Our parents were so worried about him and of course, besides taking him to a doctor, they were also fasting and praying. That night, after kneeling down and praying for several hours they went to bed in the early hours of the following day. In the morning when they got up, they tried to feel Wesley's temperature and were surprised to see him being completely normal. In the morning, when we all sat down for the family prayer (*as it was our daily routine before attending our own personal work every day*), Wesley told us that he saw Jesus and his disciples in his dream and that was the reason why he got healed.

One day a scorpion bit our mother and as she started feeling the acute pain, we children (*being teenagers at that time*) took her to the hospital, as our father was away preaching in a Christian meeting in a different place at that time. The doctors gave some medicine: but even after taking it in, she still felt the pain for a long time before she felt O.K. When we informed our father about the incident after he returned back home, he asked our mother as to why she had gone to the hospital for a scorpion bite and not prayed applying some oil.

A few days later another scorpion bit her, but this time, when our father was at home. Our father applied some coconut oil and prayed for her and there was no pain. As children, we felt very surprised to see the prayers working even in things like this.

4.4.2 MY SURGICAL TREATMENT – RELYING ON GOD

When I was five years old, I was riding an old tri-cycle for kids, which was given by Bro. David, about whom I mentioned earlier. As I was riding it one day, I somehow tripped and fell to a side. From that time on I had some problem with my knee and I used to fall unexpectedly even while walking on roads. Several doctors suggested our father to take me to the Christian Medical College in Vellore for a surgical treatment. It was a nightmare for our parents as they neither had the financial stamina to meet the expenditure, nor were in a position to go and stay in a neighboring state with the other two little children for several weeks or even months.

Our parents, after bringing home the issue to the notice of the elders in Chennai, requested their prayers. Then, as the Annual Retreat of the church was in progress in Chennai, our father fasted and prayed for three days that the Lord might show His will as to whether He wants them (*our parents*) to take me to Vellore for a surgical treatment, or if He himself would heal me without any surgery. After that our father had a vision in which he saw me taking to Vellore for a surgical treatment. Though our parents did not have the money to meet the need at that time, they used their faith and with a great difficulty our father alone took me to the hospital in Vellore.

The doctors, after examining my leg, expressed their apprehensions about the normal bending of the knee-joint even after the surgical treatment. So, our father prayed that the Lord should dispel the fears of the doctors since it was His will to take me there. During that time our mother too was praying - staying back at home in Machilipatnam. And she had a vision too, in which she saw the leg completely bending after the surgical treatment. Our mother informed our father through a letter and our father was satisfied with what our mother had written, as he knew that she was a praying lady.

But there was another problem. The surgeon who was to operate on my knee told our father that the process might take several months. Since our father was not ready for this, he started praying that the Lord might help.

The operation was successfully finished but our father being alone there found it difficult to handle the situation by himself. He eventually gave a telegram to our mother to go and help him. After receiving the telegram our mother did not know as to how she should do that long journey without reservations (*ticket booking in advance*), and with two little kids to go with! She then thought of asking one of their spiritual son, Mr. David, who was then living in Vijayawada, if he could come and help her get into the Madras mail at the Vijayawada Station. She eventually gave a telegram and started with a few things and my two little brothers. But after arriving in Vijayawada, Mr. David was not found at the place she expected to see him. After searching for him in different places and not finding him anywhere, she was disappointed and was praying much that the Lord should do some miracle in helping her get into the general compartment of the train. As the time was ticking by, all of a sudden she found Mr. David going up the stairs on the railway platform! She immediately called him by name and he turned back to see that it was none other than our mother, who was calling for him. He came down and asked as to why she was there. Then she asked him if he received the telegram she sent to him and he said “no.” Our mother was filled with tears of joy at the way the Lord had answered her prayers. After coming to know about her need he helped them go to the railway yard, where two compartments were supposed to be attached to the train she was to get into, and helped her. It was thus that her need was met at an appropriate time in a surprising way. Our mother later managed to continue her journey to Vellore.

During our stay in Vellore, Dr. Vasanthamma was of great help in every way. She was our father’s cousin (*Mr. John’s daughter*), doing her residency in the same hospital. Right from the time our father arrived there with me, she helped us meet all the doctors, and get all the tests done, besides keeping us comfortable during our stay. In Vellore, after the surgery, we had to stay in a rented house without knowing the local language and managing things. God was gracious to give our father and mother the wisdom, patience and faith to handle things.

Contrary to the earlier plans of the surgeon the plaster on my surgical wound was removed after 15 days; and soon they started giving me Physiotherapy for a few weeks before they discharged me from the hospital. This was another answer of the Lord to the prayers.

Finally at the request of Dr. Vasanthamma, God was gracious to make the hospital authorities reduce our bills considerably after coming to know that our father was an evangelist living on faith. Finally with hearts filled with gratitude and joy we returned back home in Machilipatnam. After a few weeks of rest, I was back in school not only to attend my regular studies but also to participate in all the regular sports and other activities. Our parents were filled with gratitude after seeing one more time the kindness of the Lord in their own lives.

4.5 MOVING TO THE CHURCH COMPOUND

After realizing that it was getting hard to organize things staying in a rented house (*which was located a few yards away from the prayer shed*), as there used to be several prayer services conducted during the week, our parents, after much prayer and relying on the Lord, decided to use their faith again in constructing a small thatched shed for our living on the same site, next to where the church (*prayer shed*) was constructed earlier. Finally a shed for our living - using bamboos and

Pal marina leaves for roof, and mud mortar for walls and floor, was constructed. We eventually moved into the shed which was just like a dorm with no separate rooms! In one corner our mother used to cook our meals with kerosene stove or firewood.

Our father used to go very frequently to attend revival meetings in the surrounding area and our mother gladly and graciously supported his work even though we did not have some of the basic facilities in the church compound for several years.

Though this house (*mentioned above*) was constructed in the early sixties, the flooring work was completed only later (*1967 or 68*). During this time our mother, taking the help of one or two ladies (*who used to attend our church services*), used to collect the basic ingredients to make the mud-mortar and toil in the Sun to lay a fresh layer of it on the floor and the walls - from time to time. She used to do the same even to the walls of the church. It was a lot of manual work involving patience.

Even though our parents started renting the site where the prayer shed was constructed (*in late fifties*), it was not until 1967 that we got electricity to the property. Up until that time our mother used to light the kerosene lamps every day before it used to get dark. We still remember cutting her hands frequently while cleaning the glass chimneys. Our father used to light the petromax light (*kerosene gas lamp*) whenever there used to be an evening meeting (*four times a week*) in the church. During the revival meetings in the church compound (*which used to be conducted from time to time*), our father used to rent a few more petromax lights. Many times, when the gas pressure used to go down in the lamps, heavy flames used to flare up; but the Lord helped that those flames never catch the leaves or bamboos which were used for roofing to the flimsy temporary accommodations to conduct meetings in.

We still had to go and collect drinking water from the municipal public tap located in the street corner for a long time, though we had had a hand pump to use for fetching ground water. It was only in 1974 that we got a residential municipal tap connection to the property.

Though I mentioned earlier that our mother used to use kerosene stove and firewood to cook all our meals, there is even more to add. Every year we used to have two meetings. And our mother was the sole cook for the meetings to prepare all the meals - for the family, for the guest speakers, and for many of those other people, who used to work doing the arrangements etc. She depended solely on the use of firewood and kerosene stoves to make such huge food preparations – breakfast, lunch and dinner! Thanks to Bhagyamma for helping us for several years with the cleaning work.

4.6 FEW MORE INCIDENTS IN MINISTRY

A man in a close by village wanted to marry a second lady, of course with the consent of his first wife, as he did not have children from her! He even received a sum of Rs.10, 000 rupees towards the dowry from the second lady, whom he was going to marry. During that time our father went to their village to preach and after hearing the word of the Lord, this man came up to meet our father and told him his plans. Our father asked him first to return the dowry he had received back to that lady and told him that it was wrong to marry (*another person*), with the spouse still living. When that man obeyed and returned the money, our father prayed for children to this man from his own wife and left that place when the meetings were over. A year later the couple informed our father that they were blessed with a child. This kind of – first obeying the word of the Lord - resulted in bringing many incredible results in the lives of several people during our parents' ministry.

In yet another family, both the husband and the wife had problems with each other and as they could not settle their issue themselves, they were ready to take divorce. When our father had come to know about their issue, he began doing some personal work with both the husband and wife. Though they were against yielding to the will of the Lord in the beginning, each one began to realize his and her mistakes for that situation, confessed them with each other and came into the close fellowship of the Lord. The husband and wife did not divorce but stayed in the love of the Lord until the end of their married life.

On another occasion, a man's hand got sprained and as a result he could not do any work. When that man heard the word of the Lord when our father preached one day, he got enough faith and began praying for the healing of his hand. As the days went by, one day, he accidentally put his hand in a bucket of water being heated by an immersion electric heating coil. He eventually got a shock (*electrocution*) from it and his hand got healed: so from then on he was able to go back to work.

In one of the meetings, when our father mentioned that he was healed of his eye problem (*soon after accepting the Lord as his savior*), a young man was greatly encouraged to use his faith as well, as he too had a similar problem with his eye at that time. He came to our father and told him about his problem and expressed his desire to get healed. Our father told him that it was his faith in the Lord that would save and heal him; and our father finally prayed for him. After he finished the prayer, that man heard a voice "their eyes were opened." When he opened his eyes at the end of the prayer, he was able to see!

One day, the older son of Mrs. & Mr. Nathaniel was suffering from high temperature and his nose started bleeding. As all the neighbors were suggesting Mr. & Mrs. Nathaniel to take him to a doctor immediately, our father said that they could pray for him first and began to do so. Immediately the flow of blood stopped. Many got faith in the Lord after seeing this with their own eyes.

4.7 BRINGING UP CHILDREN

4.7.1 FAMILY PRAYER

Our parents always made it a point to start and end all our family activities of the day with a family prayer, as they believed that good discipline in children starts with a good family prayer. This family prayer used to be preceded by our parents finishing their quiet time with the Lord, beginning it in the early hours when it was still very dark like 4 A.M. and sometimes even 3 A.M. The family prayer used to start with the singing of a chorus, which was then followed by reading a small portion of the Bible, which was then followed by small prayers (*by us kids, and finally by our parents*). Our father used to finally conclude it with a benediction.

As kids we were taught small prayers and as the years passed by, our parents encouraged us to add other needs from time to time to be included in our family prayers. They were cautious not to make the family prayers too long as everyone had other things to attend – particularly in the morning.

After we grew up and had different work schedules, the evening family prayer was not strictly in place but the morning family prayer was in place throughout. In the place of the evening family prayer, each one was encouraged to pray individually just before going to bed.



Figure 3 Mr. & Mrs. Abel and family - 1978

4.7.2 DISCIPLINE

Our parents used to maintain strict discipline - both at home and outside. They always used their canes to correct us. Any mistake we might do at school or elsewhere should be brought to their notice immediately. If there used to be any reports from the school or neighbors' children about our arrogant or misbehavior (*there used to be hardly any though*), we used to get good corrective treatment from our parents, which was then followed by apologizing the person in question. If it was not done, we would not get our meal for the day until it was completed! Those were the rules and all three of us, as children, had the experience of having to do this kind of apologizing at some time or other.

Our parents used cane to correct us, if we needed it. But they always used to be cautious not to show off all their anger, but to wait and do it only if it was absolutely necessary. They also used to be careful to use the cane only at the place it should be used. If by any reason they used it a little more than necessary, in the night before we went to bed, they used to apologize. Though we could not understand as to why they were doing it at that time, we are now very grateful for the correction they gave us at that time.

As we were growing in age they slowly changed the approach from using cane to using other methods to change our behavior. They also repeatedly used to warn us as teenagers that they cannot continue preaching the gospel if our lives were not exemplary and in accordance with the word of God.

4.7.3 CARE AND CONCERN FOR CHILDREN

Our mother was a teacher by profession and she taught us at home (*besides our attending regular school programs*) until each one of us reached Grade 5. From then on, she left us to do it on our own. As long as she taught us at home, we all used to be in the top ranks in our respective classes. Everyday all three of us were expected to sit on a mat next to our house between 7 and 9 A.M. to study.

From Grade 6, our parents used to encourage us to get up early in the morning by 4 A.M. to spend some time in studies while they used to spend time in prayer. As we advanced to higher grades like 9 and 10, they used to wake us up as early as at 3 in the morning, make some coffee in the winter to help us get up from bed to study, and kneel down to have their quiet time with the Lord after having a cup of coffee.

Our parents were very loving and had a lot of concern for our well-being. Whenever we were sick or suffered from ill health, they used to do all their best to take care of us. Above all, on days like this they used to kneel down by our bedside and pray – some times, throughout the night! We remember many such times.

Some times when our father was busy working for the Lord, the evil spirits used to attack us children at home making us sick. Our parents knew pretty well that we were very vulnerable to these attacks, so they used to shield us with the prayers all the time.

4.7.4 LIMITED SPENDING

When we were kids, our father used to take us to the Bazar to get new clothes stitched for Christmas and Birthdays. So, we were sure of going to the Bazaar twice a year with our father. When we were there we used to get a great temptation of eating 'biryani' in one of the famous restaurants of those days - '*Bombay Hotel*.' When in Bazar, we used to ask our father for it and he used to approve our request as it was only twice in a year! After sitting in the restaurant, he used to order biryani for us (about 50 – 70 paise for each meal in those days), but just a glass of water for himself as he did not like to spend even for a nice meal on himself.

4.7.5 LETTERS AND CORRESPONDENCE

As all of us children did most of our studies in our hometown (*Machilipatnam*), our parents did not have to keep in touch with us through letters until we left that place. It was only when Wesley and I left for Vizag (*a city about 300 kilometers from our town*) for our graduate studies that our father had to keep in touch with us through his regular letters. All our friends and classmates used to get surprised at the way he used to keep in touch with so many letters.

Our father used to keep in touch - not only with us but also with many of his spiritual children the Lord had given them. We remember mailing a lot of letters for him at the nearby post office every day, and watch the mailman get a lot of mail to our father from several people.

4.7.6 PRAYING FOR CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL LIFE

When we were growing and in teen age, our parents were concerned that we should give our hearts to Jesus and submit our lives completely in obedience to the Lord. Our parents talked about it many times to us and prayed with earnest desire. After several years of wrestling in prayer the Lord helped me first and later Wesley to believe in the Lord.

4.7.7 TAKING PRAYERFUL DECISIONS IN CHILDREN'S ISSUES

Our parents have learnt from the senior evangelists that if they prayed and followed the Lord's guidance even in the studies of their children, they could see the blessing in their lives.

When it was time for me to go to college, our parents prayed much for my studies for several days before my admission. When the question of choosing the second language of my studies (*Telugu or Hindi*) came up for consideration, both our parents and I were in a dilemma as to what to choose. At that time, Mr. P. Vijaya Kumar, who came to preach in the students' meetings in our church, suggested that I should choose Hindi as my second language, as it might be helpful in future. So, I chose Hindi and continued it even in my undergraduate (*degree*) program.

After finishing my bachelors program, the question of doing either masters in another city or doing teacher education came up for taking a decision; our parents prayerfully took the decision and sent me for doing masters program. As I had never been out of home, though there were some problems, the Lord strengthened me through the prayers of our parents and His children, and finally I finished it. The Lord also opened a way for me to find a position in teaching, in one of the Christian colleges later despite much uncertainty for a long time.

When Wesley finished his grade 12, it was time for him either to go to a professional college or continue the regular stream of college studies - taking Science as major subject. Our father, after fasting and praying, told Wesley that he did not have the guidance from the Lord for his going to a professional college. But he gave Wesley freedom to choose which way he decides to go ahead with – as it was his future. By the grace of the Lord, Wesley greatly appreciated the prayerful suggestions given by our father.

4.8 YOUTH MINISTRY

When Mr. N. Daniel prayerfully sent our father and mother to Machilipatnam for doing God's work, he told them that God was going to use them in the ministry among the young people. And our parents soon saw those prophetic words coming true as they began and continued their work.

The location of our church was close to two Government hostels (*residence homes for the students*). So, much of the attendance at our church in those days used to be by the students! As the days passed by, more hostels came around in the mid-seventies and more students began attending the services.

In the late fifties and early sixties our father himself used to go to some of these hostels to invite students to come to church and hear the word of God; but later on, it was taken up by those who were invited like this by our father before, and who had come to the knowledge of the Lord.

There used to be a separate prayer meeting for the youth on Sunday evenings. As there were other loudspeaker disturbances regularly taking place up until 8 P.M. on every Sunday evenings in the neighborhood, our father used to start the youth meeting at 8 P.M., which used to run for an hour from then. The singing used to be in English, while the message used to be in Telugu. Many students used to attend and get touched by the hand of the Lord. Later, we met many people, who told us during our conversations with them, that they used to attend our church services when they were students - residing in some of those hostels close by.

Having converted as a teenager, our father was much interested in doing his work among the students and teenagers. There were many students from different backgrounds, who came into the light of the Lord after attending our church services.

When we were little, our father also used to do some street preaching. On special days and festivals, our father used to go out with a band of young people from our church, with a lot of tracts in their shoulder bags for distribution. As you know, it is not always a happy occasion - as they used to get ridiculed and abused by many - even by some Christians! But he believed that it was a command from none other than the almighty God and he used to do it prayerfully, wisely and with caution.

4.8.1 DISCIPLINING YOUNG BELIEVERS

Our father believed that without proper discipline people could never continue their walk with the Lord. So he used to watch every believer's walk with the Lord in the church - knowing that he was responsible as a pastor, for the well being of their souls. Although he used to be mild when correcting minor mistakes, there were other times when he was very tough dealing with serious mistakes. And this kind of keeping an eye on the members of the church led to have a very disciplined and organized group of people.

In those days our church was only a few yards from nurses' quarters (*residence halls for the nurses in training*), with many nurses going on the road in front of our church - all the day. In all those years, we had never heard any young lady coming and complaining to our father - about any young man, who used to attend our church services! These young boys knew where they were going and where they were coming back to - walking on the road. There was absolutely no bad issue with them in anyway.

After learning discipline and prayer life in their student life, the young boys, after leaving back to their native places used to start gospel work there. Our father went to conduct meetings at many of these places later on, year after year.

Amrutha Kumar was one of those students blessed by our parents' ministry. After comfortably settling down in life, he dedicated his life to the Lord, resigned his job and went to a far off place in Nepal with family to do the Lord's ministry among the poor and needy. He lived totally on faith without any continued support from any organization or church for most of the time. His life was a blessing to many before his home-call.

4.8.2 COUNSELING

Our father used to be very careful about the movements and associations of the young people, whom he led up to the Lord. When they were to enter their married lives, he used to caution them

not to make any hasty decisions depending on outward considerations. While some were careful, others were not, who eventually got to pay the price later on in their lives.

4.9 SUNDAY SCHOOL

4.9.1 THE BEGINNING

Our parents believed that the fresh minds of the children were the best places for sowing the word of God to teach them the right path (*which God expects them to choose*) so that when they get to their age of understanding, they could make correct decisions. So, they gave importance to the Sunday school ministry. After our family moved to the church compound in Malkapatnam around 1963, the Sunday school was started, which used to be conducted at the residence of Mr. B. Israel, (*about whom it was mentioned previously*) in Railpet.

As mentioned, Mr. B. Israel was a very experienced teacher and a jealous man for the Lord. He was always seen on his knees praying and never used to tolerate mischief in children!

Both Wesley and I, together with a few other children from Malkapatnam used to attend the Sunday school walking several blocks away in the hot sand to Railpet. It was really a nightmare to go with not many houses seen around in those days along the way.

About thirty kids used to attend the Sunday school, where we used to learn biblical stories, and recite a few verses from a specific chapter (*chosen by the teacher*) from the Bible every week; so that by the end of each year we used to finish reciting about two or three complete chapters. At the end of the year, there used to be a Rally with a special ceremony and prize distribution, which was then followed by marching of the Sunday School children around the locality with singing and playing - drums and other instruments.

4.9.2 CHANGING THE PLACE

After much prayer and waiting, the venue of the Sunday school was changed to the church property in Malkapatnam either in 1967 or 1968, with our mother as the sole teacher. It was a huge class with children from grades 1 to 10 – all in the same class! Our mother being a teacher herself, used to teach it very interestingly that the attendance never used to drop, and we kids used to anxiously look forward for attending the next Sunday School class the following Sunday.

It was there that we learnt many of the famous stories of the Bible – from the creation to Esther, the popular Psalms, Proverbs, and the parables and stories from the New Testament. Our mother used to tell each big story as a series – with each class being the continuation of the previous class – until the whole story ended. In this way, it not only used to be very interesting, but also used to give us a chance to know the whole story of the Bible in a few classes.



Figure 4 MR. & MRS. ABEL WITH SUNDAY SCHOOL CHILDREN AND YOUTH (1967)

Sitting first row: Nanu, Babji, Chinni, Leona, Yohanu, Yesupadam, Chanti, Kumar and brother, Name unknown, Francis

Second row: Shoban Kumar, Swarnalatha, Mercy, Chittamma, Bujji, Chinnu, Sukanya, Jerusha, Suneeti, Name unknown, Suneel

Third row: Chellemma, Raju, Mrs. Abel, Mr. Abel

Standing: Noble, James, Venkateswara Rao, Prasad, Freddy, Prabhakara Rao

The year-end assessment used to be based on recitation of the Bible chapters, which we learnt during the year, which was followed by a written test in the content dealt with during that year. It was amazing to see how some of those young students used to recite several chapters of the Bible without even a single mistake!

This Sunday school, as a single class, continued for about five years.

4.9.3 DIVIDING INTO BATCHES

Since this single class was becoming difficult not only for handling, but also for assessing the students' achievements on the same scale, they decided to divide the class into four groups – The very first class was - for those between KG to Grade 3, for which the teacher was our mother; the next class was for Grades 4, 5, and 6, for which the teacher was Mr. Noble; and the next class was for Grades 7, 8 and 9, for which the teacher was Mr. Prabhakara Rao; and the next class was from Grade 10 and above (*with English as the medium of instruction*), for which the teacher was Mr. Pushparaj –

respectively. This set up probably may have started in 1971 or 72, and continued for many years (*may be with a few minor changes*), and of course, with change of several teachers.

From 1983, we started having a few children's retreats, once a year, with each being organized for about three days: and these retreats replaced the regular Sunday School Rallies, which we used to have earlier.

4.9.4 FIRST CHRISTMAS PLAY

It was 1972, when all of us as school children remained at home for several months because of an unprecedented agitation for a separate Andhra State. Having a lot of time to spare for practice, we asked our father if it was possible for us to participate in a small Christmas play-let. After giving much thought he asked Mr. Prabhakara Rao, if he could spare some time on this activity with the Sunday school children. The play-let was finally enacted in a thrilling way by the children in the small (*old*) prayer shed with a great success. This tradition of enacting a Christmas drama continued every year later, as long as our father was alive (*if I remember well*), except in 1977 when a tidal wave hit the area – killing several thousands of people, and in 1982 when our father went to be with the Lord.

Although our father gave permission to the children to take part in it, he pretty well knew the dangers behind it as an experienced evangelist, and also being a drama actor himself in his school days. So he always used to warn us to be cautious and vigilant by spending much of our time in prayer about the possible attacks of Satan. He never liked the idea of dramas and music taking the place of the real worship which should come from within the heart.

4.10 ANNUAL MEETINGS

During the days our father was alive, we used to have two sessions of meetings scheduled (*the students' meetings in July or August, and the year-end meetings in the month of November*), in the church compound, generally every year during the mid and late sixties - except in the year 1966, when the revival meetings were conducted in the town hall. But because of the busy schedules of the evangelists, the revival meetings could not be conducted each year later on, but the students' meetings were continued in the month of July or August – each year.

For these meetings, we used to have temporary structures with bamboos, and tarpaulins – which were rented or borrowed from local agencies. During that time, unlike as it is now, we hardly had any problems conducting the meetings in the month of November, as the cyclones were not as prevalent as they are now. But we used to have some problems with conducting them in July or August, as it was the monsoon season for south India. Later on, 'Shamianas' were used to conduct meetings in.



Figure 5 Revival meetings time in mid-seventies

After each of these meetings, we used to have a good revival harvest with many coming into the knowledge of the Lord; and these people were then led into a deeper experience of salvation by our parents. Many of these people, later on, became soul winners in various places.

4.11 BUYING THE LAND FROM THE OWNER

In 1967 the owner of the Land from whom our father rented the land for rupees five a month, gave that property to his daughter, who was in New Delhi at that time. As this lady wanted to sell her property, she gave us a notice to vacate. It was an unexpected problem for which our parents were not ready. So, even without giving any consideration to the price tag on the property they were looking for other places to rent and move to. The matter was brought to the notice of the church administration in Chennai for their prayers and suggestions.

Following the instructions from it, when our father asked the landlord for the price tag on the property, she mentioned a huge figure. After much correspondence with the landlord the price was reduced just a little bit. Just as before our parents decided to take it to the Lord in prayer and look to Him for the need. After spending many months on knees and fasting prayer, they were able to buy the land probably in 1968 and register it on the Church name.

4.12 CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW CHURCH BUILDING – 1973

After years of conducting prayer meetings in the small thatched shed, with our mother and other women regularly repairing the walls of it, and with frequent need to replace the Pal marina leaves used for roofing to it – at least once every two or three years, they thought it was time to do something to accommodate the growing number of people attending the church, who had no place to sit in. This was preceded by a frequent practice of making the people stand up and move a little bit forward so as to accommodate those who showed up late. So, our parents started praying much about it and requested the church members to join them in prayer. The matter was also taken to the notice of the church administration in Chennai and there was a positive response.

Again the local church did not have enough financial resources to meet the expected expenditure. The policy of our church and parents was not to request for donations as they believed that God would supply if it is His will. They saw it happen many, many times before and they had no hesitation trusting the Lord even at other times.

At last our parents started the construction of a new church (60'x 30') with very limited resources – which might be enough barely to start the foundation work. But with faith they started the carpentry work first by getting ready all the trusses needed. It was a great encouragement to have a man of God like Mr. G. B. Solomon, who had had some experience constructing some church buildings before - staying with us and overseeing the work continually for several weeks. He was one of the most praying men we had seen. He remained as a bachelor – after realizing that it was God's will for his life. He kept his testimony clean until the end with great fear and trembling before the Lord.

After preparing the trusses there was another problem: As it is generally the case, the local municipal administration did not give permission to go ahead with the construction of the new church building. The work was eventually stopped and the trusses were laid out exposing them to Sun and rain. And people passing by that street (*even some of the Christians*), started thinking that the work could not go ahead as our father did not receive funds from the western countries! But the reality was different. Though our parents started the work even without having enough funds, their faith was that the Lord would provide as they make each of their steps of faith slowly – one after the other.

After waiting for several months the work was put into progress again and it continued until it was finished - leaving just the flooring work. It was a big project to our parents, and another big experience of exercising their faith. It was a simple structure to accommodate more people under one roof – with asbestos sheets used as roof. Wooden trellises were used on all four sides, with a few curtains covering the backside of the preacher.



Figure 6 Construction of the new church building in progress - 1973

The first meeting was held on the Christmas day 1973 in the new church. It was a joyful experience worshipping in the new building – though with a sandy floor below. Mats made of leaves used to be spread on the sandy floor for people to sit on. The dedication of the church was done later on in one of the students’ meetings in early 1974 - not as a big ceremonial function with ribbon cutting etc, but with praise and thanksgiving. One or two special songs were sung and a couple of the guest speakers of the meetings preached.

Though the church was opened and dedicated, it was not until 1976 that the flooring work was completed. And this, by itself, was another exercise of their faith to our parents. One of the friends of our father graciously agreed to give away some of the Cuddapah slab of their dismantled house as donation to the church. But that was too little to cover an area of eighteen hundred square feet. So, our father had to go and buy a lorry load of additional slab from Macherla, in Guntur district to meet the need. Soon after his return, the work was undertaken and God was gracious not to let us wait more time to get the slab laid. The work was completed and we were very happy.



Figure 7 Men and boys after the church service - 1973



Figure 8 Dismantling the First Prayer shed after construction of the new one

4.13 HOME CALL OF MRS. ABEL'S MOTHER

It was April 24, 1974, when our father was away in another place preaching in revival meetings. That evening, my grandmother, who was a little over sixty years of age, started getting weaker and weaker and was confined to bed. Our mother and some of the other church members were by her side. She said that she was being invited by little children (*whom we could not see*) to come home. Some of the nurses who were close by and who examined her condition said that she would not survive and hence we were suggested to inform our father and other relatives immediately. In those days, Telegrams were used to communicate any serious and urgent messages. We sent them to all.

A little later our grand mother went to be with the Lord. Our mother grieved much as she lost her mother, who, with her hard work brought her up to that stage. And now she went to be with the Lord leaving our mother behind: in addition to that, our father was not even there at that time. We waited for his return, but since he did not get the message on time he could not return. As it was summer, the burial was finished.

Later, our father returned back home and it was a very sad moment. Our father tried to comfort our mother – knowing how much she was loved and cared for by our grandmother.

4.14 EXPANDING THE CHURCH PROPERTY

It was in 1975 that the next property to the church, where a public municipal elementary school was running, came up for sale. The owner of that building was a good friend of our father, who lived in Hyderabad and died shortly before, and his wife wanted to sell away that property.

The matter was brought to the notice of the church administration in Chennai, which wanted to buy that property as well - keeping in view the expansion of the ministry in future. After a few bargains between the church administration and the owner, it was bought and registered in 1976 on church name, and the municipal administration was informed of the change of ownership of the property and was given notice to vacate the building. But it dragged on the issue until 1980, before handing over it. Being a preacher, who himself teaches against giving bribes, which was a common practice to get things done in several parts of the world today, our father never stooped down to doing such practices - despite the long delay. On the other hand, whenever our father used to go to the municipal office, he used to tell them, who he was and what he preaches - whenever he used to get a chance. Our father used to go to the municipal office, once in every two or three days - requesting for the vacation for several years (*from 1976 to 1980*)! Few could have done that with such patience.

In addition, our father used to brief in every evening meeting, when the church members used to meet for prayer service, the updates on the issue and encouraged believers to pray without ceasing, which finally paid off several years later.

4.15 NATURAL CALAMITIES – EXERCISING FAITH

Whenever there used to be heavy rains and winds, the bamboo trellis used as fencing to the church property used to fall without any doubt, and fixing it in place was our regular job the following day.

But there were a few occasions when we were battered by terrific coastal cyclones (*with our location being only a few kilometers from the Bay of Bengal*).



Figure 9 Mr. Abel and others fixing the fence to the church after cyclone

4.15.1 CYCLONE – 1968

There was a big cyclone in summer of 1968, when we were away in Chennai attending the annual retreat of the church, which took place in St. George's school. Many railway bridges got damaged and no trains were running between Chennai and Vijayawada. The Retreat was over but the situation made it difficult for the people who attended the retreat to go back to their places!

After several hours of uncertainty our father finally came to know that there was a train going up to Ongole, starting in Chennai Central at about 11:30 mid night; so he planned to take it, and asked others going that way from the retreat to take it.

As the train was shunted back to the platform, people tried their expertise to push themselves into the compartments (*bogies*), and some - even through windows - as there used to be no grills to the

windows in those days. Our father tried to push all of us in, and we kids got squeezed both by the heavy rush of people as well as by their luggage. We even felt that we would die there suffocating. But our father had no other choice. After several minutes of this unpleasant experience with more and more people getting in, the train finally whistled and started.

After spending a restless and sleepless night, with many of them standing on single foot for most of the time we finally arrived in Ongole at about 11:30 the following mid-day. We ate lunch late in the 'Choultry' and waited for the arrival of a private bus to travel in.

After making sure that everything was O.K., the bus slowly moved and left Ongole. Starting in Ongole at about 2:30 P.M., we many times had to take shortcuts to avoid the fallen bridges etc. to finally arrive in Guntur at about 8 or 9 P.M., dropping people in their towns and villages along the way. From there, we finally reached our home in Machilipatnam in the mid night or in the early hours of the next day. Our father prayed and gave thanks to the Lord for bringing us safe back home.

4.15.2 CYCLONE – 1976

That was November 4, 1976. Though it all started in the morning, it was only in the evening at about 7 P.M. that the winds started blowing fiercely, when we were all in our house – a thatched shed. It was all dark and we were managing with just one or two flash (*torch*) lights. Our father was so afraid that he took all of us into his hands, made us kneel down and started praying that the Lord might save our lives from possible unexpected dangers. The roof of our house, which was made of bamboos and Pal marina leaves, was terribly shaking and bending low because of the fierce winds. Our father kept on praying, while our mother, who was a lady with more courage, strengthened our father that no harm would happen to our lives.

As we were eagerly waiting for the terrific winds to die down, all of a sudden we heard a big sound like a lightning hitting our church, which was built three years before. We all got panicked and knew immediately that something serious had happened in the church building. A couple of hours later the winds subsided and we came out with our flashlights to find some of the asbestos sheets on the roof blown off.

Our father got the large hole to the roof covered with a tarpaulin and continued our church services in the same area. The broken asbestos sheets were replaced many weeks later.

4.15.3 TIDAL WAVE – 1977

Days passed by swiftly and soon it was the same month – a year later. On November 4th, they remembered the havoc that happened a year before and thanked the Lord for saving our lives.

The clouds were overcast on 18th and it started drizzling. They spent 18th (*day and night*) without any problem though it was raining because of the cyclonic weather.

On 19th, right from the early morning the winds started picking up strength as they grew wilder and wilder. Our father and mother gathered both my brothers into the house, closed all the shutters as they did in the previous year, and started praying to the Lord to keep their lives safe.

Realizing that the rain and winds were not subsiding, our father took our mother, Wesley and Emmanuel out of that place to our aunt's (*Mrs. Indira Daniel, our father's younger sister*) rented residence, which was located a few hundred yards away from where we were staying. After keeping them there, my father left back to the church with Mr. Theophilus, who was a student and a faithful believer attending our church.

But after reaching the church compound, because of the weather that was getting worse, they had no choice but to stay back in our neighbor's house across the street. Our neighbor was a nice gentleman, who invited them to stay back with them while they themselves were not sure of their own survival. Mr. Noble also happened to be with our father and Theophilus on that day in our neighbor's house.

Our father kept watching the church building, wondering if the structure would withstand the fury of the winds - by opening a small window shutter of the neighbor's house. At about 3:30 P.M., some of the asbestos sheets of the church in the front got blown off by the heavy winds - making the two front trusses underneath collapse. Our father could not see this happen to the church building, which he had built with prayer, patience and after exercising a lot of faith. So, he asked Mr. Noble and Mr. Theophilus to close the window shutters, telling them that he could no longer watch the church building getting damaged further. They did so and remained in.

When it was around 3 in the early hours of the 20th November, the rain and winds slowly started to subside and completely died down at about 4:30 in the early morning. My father and others then realized that there was a tidal wave - not just wind and rain!

As soon as they heard it, they rushed with a great difficulty - with a flashlight (*torch*) to get back my mother and brothers. They told them that all our sheds totally collapsed and the front portion of the new church building collapsed too!



Figure 10 The fallen trusses of the Church in 1977 cyclone

As my two brothers arrived at the church compound when it was still a little bit dark, they saw people in their neighborhood moving and looking for their loved ones and the things they lost. The streets were full of seawater and panic stricken people. There were screams and tumultuous atmosphere with people searching with flashlights. While my brothers, Mr. Theophilus, and Mr. Noble were at the church compound, our father came there a little later accompanying our mother, and she was filled with tears - seeing all the damage the tidal wave and the cyclone did.

Our mother and brothers found our house collapsed, with all our personal belongings being buried under the mud-mortar walls of the fallen house and soaking in water. Our father told them that the Seawater came up to the steps of the church compound before receding.

That was a Sunday, which means the previous day was a Saturday, when they were supposed to have assembled for a fasting prayer in the night. But no one could venture coming to the fasting prayer as there was absolutely no scope! And that was the only occasion, when the church service was cancelled without making an announcement before hand in the history of the church up until then.



Figure 11 The damage to the front portion of the Church and our house by the Cyclone 1977

When they entered the church building there was all kinds of wet garbage scattered everywhere, and the mats used in church got drenched and were soaking in the rainwater. The pieces of asbestos were everywhere. They saw a tiny little dead bird on the church floor soaking in the water.

As people came to know as to what had happened, a flow of crowd came out to take a look at the vast sheet of the Seawater still covering the land, right from the place where our houses were located to the Sea! As the crowd was passing by - looking at the damage the tidal wave and the cyclone did to each property on either side of the road, they saw ours too. While some expressed their sympathy looking at the fallen portion of the church, others started giggling at - as it is Church property! Sitting near the fallen trusses, our parents watched some of these reactions and expressions. But our father knew well that they were to face the ridicule from people (*though not from everyone*) for the sake of the gospel. He did not respond in anyway, but prayed in his heart that the Lord should show His mercy towards them all.

As the time was close to 9 A.M., even while the rush of people walking in the streets continued, about 3 people, who barely could take a look at their own loss and damage to their personal belongings, came to the Sunday church service with Bibles in their hands! Mrs. K. Kamamma was one of them. She was a lady of great faith.



*Figure 12 The tidal-wave brought this huge boat from a place a few kilometers away and left it right on the road, which was pushed aside to clear the way for traffic.
(water receded when photo was taken many days later)*

There were about 10 or 12 people (which included our family members and the young people who used to attend church services) who assembled that Sunday. They sat in the front (where the front two trusses had fallen), with our father sitting in the corner on a chair. He asked those who attended as to how they had survived that terrible time, and later ended the meeting with a word of prayer thanking the Lord for His mercy in sparing their lives, and asking for help and comfort to those who lost their lives and properties. Even while they were still in prayer, lot of people were still passing by on the road looking at them and wondering if the destruction did not keep them from worshipping the Lord at a time like that, at a spot where the trusses literally fell! No, it did not shake their giving first place to the Lord on a Sunday despite losing everything – except their own lives.

Dead animals got piled up everywhere along the roadside – one after the other and they had never seen things like that before! A little later they realized that not only were there dead animals, but also many human bodies.

Later they came to know that the tidal wave did even greater damage covering a very large area and totally washing away many villages. The relief operations undertaken by government and other Christian organizations were in full swing during the next months, and continued for several years following it. The total death toll was estimated at about 50,000 in all – though these numbers are intentionally kept as low as possible on many occasions by the authorities.

The clean up took a long time (*several weeks later*) during which time, there was neither electricity nor drinking water.

Clean up in the compound: After suffering such a heavy loss to both the property and our personal belongings, clean up and rehabilitation was our father's main focus. Many of the young boys and people, who were blessed by our parents' ministry, came up to help in every way they could during this time. They did a lot of manual work by cleaning the compound, and by salvaging and shifting our personal belongings to a small portion of the church behind the preacher's back, – where a few screens were used as partition (*in between the preacher and our personal belongings*).

Theophilus was a young man, who did a great job during the cleanup. He was great in killing snakes. As the Seawater marooned much of the land around, the snakes and other poisonous creatures were forced away from their usual habitat to the residential area. During the cleanup, Theophilus killed many snakes.

A few weeks later, the municipality started supplying drinking water through taps. After almost two months of spending in virtual darkness during nights, they finally got the electricity.

Meanwhile our parents thought there was an urgent need to build a small shed (*about 12'x 10'*), where they used to have one previously, which was used as a kitchen. They started building this little shed with the material salvaged from the houses collapsed. Many brothers and sisters helped much in this project. The shed was used both as a kitchen and also as a small bed room for our parents. My brothers lived in the small portion where they kept all our personal belongings behind a curtain inside the church. During night, staying in the prayer hall under the asbestos roof was not a problem, but, during day, it used to be very hot being a tropical country. Our parents, after realizing that putting up with uncomfortable times was part of their duty in obeying the call of the Lord, did neither grumble nor complain about the critical times they had to go through. They simply continued the work as if nothing had happened.



Figure 13 Mr. & Mrs. Abel recycling things after cyclone in 1977

Our living like this continued for a long time later on. But even though the church owns the next house, where the municipal school was running, they did not vacate the house and hand it over to us. But the headmaster and the teachers were kind enough to allow us to use a couple of their rooms for a few days even without obtaining permission from their administration – but taking the risk on themselves, for the act of which our parents thanked them wholeheartedly.

4.15.4 CYCLONE – 1979

This time, it was mid-summer in May 1979, when Wesley and Emmanuel were writing their final exams in college.

Knowing well the fury of these natural calamities, our family members and some of the other boys and girls did not waste time after it started raining with winds, to go to a nearby college hostel,

wherefrom many of our boys used to attend our worship services. Some of the boys in the second floor were kind enough to vacate and give their room to keep them comfortable and to let them spend the night there. But, even though the cyclone did a lot of havoc with much rain and wind, the Lord did not allow loss to life as in the past. The next day, after thanking the boys who let them use their room, they came back home and praised the Lord.

4.15.5 CYCLONE 1990



Figure 14 The destruction in Cyclone 1990 in the Church compound

This happened in summer of 1990, eight years after our father went to be with the Lord and when our mother was staying with Emmanuel. But this time our family moved in to the school building I have been talking about earlier, unlike, on occasions before when we stayed in temporary sheds.

Since the school building we moved into was too old, our mother was moved to a safer place during this cyclone. The destruction during this cyclone was even greater with stronger winds; but the difference was that the loss of life this time was little because of better communication, and immediate action taken by the authorities in moving people to safer places; and of course, the absence of tidal wave!

In addition to these experiences, right from the beginning, it was a regular practice for us – to collect the leaking rain water from roofs in buckets, whenever there was a considerable rain – both in thatched sheds and also in the tile house. There were several occasions, when, after running out of all the available buckets in the house, we used our regular cookware (*used in our house for*

preparing food) to collect the leaking rainwater in. And we had so many leakages from the roof, that on several occasions, we literally ran out of even all the cookware that we had at home – for collecting this leaking rainwater! But the Lord gave our parents patience and faith to face uncomfortable times.

4.16 ATTENDING RETREATS IN CHENNAI

4.17.1 ANNUAL RETREATS

Attending the annual retreats of the church in Chennai was one of the regular programs of our father right from the time he was a bachelor. After his marriage it had become even a more responsible job. In the late sixties we still remember them being in a position to making reservation for just one berth for the whole family, and managing things by making three of us children sleep on a single berth, while our father and mother used to travel sitting on seats throughout the night! In the late fifties and early sixties, they could not even talk about reserving seats, as they had to look until the last minute even to buy their regular passenger tickets. But in all these situations, the Lord helped them.

We still remember our parents telling us of an occasion (*when we were very little*), when they had to change from one train to the other, on their way to Chennai at a collapsed railway bridge! The two trains stopped on either side of the broken bridge, and the passengers were asked to get off the train and move over to the other side on foot to get into the other train. The trains would then push back to their originating stations they had started from. Since it was mid-summer, with two little children and luggage to handle, our parents had to exercise their patience.

Our father used to - make all the people attending Retreats from his church to fast and pray for several days before going. He is used to give instructions to all, right from start to finish at various stages, and watch them when they were at the Retreat.

To cut short family expenditure, our mother used to prepare a lot of homemade un-perishable snack that could be stored for about two to three weeks, to feed us children, and to share with other brothers and sisters who used to stay with us in the retreat. In the Retreats our father used to do a lot of translation from English to Telugu. Many times, he used to lose his voice after translating for several days - not only in the retreats, but also after every major schedule of meetings elsewhere.

Being an evangelist with thorough knowledge of the problems faced by the other evangelists, he used to take some time talking to them when he was in the Retreat, to know their personal problems, to pray, and to help in any way he could. We saw him doing it several times. Some of the people who used to come to him used to hesitate to sit beside him, as they had a high respect for any evangelist. But he used to tell them that he was only a servant of the Lord and that they need not fear to sit by his side and talk.

When in Retreats, our father sometimes was assigned the duty of giving Baptisms too. He used to do it not only with all his heart, but also with a broken and contrite heart before the Lord - knowing well, that he himself was a human being, who is prone to the attacks of Satan in numerous ways. He used to pray constantly for his own spiritual stability and exemplary life throughout.

After the home-call of our father, in the mid and late eighties, our mother had difficulties attending retreats. But despite all her problems, she always desired attending them, where she had to sleep on mats and manage things using the facilities that were meant for healthy and young people. The Lord had put in her heart a hunger for the spiritual manna and a desire to be with God's people to pray and worship Him.

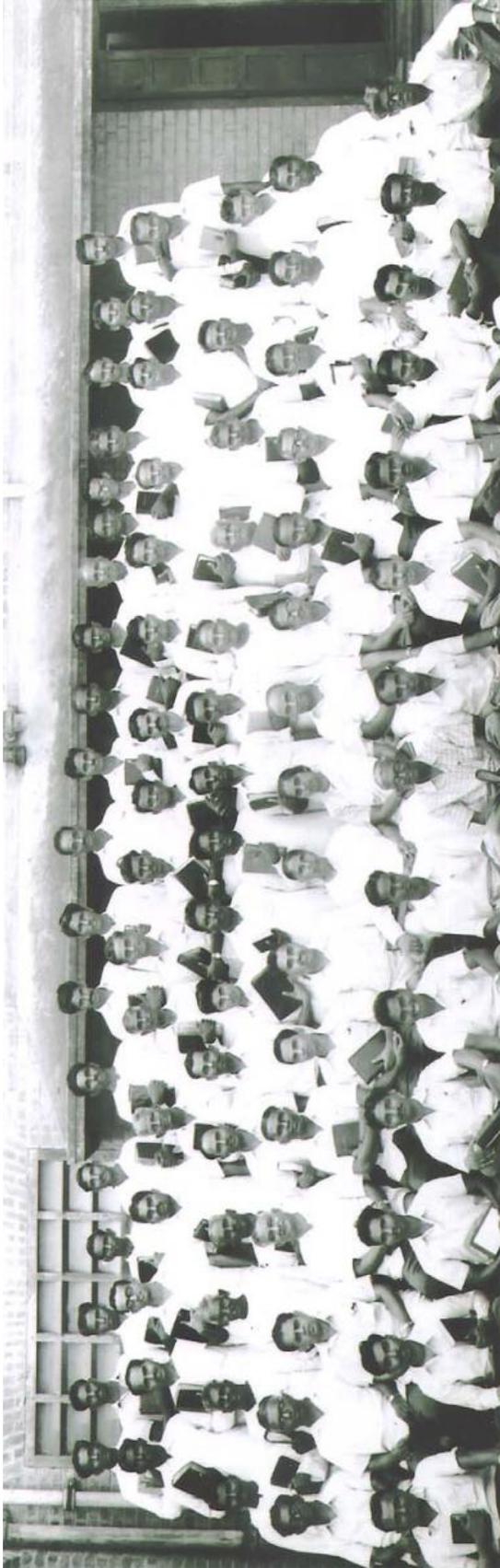


Figure 15: Evangelists at one of the Retreats in Chennai

4.17.2 STUDENTS' RETREATS

In those days these retreats generally used to be conducted in the month of January. Our father used to attend with a few students from our church every year. He was never mindful of the number of students going, but was always keen on their conversion and spiritual stability.

4.17 ZEAL TO REACH THE UNREACHED

4.17.1 MINISTRY IN THE SURROUNDING AREA

Right from the time our father came to Machilipatnam as an evangelist the Lord started using him for His glory in Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam and Visakhapatnam districts. In major revival meetings of the church, he was one of those who generally used to preach the parables of the sower.



Figure 16 Mr. Abel and others seen with Mr. Joshua Daniel in Stuartpuram meetings

We as children, many times, never used to see him for several days, after he left home to preach in different places. There were several occasions when our mother told us that our father had come home finishing meetings in one place late in the night (*after we kids used to go to bed*), and left for another place for another schedule of meetings (*even before we used to wake up the next day*). And some times, he used to ask some of the college students (*his spiritual sons*), who used to stay in the church during nights, to give him a bicycle ride in the early hours of the day to the bus stop, to catch one of those early buses: Many times he used to do it to save some money, as in those days, he could not afford even paying for his rickshaw fare.

4.17.2 NO MISSING OPPORTUNITIES

Sometimes, when we were in college and university, some of our friends used to come home to meet us. And our father never used to let them go without telling them about the love of Jesus, which was usually followed by giving them some useful good booklets of testimonies. He always used to be mindful of the souls of people he used to meet.

In the late sixties, at least once in a year, we children used to go to the sea-shore with the young boys of the church, to spend a couple of hours - as we were located pretty close to the shores of the Bay of Bengal. Sometimes our father used to go with us too. While we kids used to play on the shore, when the young boys used to go a few feet into the Sea water, our father usually used to get into conversation with some fisherman in the nearby boats, telling them about the love of the Lord and how he spent his times at the Sea with his disciples. Finally, he used to give them something like - one of those huge papaya fruit we used to take fresh from a tree in our church compound.

4.18 CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMUNICATION

Our father was very prompt in keeping communication. He used to keep in touch with all his spiritual sons, daughters, brothers and sisters through good communication. He knew pretty well that some of these people, who, after leaving Machilipatnam and going to another place - either for doing a job, or simply back to their native places, badly needed some spiritual material and guidance for keeping them in touch with the Lord. So, he used to write many letters to them to know their status and to give guidance. He also used to mail out some useful printed material, from which, he himself used to find good spiritual manna.

4.19 RELATION WITH NEIGHBORS

By the grace of God, our parents always tried to keep cordial relationships with our neighbors. The people around where we lived - were mainly Muslims and Christians, and our parents had always kept a good relationship with them. Also, there were many churches in our neighborhood and our father always maintained a brotherly relationship with the pastors of those churches as he knew that they were all working with the common goal of proclaiming the good news of the Lord.

4.20 TEACHABLE SPIRIT

By His grace, the Lord gave our parents respect for the aged, the elderly, and for the senior brothers and sisters of the church.

They made it a point to bring home important issues to the notice of the senior people for their prayerful suggestions and opinions. At the same time, they were careful not to fall prey to Satan to gratify their minds.

In those days those who used to attend the retreats were expected to take permission, if they were to go out of the campus on some personal work. Our father's own sister and brother used to live in Chennai city at that time, but our father never used to leave the campus without taking permission from the administration to pay a brief visit to their places on an afternoon (*just once during the ten day period*). He never used to take liberty to get out by himself. The Lord granted him the spirit of meekness throughout.

4.21 SPIRIT OF REVELATION

During the early days of my father's conversion he had the gift of speaking in tongues and he used to pray in other languages: And he was not even aware of it! Some of the people after hearing his prayers told him that he was praying in their own languages. At that time one of the senior evangelists told him to ask the Lord for the gift of 'revelation'. Then as our father went and prayed for it the Lord granted it and praying in tongues gradually stopped later.

With this gift of the spirit from the Lord, he prayerfully used to caution believers in the church: and we have heard from some of them (*both those who obeyed, and who did not*) about their experiences later.

On one occasion, it was Wesley's final chance of passing the exam, and if he was not going to, a lot of uncertainty was ahead. But despite preparing well for the exam, strangely, Wesley could not do well. Being heart-broken, after finishing the exam he came to his room to find a letter from our father. In that letter our father wrote, "Son, I am sure that you will have finished writing your exam by this time tomorrow. And I am still praying much for you as the Lord showed me that you would not be able to do well. I am anxious to hearing from you; please reply as soon as possible."

Yes, as the Lord told him even 24 hours before, Wesley really could not do well in the exam.

4.22 LITTLE THINGS – YET USEFUL IN MINISTRY

The Lord helped our parents realize that worship should come from the depths of their hearts and not from their lips. They believed that the musical instruments should help us worship the Lord, but not become some kind of entertaining objects for the mind. In the early days, when the first church was built, we just had a 'drum' and a 'tambourine' to help with our singing in the church. My father liked to play a 'tambourine'- sitting on a chair and singing.

It was in 1968 that someone informed our father that one of the Christian organizations in Bangalore was helping evangelists by sending a few gramophone records with songs and messages to be used with a small instrument, which they called it "turntalk," which needs manual spinning of the record for its working. This works only as long as we spin the record manually but not otherwise. They supplied them to the evangelists for a nominal price of ten rupees and our father ordered for one and got it. By using it in the surrounding villages, they did gospel work among the common people. Some of the students, who got converted and blessed by our parents' ministry used to borrow it to use in their villages.

In 1970, Mr. David, about whom we had mentioned earlier, was in Aden. And he rarely used to keep in touch with our father. He thought that our father needed a cassette-tape recorder to use in the ministry and he brought one during one of his trips to India. And this tape recorder was so useful in recording Christian messages, testimonies, and new English songs taught in the retreats from time to time. It was also used for playing back the recorded messages in church.

One of our family friends gave a radio as a gift in 1972. But the Lord helped - even us children, not to tune in for listening to any unhealthy program or music that was not good for our souls. It was really the grace of the Lord. It was mainly used for listening to the overseas Christian shortwave broadcasts.

Prior to purchasing a public address system, our father preached without it for more than twenty five years. It was a frequent duty for us to squeeze the sweat off, rinse in water and dry his shirt after he came back home finishing preaching. The Lord enabled him to put his heart and soul into His work. We did not even have a table fan until 1968 to cool off a preaching evangelist on a hot summer day in tropical climate.

4.23 *SHOWING LOVE – WINNING BACKSLIDERS TO CHRIST*

Our parents believed that even if a person makes a serious mistake in his life, he could still be won for the Lord, if he is willing to realize his mistake with deep repentance, confess it and recommits his life to the Lord. It was with this belief that our parents used to keep in touch with some of those people - even after making some wrong choices, unless they deliberately and intentionally did not like to be kept in touch.

One of the early converts, who was very jealous for the Lord in those early days, and whose exemplary life even brought others to Christ, somehow lost his touch with the Lord, and a little later went back to even some of his old habits like smoking.

Our father used to travel frequently for attending the religious meetings here and there, and one day it so happened that he found this person, whom he lost years ago - standing close by the bus my father was to travel in and smoking a cigarette. Our father, without any hesitation called him by his name, and when he heard the voice of our father, he realized that it was a familiar voice. As he looked around to see as to who it was from, he found our father sitting in the bus and waving his hand to come closer. As soon as he saw our father, his eyes were filled with tears - remembering all those wonderful days which he had spent with the Lord, and then and there itself, he dropped the cigarette he was smoking, went to our father, talked to him, and he soon made a re-commitment to the Lord to follow him again. He became a witness for the Lord and never ever again touched a cigarette in his life. From then on, he had maintained a very strong testimony in the company he worked for, and has been laboring for the Lord after retiring from service.

There were several other young people, who were brought back to the grace of the Lord - even after making a wrong decision at some point of time during their walk with the Lord in their lives. This is nothing but the love of the Lord.

4.24 *HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW*

Other than what I had mentioned sofar, there are a few more incidents -

4.24.1 *LORD'S PROTECTION*

The compound, where the church and our house were located, was full of poisonous snakes - even though it was always kept clean and located in a residential area! We had literally

killed dozens of such poisonous snakes, with more than 95% of them being ‘Vipers.’ We found them in bathrooms, inside the house, on - gates, bicycle, sleeping mats, taps!

Once it was on my brother, Emmanuel’s mosquito net when he (*4 years old at that time*) was sleeping on a bed inside a mosquito net when our mother was in a fasting prayer. Our father was attending a revival meeting somewhere at that time. After finishing the prayer in the early hours of Sunday (*which started at 8 P.M. on Saturday night*), when our mother returned to sleep on the same bed, where Emmanuel was sleeping, she noticed in the dim bed-lamp light a rope like thing on top of the mosquito net. But as she kept watching it, it stretched a bit longer making her rush out and call for help from some of her spiritual sons and most dependable boys, who used to sleep in the church taking care of some of the routines of the church services. They came in immediately and very tactfully killed the snake. This is just one of many such incidents, when the Lord kept everyone in the compound safe from snake-bite without any loss to life. This situation continued until the last year (*2004*) our mother stayed in the compound.

4.24.2 FACING THREATENING AND INSULTS

Working as a servant of the Lord often keeps one in a very vulnerable and critical position of having to face insults. Our parents were not new to this. There were several occasions when they received threatening letters, and experienced many insults in every possible way: but they kept pressing forward – forgetting the things behind.

Much of the attendance at our church was by students. Every year we used to have a fresh batch of students added up as new believers. Many of these boys used to come from very ordinary families. The Lord used to touch them when they started attending the prayer meetings in our church. These students, after finishing their studies and going back to their native places, used to start some gospel work in their own village, and the gospel thus used to spread to a new place. Some of the parents of these students were not happy with their boys and girls, when, after hearing the word of God, they refused to take scholarships from Government by giving false declarations. So some of the parents used to come and blame our parents for preaching the gospel. But the Lord helped our parents to take comfort in Him to realize that it was part of their ministry.

On one occasion, a boy in a different place was led up to the Lord; as a result he had to give up his girl friend. The family members of the girl were planning to kill both the boy and our father that evening! But before that could happen, the Lord helped both of them slip away from that place.

On another occasion, a person, who misunderstood our father’s attempts to help their family, came to openly threaten our father. The person stood in front of the church gate and started cursing, shouting and yelling at our father while everyone was passing by. After noticing the unpleasant actions of the person, our father did neither move nor respond: the person left having received no response. As our parents and other believers prayed with burden, that person’s attitude towards our father completely changed later.

4.24.3 YIELDING TO THE WILL OF THE LORD

Our father used only a bicycle throughout his life – even when he was a heart patient before his 'home-call'. When someone wanted to give him an old scooter as a gift, so as to help with his moving here and there in the ministry work, he prayed about their good intention and after realizing that he had no permission from the Lord to accept it, he humbly refused it without hurting their feelings.



Figure 17 Mr. Abel with his old Bicycle

4.25 SILVER JUBILEE WEDDING ANNIVERSARY – JUNE 1981

It was on June 11th in 1981, that our parents finished twenty five years of their meaningful married life for the glory of the Lord – right from the day they got married. The church membership was growing slowly and steadily. Things were a lot different at that time than when they first started the ministry together. Wesley was away in Vizag for doing graduate studies, but both Emmanuel and I were there with our parents in Machilipatnam.

A brief thanksgiving meeting was arranged and both our father and mother gave independently – their testimonies. Many people who attended the meeting were in tears of praise as the name of the Lord was glorified. After our parents spoke, a few others spoke. The meeting ended with a prayer. In his testimony, our father mentioned two questions that were on his mind at that time - 1) How exemplary was his life as a father and as a husband, and 2) How exemplary was our family.

4.26 TESTIMONY OF WESLEY (IN HIS OWN WORDS)

I am the second child and first boy of Mr.& Mrs. Abel.

The strict rules of the family and the prayerful atmosphere at home did not prevent my natural craving for choosing bad things in life. As I grew up in age, my evil desires also grew. The punishments of our parents could not stop it.

I was always a bright student standing in the first few ranks in my elementary and high school. But after going to college, my concentration started diverting as a result of my desire for the pleasures of this world. My father, after noticing the loss of my enthusiasm in the church activities and the word of God, warned me to be careful – as it could lead me to fall behind in every activity of life. At that time, as a teen-age boy, I did not pay much attention to his words.

In intermediate and degree, my grades dropped even further as I was unable to concentrate on my studies.

Since my life was not in accordance with the word of God, some people started ridiculing me. Being a very sensitive boy, I felt deeply hurt and I tried to get away to avoid their presence by going to the outskirts of the town to sit and feel sorry - all alone for the situation I was in. When it was late in the night, I used to go back home. When my parents used to ask me as to why I was getting back home late, I used to tell them lies. And even after going to bed, I used to spend the rest of the night without any sleep or peace of mind. Our parents could not understand as to what was going wrong with me, as I never used to be like that before. At that time, I was badly in need of some time out to be in a place far away from home. Though I was not at all doing well in my studies, the Lord miraculously helped me through His grace to finish my B.Sc degree.

I got a seat in Andhra University, about 400 kilometers away from our hometown. Since I was desperately looking for an opportunity to be away from home, I left.

At the University I had to stay in students' residence halls (*hostel*) for the first time in my life. The condition of my heart coupled with the new adjustment problems made me fall back still further in studies. Months later, as it was exams time, I skipped writing all exams.

The second semester started, but there was no improvement in my situation, again I skipped exams!

During this time all the things I had learnt at home because of the family traditions and customs like – going to church every Sunday and not going to movies continued. When

people used to see all this, they used to get surprised as to why I was not doing well in studies - being a person with regular church going, and with no smoking or even going to movies.

In the second year things got worse even though I moved to another building with better accommodation. In the afternoons and evenings I used to go and spend time aimlessly on roads and streets. In the nights I was without sleep, and it was a nightmare whenever I thought of studies!

Days passed by swiftly and soon it was going to be the end of yet another semester (*third*)! With the constant thinking of the situation I was in, life became bitter. I became mentally very upset. Many times, I used to cry within myself and often even aloud (*when none was around*). I used to return back to my hostel late and in order to forget the pain and mental agony, atleast temporarily, I used to go to bed; and this had become my routine life.

It was then that I thought of committing suicide to end up my life, as it was neither useful to me nor others. Then, as I thought of my parents, I cried aloud as I could hardly control my emotions. The love of our parents was too valuable for me to trade anything with it.

During that time I went home one day to my parents and when I was getting back to the university, as usual my mother prayed for my journey before I started. As I paid attention to her prayer, she said, "Lord, let this son of mine come back home next time becoming your child!" After hearing that prayer, I was deeply disturbed within myself remembering all the troubles and turmoil I was going through in life for several years, and the latest desire in my heart to end up my life. My parents, being praying people, though were not happy with my performance in my studies, they were very patient to wait in the presence of the Lord and to pray for me. But at that time when I heard my mother praying like this without knowing the condition I was in, and the desires of my heart, I was deeply hurt and left back with tears.

As days were heavy like this, on a Sunday afternoon, I thought of watching a movie for the first time in my life so as to forget my pain - atleast temporarily. Up until then, all my classmates knew that I never used to go to movies - as our parents taught us not to, right from the beginning (*as they believed that there was more harm than good in them*). My classmates, up until then, many times used to bet on taking me to a movie. But now, because of the perturbed state I was in, I went to one of my classmates and asked him, if we both could go for a movie. He thought that I was joking. Several minutes later he was convinced and agreed to go with me.

We arrived at a famous movie theater in the heart of the city. It was an English movie. Right from the beginning I could not follow even the story, as I started thinking of my parents at home, and the situation that had brought me there for the first time in life. Moreover, it was a Sunday afternoon, when I always used to be in a church except that day! As the movie progressed I became even more restless.

Finally the movie was over but contrary to my expectation I was in a worse mental state. We returned back to the hostel and I started thinking of all the problems that engulfed me from every side.

I went to bed that night like any other day with no peace of mind. When I was sleeping, in the early hours at about 2, an evil spirit came and started tormenting me with suffocation as I tried in vain to wrestle with it. I was trying to cry out for help, but my mouth was shut and I was unable to utter any word. After a while, as the evil spirit left me my hand hit the wall hard next to me and I suddenly woke up. It was all silent and when I looked around, my room-mate was sleeping sound in the bed-lamp light. I could hardly sleep for the rest of the night.

In the morning everyone got up and after finishing breakfast, they left for attending classes. But I stayed back in room. As I was in the lowest of my moods and completely in a state of disappointment and despair, the mailman was coming around in the hallway dropping mail into rooms. He dropped some mail even in our room. I picked up mine and started reading them. After reading one of those letters, which was from a friend of mine, God revealed to me that the things I was seeking in this world, and for the sake of which I could not give my heart to Jesus up until then, were like mist in the air with temporary existence. I questioned myself if that was the world I have been living and waiting for! I felt that the things I was looking and living for so far leaving me all alone in a desert with nowhere to go. It was hard for me to control my emotions. Fortunately no one was around as they all left for classes. I bolted my room from inside and cried for the way I was deceived by Satan! I realized the mistake I made in life.

At that moment the only choice before me was to stop going further in the way I was proceeding, and go back to the loving hands of the God almighty for His mercy to rebuild my life once again from scratch. After realizing how my longing for the pleasures of this world deceived me, I did not like to waste any time further. I wanted to go home immediately and set everything right before the Lord and my parents.

I knocked on the door in the mid-night and my mother came out to open the door for me to let me in. I asked if our dad was not at home, and she replied that he had gone to another place for conducting revival meetings and that he would be back the following day. I told her as to what had made me go there in the first place and without holding back anything I confessed all my deceitful life and asked for her forgiveness. My mother was so happy to know that she could get me back into the loving hands of the Lord, after wrestling in prayer for years. She prayed for me and asked me to take some rest.

Next day afternoon my father arrived and I was, by nature, too afraid to approach and talk to him. I went to solitary prayer with Mr. T. Prabhakara Rao (*an early convert of my father's ministry*). After we finished it, I came back to attend the fasting prayer service in our church.

Through the years, I sat in the church for several hundreds of times but never did I sit in the church with such a need and rapt attention. As my father began to preach, it appeared to me that each word that came through his mouth was meant only for me. After the preaching was over, and as everyone knelt down in fasting prayer, the spirit of the Lord came upon me and I began to cry aloud confessing my sins in the presence of the Lord without even worrying about as to who were around and if they were hearing. The mat where I knelt down became wet with my tears. When everyone prayed and finished, my father finally finished his pastoral prayer and gave the benediction.

After everyone left, I went to my father, revealed to him all my deceitful nature and asked for his forgiveness. We both prayed in that late night for a long time before my father asked me to pray alone so that he might pray for me in his room.

The morning broke and it was like a brand new day for me. I thoroughly enjoyed the presence and the company of God's children in the church services that Sunday.

The next thing before me was setting things right with people as well. Previously it was the most difficult thing for me even to think of doing. But now as I started and finished it, new hope and light started coming into my heart and joy started filling my soul.

This happened a few days before the third semester exams. The thought that I did not even appear for the first two semester exams was too hard that Satan started attacking me time and again with the doubt - whether I would be able to finish my studies at all with the situation I was in, at that time. Though it appeared impossible, I put my trust in the Lord. I left home and arrived back at the university.

As I entered the room, I prayed for the guidance of the Lord and for His leading in all my course of actions from then on. From then on, solitary prayer had become a habit for me morning and evening despite heavy work and schedules. There was hardly any time left for me to prepare for the coming exams; but I began planning and preparing for the exams. And I could see the Lord's hand leading me throughout. Many times, I had experiences of ups and downs, joy and sorrow, feelings of worthlessness and sometimes hope - one after the other. It needed strong commitment and hard work on my part to put my faith to work.

The third semester exams were over and I was surprised to know that I could do well and pass except one paper during that little time available to me. It was a great encouragement.

Then, the fourth and last semester started and finished pretty fast (*within two months*). I passed all but one of the papers with good marks. It took a little more extra time but finally, I got my degree. It was merely the grace of the Lord that enabled me to get through those situations without ending up my life.

Later I worked temporarily before getting a couple of teaching jobs in the Government - passing the state wide competitive exams. God had enabled me to succeed in my teaching profession, working in different colleges in India: He also showed upon me His grace to maintain a good name in all the places I worked. Many times, I was spiritually weak, but when I turned to the Lord for help, He enabled me to look to Him for all my needs. There were many occasions when the Lord saved me from several dangers and horrible situations of day to day life.

From those days, which I described earlier, several years passed by. But the Lord never left me alone. The challenges of today are very different from those I had had then. But with God, life is worth living for His glory.

Today, when I am writing this testimony, I am married and we have a daughter. I give all the glory and honor to the Lord, who gives His peace of mind and hope to those who trust in Him. Church members who suffered for attending the prayer services

There was a professional fisherman's wife who had several children. She lived in a small village 'Gilakaladindi,' located next to the seashore. She used to come around into our neighborhood from late sixties selling fish. One day when she narrated her personal problems to our mother, she told her about the love of the Lord and immediately she accepted the Lord and started bringing her children too to the church, who, at that time were very young. The evil spirits started giving her a hard time! After praying for several days for her by our father and other evangelists, those spirits finally departed her.

Her husband used to give her a hard time for accepting the Lord and not following their religious customs and traditions. Despite getting constant beatings from him, she did not yield to the pressures but remained faithful to the Lord. Our father used to go to her village sometimes to tell him not to trouble her; though that man used to agree, he could not live up to his promise the moment our father left their village: and this continued for a long time. In a few years he died. But this lady continued to attend the church services until her last days in January 2006.

There used to be another family which suffered for attending the church services. The wife and children were harassed, beaten up and abused by the man of the family. It did not take much time before the Lord dealt with the situation to make the way clear for them to worship Him.

4.27 CHURCH MEMBERS WHO SUFFERED FOR ATTENDING THE PRAYER SERVICES

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4.28 IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

The Lord enabled our parents to learn that it was the faithfulness to the Lord from the depths of our heart that is important – and not the temporary applause, praise and credentials from men.

He also taught our parents the importance of personal prayer life. So right from the beginning they gave ‘solitary prayer’ their top priority in their personal lives.

While our father used to go to the vacant lands located behind the Principal’s (*Noble college*) bungalow in those days, our mother used to pray at home after taking care of other things. Many times our father used to come home late in the night, by which time, we children used to go to bed long before. Before the revival meetings in our church were scheduled to begin, he used to spend a lot more of even his day time in fasting prayer – carrying with him just a bottle of water and his Bible bag. It was this spending time alone in the presence of the Lord that made them keep pressing forward despite discouragements and other problems.

From the time our parents got married they made it a point to pray together throughout their lives for oneness between them, for their family issues and for the various problems of the church and its members. Many times we saw our parents wrestling in fasting prayer for some of the tough issues. It was this relying on the Lord throughout that made them stand firm until the end.

Having a firm belief in solitary prayer, our parents always encouraged every believer in our church – in particular, the young people, to go and cultivate the habit of setting aside time for solitary prayers everyday – generally, in the evening after returning from colleges or work. As a result we used to see a group of people who used to attend our services, sitting along the long old railway station platform overlooking the beautiful rice fields and offering solitary prayers in the evening. In those days, some of our young boys even used to go into the wet rice fields by crossing a few water canals to pray every day.

HOME CALL OF MR. G. ABEL

5.1. *KNOWING IT BEFORE*

It was 1981 summer, when we all sat for the family prayer in the morning that our father said, "I had a dream last night in which I saw myself going to my eternal home; so I think my time is up in this world!" None of us liked what he said – especially, our mother! She asked him as to what she should do with all the responsibilities of the family if that happens. With a smile on his face, he said, "Well, that is all your responsibility then!" Our mother got so alarmed and asked him the details of the dream. And he said, "Well, as I was walking and going I came to a place where there was a river and a boat; I took the boat and crossed the river over to the other side, where I saw little children playing, some of whom were from our Sunday school. When I saw there a Muslim girl from our neighborhood, I asked her as to how she happened to come there; and she replied that she accepted the Lord and that was the reason why she was there! Then as I looked around, there were so many high-rise glass buildings. When I finished going around that place, I came back to the river to take the boat to go back in, but I could not find it. So, I am pretty sure that my time is up in this world!"

We were so alarmed after hearing his dream - as we all knew that he was a man of prayer and that he had the spirit of revelation.

5.2. *MR. ABEL – ETERNAL HOME-CALL*

After a few incidents of his hospitalizations after his dream, our father (*who was 52 then*) was admitted to the hospital and started some kind of numbness in his toes, which was spreading up. So he asked his two brothers – David and Vimal Rao to take him to Chennai for further treatment.

When Miss. A. E. Hyny (*about whom it was mentioned earlier in this book*) came to know about the condition of our father, she rushed to the hospital to see him. She suggested that he should be taken to Chennai for better treatment.

Around 3:30 P.M., the taxi was ready and all the formalities with the hospital administration were finished. Before lifting up and laying our father in the back seat of the taxi, he prayed - "Dear Lord, help us as we are going to another place for further treatment. Give us the grace and wisdom as we move. Bless these dear people who helped me throughout. Bless all the doctors and the nursing staff who cared for me during my stay here, and help these co-patients who stayed with me in the hospital to get well soon. And if it is your will, help me to see them all again. In your precious name I ask. Amen."

Everyone standing close by and heard that prayer knew that it was not an ordinary prayer but was guided by the spirit of the Lord!

We first went to our house, where many other people who had been blessed by our father's ministry and all the church members were waiting. As half of our father's body was paralyzed, he could not be helped to go into the house or even our church. So, all the people were anxious to see him lying in the back seat of the car.

But our father specifically asked for seeing our younger brother, Emmanuel. He came and our father said, "son, if I come again, it is OK: but if I do not, I have to see you in heaven." Our father specifically wanted to talk to him - as he was burdened about our brother not completely coming into the light of the Lord yet, and perhaps after coming to know in his spirit that it could be one of his last few conversations with him. Emmanuel was filled with tears, and then and there itself, he asked for the forgiveness of our father for grieving his heart on several occasions. The door was closed leaving behind every one - including Emmanuel and me, and the car moved and sped away.

In the night, while in journey, our father had a conversation with our mother and asked if she had any revelation from the Lord about him. Though our mother had something to talk about it, she did not as she was worried about the condition of our father and the effect it could have on him. He gave some guidelines to her, some of which were - "1. Continue having the association of the children of God, and the church, even if that means having some critical times. 2. Bring my body back to Machilipatnam, if the Lord would take me into His presence. 3. Be steadfast in the service of the Lord and look for His help in all your future issues."

As soon as they arrived at the clinic in Chennai, the doctor came in, examined our father and gave the prescription. Our father was there for ten days taking treatment, but his condition did not change much. After realizing that my father had a rare complaint, the doctor asked if it was possible for us to get a medicine from the U.S.; but unfortunately we could not do so.

Emmanuel and I arrived in Chennai to see him on 25th of December 1982. Our father was pleased to see all his children and wife by his side. Just before the Christmas, Mr. Yesuratnam (*another student who was blessed by our parents' ministry*) and another lady arrived in Chennai to see him.

It was December 26, 1982 and the time was 10 A.M., when our father had an unusual experience of enjoying the heavenly presence even without his knowledge. Our uncle Mr. Daniel, Emmanuel, and Wesley - could see everything that was happening standing next to him. Despite his body being hooked up to many tubes and with his eyes closed, he joined with his humming - the rhythmic drumbeats of the heavenly choir. Those around were wondering as to what he was hearing and experiencing! It lasted for about 40 minutes. One of the nurses came into the room at that time and after seeing what was going on, she was terribly afraid and called him "Mr. Abel" - several times! Our father did not open his eyes to see her but said, "Sister I am in a heavenly meeting; please do not disturb me." And he continued as before. She left and brought a duty doctor: but he too could not understand when our father gave a similar response to him. Realizing that it was an unusual thing, and knowing pretty well that there was nothing they could do, they left. Our father slowly opened his eyes after an hour.

Wesley went close by and asked our father to find as to what was going on. And he said that he had a heavenly vision. Wesley told him what all was going on with him for quite some time there. Then our father said, "Oh, is that so? I do not know about it; but how come that this was happening here when I was busy talking to him?" And Wesley could not understand as to whom he was talking to, and what? But they knew for sure that he was in an unusual experience.

December 26, 1982 was a Sunday. Night fell and all the friends and other relatives who used to come to check his condition, left. One of our relatives, Mr. David Raj (*who worked as an evangelist in Gannavaram on behalf of the same church we are associated with*), was a student in the Bible School at that time in Chennai. He and Wesley went on a bicycle to get the medicines!

After they left, Emmanuel, after noticing the condition of our father deteriorating, went to the residence of Dr. Jayasingh (*another famous surgeon from Chennai, who was also associated with our church*), and called for him. He was praying for our father in the middle of the night and when he heard Emmanuel calling him, he immediately came out and followed him to the clinic, where our father was. Soon after they arrived our father had the last conversation with them, which on one side was filled with joy that the Lord was calling him, and on the other, was filled with moments of sadness over the situation of his family. My father asked Dr. Jayasingh to call for Bro. Joshua Daniel. He also said that he should go and preach to the nations waiting for him and singing 'Hark the herald angels sing.....'! And finally he said that he was being lifted up. It did not last long and our father finally went to be with the Lord in the early hours of 27th December 1982.

The ambulance carrying our father's body left Chennai around 8:30 in the morning on 27th December 1982, and finally arrived in Machilipatnam at about 11 P.M. As soon as the ambulance stopped the crowd at church in Machilipatnam was at the peak of its emotions for losing its loving pastor.

Early in the morning everything was in place to go ahead with the funeral at 9 A.M. There was a huge crowd in our church hall with many friends, relatives, neighbors, and church members. After finishing the formalities, we proceeded to St. Mary's church, where the burial took place. The Church was fully packed with people. Mr. G. B. Solomon gave a powerful message, which made all those who attended to look back and think of their own lives. After finishing the other formal proceedings the crowd proceeded to the burial spot.

We were happy to see Mrs. Nicodemus attending the funeral, who happened to be in Machilipatnam visiting her relatives at the same time. She was a lady with a great burden for the ministry, and a vision for her relatives in Machilipatnam. She admired our parents' services in the Lord's vineyard. The burial was finished and many started leaving with heavy hearts.

Then suddenly we heard again an elderly couple crying at the grave: And there we saw from a distance, Mrs. & Mr. G. John, (*who led our father into the experience of salvation when he was 16 years*)! The same evening a prayer meeting was arranged, where many friends, family members, and co-evangelists like – Mr. G. B. Solomon, Mr. B. Devasahayam, and others spoke.

5.3. MATCHLESS HELP

Following the demise of our father, we were filled with a feeling of loneliness, whose presence itself used to give a lot of strength to us. Our uncle, Daniel and aunty, Indira with their children, helped us overcome those difficult times with their matchless company for several weeks. Their stay with us made a lot of difference in our lives at that crucial time of need. In fact uncle, Daniel was the one who took care of our father single handedly when our father was in Chennai for treatment. We thank them all our lives for the services and the help they rendered. At the same time aunty, Rajendram and uncle, Vimal Rao, after helping us meet all the financial burden related to the hospitalization of our father, frequently visited us with words of comfort and times of togetherness, and we whole-heartedly thank them ever for their kindness and love.

During night, for a few weeks that followed, some of the young people who were blessed by our parents' ministry came to sleep at the church, whose regular prayers in the night gave us great uplifting to our souls.

MRS. G. PADMA ABEL'S MINISTRY

With the demise of our father started a new era in the life of each one in the family, especially our mother. Though in the beginning she was a bit afraid of the huge issues before her to handle, which she was never exposed to – having been brought up as the only child by her single mother, she derived her strength from the Lord. She thus had no doubt to believe that the Lord would handle all her problems Himself on her behalf. The only weapon she chose and used throughout was – ‘prayer.’

In the earlier days of their ministry, she was all the time busy conducting prayer meetings at various places – lady Amphthil School (*for teacher trainees*), hostels for women and girls in the town, and at our own house for a group of young women. Some of the young women (*Mrs. Rajamani, Mrs. Vijaya and others*), who had been led up to the Lord by her, are not only strong believers, but also tremendous supporters of the Lord's work.

With the home-call of our dear father, our mother had many uncertainties and issues before her to handle. Dealing with my marriage was her major issue. At that time I was paid an amount of 500 Rupees a month – for the period I worked (*which excluded vacations*) as a part-time lecturer. Wesley had a little more course work to finish and Emmanuel was in his final year of his degree program. This means there was a lot of financial need. Next, our mother had no place of her own to move into, just in case, if we had to – as the property belonged to the church.

The church administration wanted to strengthen the gospel work by sending some of the senior evangelists every week from Chennai. This continued up until 1984 or 85. In 1984, Mr. Joshua Daniel visited Machilipatnam to hold a few days of meetings in the church compound.

Time quickly passed by and it was already three years since our father went to be with the Lord. As my marriage issue was not yet settled, it had become a great burden on our mother. In the summer months of 1986, when we used to sleep in the open air outside - we noticed our mother praying and wrestling in the presence of the Lord night after night.

During that time she woke up one early morning and started wrestling in prayer for a solution to my marriage issue. As the day was about to break there was a bird close by on a treetop singing. We could hear both the prayers of our mother and the singing of the bird as well. The singing of the bird was like saying – “Aentadi? Aentadi?” in Telugu! (*Which meant – “what is that, what is that?”*). The bird stood there on the treetop and sang almost until the end of the prayer. As our mother finished her prayer, Wesley just woke up and she asked him if he had noticed the little black bird on the treetop singing for a long time. And he told her he did. She asked him as to how the little bird's singing sounded like to him? As Wesley was yet to give his answer, she said that it was like asking her “Aentadi? Aentadi?” She said that the song of the bird instilled on her mind a kind of feeling that the Lord was asking her

as to why she was overlaid with burden! Even to Wesley, amazingly it sounded just the same way. From that moment there was a great relief to her – though the problem still persisted!

After a few days of uncertainties and critical times, the issue was settled in an amazing way and Mr. Witson Paul came to Machilipatnam to solemnize my marriage with John Chrisostom in July 1986. Mr. Joshua Daniel came and conducted a few days of meetings prior to the marriage. By God's grace our father's uncle, Mr. John came with exceeding joy to give his granddaughter's hand to the bridegroom.

Though we knew John Chrisostom as a church member even when our father was alive, we did not know much about his exceptional abilities and qualities until he became a member of our family. We are so thankful to the Lord for bringing in a friendly person to be one with us in all our issues. With this, the Lord finally settled the major problem of our mother after many years of wrestling in fasting prayer.

Emmanuel finished his college and left for another town away from home to continue his graduate studies in 1983. During the time he was there, the Lord miraculously opened His ways and met his needs. He finished his studies and came back home in 1985. Before getting an appointment in 1988 as a lecturer in Government Polytechnic, Wesley could work from 1984 to 87 on a consolidate pay.

Meanwhile we were blessed with our two sons in the years that followed.

Then the issue of Wesley's marriage came up for settlement. Wesley kept in touch with the servants of the Lord and requested their prayers. It was in 1992 that Wesley got married. They were blessed with their daughter later.

It was interesting to see how the Lord helped in the marriage issues of both Wesley and mine, as in both cases, we did not have any specific person in mind to think of until a few weeks before the weddings. Everything was settled during the last few weeks before marriages!

Meanwhile our mother was keen in the ministry. She used to preach occasionally in our church in the evenings, and group meetings with women (*in different areas of the town – almost every day*). She organized several Women's one-day meetings in the church. The small 'group-visiting' work which she started in 1983 continued with the same spirit and enthusiasm until she could no longer go out because of her arthritis in the mid-nineties, at which time she limited her work to counseling and occasional preaching in the church. All through the years, after our father's home-call, she managed to keep the accounts for the church (*which our father used to do, when he was alive*) except the last two or three years before her home-call, when she could no longer do it because of ill health. She was very cautious in doing all this work with a broken spirit before the Lord. Her house visiting and other work among women won new souls for the Lord and helped many get blessed through her prayerful suggestions. Despite her own problems she settled many marriages of young people in the church (*especially the poor and the needy*).

Many elderly people, and those who had grown up children used to come to her for suggestions and prayers. Many critical problems were solved after getting her prayerful suggestions. As an experienced lady, having years of prayerful walk with the Lord, she handled them courageously and with boldness. She always believed that she should please the Lord, who sees the inner hearts: And this is this fear of the Lord that kept her firm throughout to live for His glory.

Many people used to come with their personal problems, but she never used to share those issues with others unwisely. In the same way, many times people used to come with lot of complaints, but she never used to make the things complicated, but always tried to settle them with the help of prayer. This helped resolve many complicated problems and nuances among believers.

A few years later Emmanuel got married. The two daughters in law are a good addition to the family. Emmanuel and his wife were later blessed with their only son. It was a consolation for our mother to have this little boy in the family to take comfort in, during her last days.



Figure 18: Mrs. Abel in her final years with her youngest grand-child, Ronald

HOME CALL OF MRS. G. PADMA ABEL

7.1 'GOOD BYE' TO WESLEY

That was June 2004 when Wesley came home. It was a troubling thing for him to see her using a wheel chair even for going to bathroom, and needing someone with her all the time to constantly take care of her needs – day and night. Sumathi (Mrs. Lal) did most of the help staying with our mother all the time, besides a few others attending on her needs on and off. We whole-heartedly thank them all for their help.

Finally the day arrived when Wesley had to leave. He said “good bye” to everyone, and especially to our mother by hugging her and she was filled with tears. Looking straight into his eyes, she cried. Wesley held her hands for a couple of minutes and she made her final prayer for his journey ahead, which was ultimately her last in her life! When Wesley made a couple of steps away, he heard her say something and when he stepped back to know as to what she was saying, she said to him, “I am saying if I would be able to see you again!” With those final words of hers, it was very difficult for Wesley to control his feelings. But he had to leave!

7.2 TILL WE MEET AGAIN

On Oct 24, 2004 she had pain in chest and was examined by a homoeo doctor, who was attending on her from time to time. As per his suggestion she was immediately taken to a public nursing home to give oxygen. The doctor there suggested us to rush her to the Govt. headquarters hospital. Within half an hour after taking her there, by God’s grace she recovered. But the way the things happened appeared as if she had gone upto the gates of heaven but returned back for our sake. She was in the hospital for a week. The Lord marvelously prepared her and us during that time to cope-up with the incidents happening fast.

Again, as she was feeling frequent chest pain she was admitted to a Nephrology clinic in Vijayawada. As she developed a problem with her lungs they gave her a special treatment instead of hooking her up to a ventilator. During this time she used to talk to people – we could not see. One of the sentences she said during that time was - “...need to be patient for a little more time..!” At that time, many believers from Vijayawada used to visit her. As she saw and recognized them, she used to shed tears. When one of the sisters asked her, “Aunty, can you see the Lord,” She nodded her head like saying “yes!” At this time she was given blood by our beloved cousin, Sunil, whose love for our mother we always cherish. But we heard our mother say repeatedly, “Please take me home, I am not going to survive!” I asked her not to say so, but she kept on saying it to everyone who visited her that time. Because of unavoidable work, Emmanuel and I had to go to Machilipatnam.

On Novermber 30 th at 7:30 in the morning she had a heart-attack, so the doctor hooked her upto a ventilator. We conveyed the news to my husband in Assam, and Wesley. My husband reached the clinic in the evening. The doctors said that her system got badly damaged and

there was no scope for its recovery. At that time we were compelled to remove the ventilator she was connected to and take her body back home.

Upon hearing the news, many people from different places reached Machilipatnam to show their respect. Bro. Priyanadh from Vijayawada came over to conduct the service at the church. After the funeral procession reached St. Mary's church, her body was laid next to our father's grave.

A memorial service was conducted following the home-call in which Bro. Witson Paul preached and many spoke.

Within a few months, Emmanuel handed over the property to the Church and left to stay at his own place.

From that time, the Lord has been good to all of us children and the believers in the church. The work of the Lord, started by our parents is continuing with many new people coming to know the Lord from various backgrounds and nearby places. Temporary extensions had to be made continually to accommodate more people. Please pray that the Lord is the supreme person of every activity here and that all glory belongs to Him.

MESSAGES GIVEN BY MR & MRS. ABEL

8.1 MR. ABEL'S MESSAGE – I

Bible Reading: Luke 11:1-4

Here we see the disciples of Jesus coming and asking him - to teach them to pray. When our children were young we taught them prayer like -"Lord make me a good child! Protect me today and enable me to know you soon." After they grew up we taught them the Lord's Prayer, and later, we taught them the Lord's Prayer in English. If parents don't pray, children neither pray nor like prayer. When we pray in spirit, then those next to us will also pray.

The disciples didn't disturb the Lord when he was praying but came to him after he finished it. Prayer shouldn't be disturbed, and none should speak in the middle of prayer. We need to respect and behave well in prayer. Those who go out for unavoidable reasons must do so very slowly. Before praying in the morning, it is good to clean our face and teeth.

A company Manager had the habit of praying for 15 minutes every day soon after coming to his office. The President of the company called the manager on phone one day. His secretary, who received the phone call, told the president that the manager was in a conference and that he does not like to get disturbed. So the president himself came over and found the manager in prayer. He then said to him, "I apologize for disturbing you; but is it your daily practice?" And the manager humbly replied, "Yes."

Here the Lord gives the blue print for our prayer.

The Lord's prayer begins with - 'Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven' - These three points relate to God.

When you say 'Our Father,' first of all you need to make sure that God has really become your father. It should not become a routine addressing like some beggars do when calling for help! We cannot pray for His kingdom and for the fulfillment of His will without first becoming His children.

For becoming His children, first we need to pray the prayer of the prodigal son - who said that he was not worthy to be called the son of his own father. Those who are yet to get the salvation experience should first pray for their salvation. Many times we see people even without salvation - praying long intercessory prayers for others and the ministry etc. But first we should pray for our own salvation. After getting the experience of salvation we can pray for others appropriately and with burden.

“Hallowed be thy name” means let your name be glorified. Is His name being glorified everyday in your life? One lady used to get fever whenever her mother in law came over to stay with them and get well only after she left. Does this bring glory to God?

“Thy Kingdom come.” Unsaved people and those who love the world and its pleasures cannot have the burden for the Lord’s kingdom. Where two or more God’s children gather in His name, there will be the Lord’s presence and His Kingdom; but the devil rules where the ungodly gather to fulfill their fleshly desires. We see God’s children, who have a real burden for His kingdom, praying for the unreached souls keeping a world map before them.

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” God’s angels and his saints fulfill His will in Heaven. Here on earth only a few follow His will. When I was a student, I prayed, “What is your will for my future life, Lord? What should I do after studies?” Then the Lord revealed, “You will do your secular job only for two years and later, you have to report to doing my ministry.” The desire to find out God’s will is declining these days; people are led by their own desires. A few years ago, when I was praying and seeking the will of God in an important issue of one of our children, I realized that it was not God’s will to go ahead with the plans I had at that time. Many people do only self-will.

The next three issues in the Lord’s prayer are related to God and man –

“Give us this day our daily bread”. Every day we need to pray for our food. The Lord asks us not to be anxious about tomorrow. There is no need, now itself, to worry about your food in the next few months! Do you receive your daily bread from the Lord everyday in the morning from His word? Is it going deep into your soul and renewing your spirit? If not, we have to ask everyday for the same. Some of us would be spiritually strong if our physical needs are met on a ‘day to day’ basis. I have seen in my own personal life the presence of the Lord being very close to me when things were so.

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”. Some people ask – “why should people pray for their sins when once they were forgiven and became children of God!” This is a wrong notion. We commit mistakes even after becoming God’s children: that root of sin is still within us and could re-grow, if we are careless; hence we should ask for forgiveness. Also, we have to make sure that we forgive others: if we make a mistake, we should repent of it. When I was working, one day my boss came over and asked if the inspector attended duty that day; and I kept quiet without saying ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ And when I went into the presence of the Lord that evening, I could not pray and my conscience was troubling me for several days following it until I thoroughly and whole-heartedly repented and set the issue right.

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”. The devil knows how to deceive us; if one snare does not work, he will use another. Therefore we must pray without ceasing. Peter had overconfidence about his own faith and his stability. He thought, “Will I deny Jesus?” But we know what happened next. A young man came to me for prayer before going to his exam; after praying for him, I cautioned him about getting a temptation to copy when in exam hall. He was overconfident about himself and said, “I am a believer, how will I do

it?" But in the exam hall, he was caught red-handed copying! Overconfidence is very dangerous. Many people think, "Will I get a temptation like that, even if I do, will I yield?" Such people may fall soon if they continue like that. So we should always pray that the Lord might help us overcome the temptation.

"Thine is the Kingdom, the power and glory forever and ever" – This means that the kingdom, power and glory – forever belongs to the Lord. The bill that Mr. Morarji Desai had tried to make it a law was – 'Anti Conversion Bill;' which was basically aimed at people becoming Christians. We prayed much and soon Mr. Morarji was brought down from power! Our heavenly father has His omnipotent dominion over everything. He is all powerful and His dominion extends over all heaven and earth!

Therefore first we should become God's children by trusting in His name. Then we have to pray that the Lord's name might be glorified and that His kingdom might come. Then pray that His will might prevail on earth as it is in heaven. Then we have to pray for our daily manna (*both spiritual and material*). Then after forgiving others, we have to pray for the forgiveness of our own sins. Then we should pray that we might overcome the temptations; and finally we should attribute the kingdom, power and glory to God.

Bible Reading: Luke 11: 5 – 8

Here we see the friend of a particular person coming in the midnight and knocking on the door for help; the person opened the door and gave the friend all that he wanted.

There are several kinds of prayers -

Praying with Perseverance: In the passage that we read, the person helped his friend as he was asked repeatedly and persistently. We should do the same when asking for something from the Lord. The Lord said that we are his friends. We have become friends when we trusted the Lord in our personal lives. So, we should persistently ask the Lord in prayer.

Prayer without vain repetitions: In the 'Sermon on the Mount' our Lord said, "When you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think they will be heard for their many words." I heard a man praying using high sounding words like, "Our almighty and heavenly father, God of all creation, etc. - with all his prayer mainly addressing God! Another member of the same assembly also used similar wording when he prayed. When we have sin in our hearts, we should first pray about it and get right with God. Prayer should not be imitated. We need to pray depending on the condition and need of our heart.

Meaningful Prayer: Our prayer should be meaningful without vain words. When we address Him as "Lord," we should really mean that He is our "Lord." Before I came to the Lord, I had never addressed God as "Lord". I thought how could He be my Lord? But when I repented, I meaningfully addressed Him as "Lord." As soon as I said, "you have gained victory over sin and death my Lord," the spirit of the Lord took hold of me.

Repetitive prayer: Our prayer shouldn't be the same always - like what we read in our prayer books. Once, when Mr. Sundar Singh asked a pastor to conduct a funeral service, he started running to get a prayer book! Some people can never pray without a prayer book. "Some time ago I had been to a house and I heard a voice asking me, "Are you O.K," and I said, "I'm O.K" and I started looking around to find the person who greeted me; but I could not find anyone. Again the same thing repeated! Then the person of that house came out smiling and I asked him if he was the one asking me that question! He showed a 'mynah' bird in a cage and said that it was the one asking him. I asked him to make it talk a little more - to hear from it! He said that it was the only sentence the bird learnt and that it could not talk more. Our prayers should not be like that bird's talk.

Spirit-led prayer: The spirit of God took Jesus Christ into the wilderness for prayer. If the spirit of God enters a cleansed heart then that person will be able to pray without ceasing. "For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom 8:26. When you pray the 'spirit-led' prayer, you do not feel the time. Some people do not know about it and that is the reason why they get irritated when in prayer.

Prayer for our needs: You must ask what you need, but in accordance with the will of God. In the country of Palestine they say that bread looks like stones, that is why Jesus said in Mathew 7: 7-11, “what man is there among you who, if his own son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven who ask Him.”

Anne asked for an egg in prayer and got it, she asked for a bone to make soap with, and she got it. Once my wife asked for firewood in prayer and she got it.

Praying with a clean heart: “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him that your father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.” Mark 11:25, 26. Some forgive but can’t forget. They keep harboring the thought in their heart. The Lord says that He forgives our sins and never remembers them. A man started telling bad things about me to several people, and this hurt me much. As a result I was unable to pray; so I determined to get victory over it. After wrestling in prayer for two days, the Lord granted victory over it. We have to have a clean conscience about our relationship with our neighbors when we pray.

Prayer from a heart devoid of anger: “I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy-hands, without wrath and doubting.” 1 Tim 2:7. We shouldn’t go to pray with an angry heart. Some people pray that the Lord might teach people they hate - a lesson, even by breaking their hands or legs! That is wrong. When I was talking to a couple, the wife said that she had forgiven her husband over an issue, but I learnt later that it was six months since they both talked to each other! We should not harbor anger in our minds. The Bible says, “Let not the Sun go down upon your wrath.” We shouldn’t pray holding anger in our heart. John and Jacob asked Jesus on an occasion, if he would allow them call fire from heaven and consume the people there. (Luke 9: 54 – 56.) We see Jesus rebuking them. Some people pray keeping malice in their hearts, such prayers are not answered. Someone told me that on account of a nuance between the husband and wife they were unable to have family prayer in the house! This is not correct.

Praying with faith and without doubt: We have to pray with faith and without doubt. Once a crippled boy was taken to Mr. Oral Roberts’s meeting for a healing. After reaching the venue, the boy asked his parents to remove and take home the crutches he came there using. The parents replied him that they could do so after he gets healed. But the boy insisted that he would definitely going to get healed, hence the crutches be removed even then. After he was prayed for by Mr. Roberts, he got healed. This boy had no doubt but faith in his heart. Are we able to pray like the boy?

Praying with humility and in tears: When we pray, we should do it with humility and tears. When Daniel prayed, his petition was heard in less than 21 days. I have seen in my own life that prayers made like this being answered very early. When Hezekiah prayed humbling himself, we see God extending his life for another 15 years. Many of us lost this kind of prayer. In Mathew 15:21-28, we see a woman from Canaan humbling herself and asking Jesus for help. We should pray like her.

Praying in accordance with the will of God: The spirit of God teaches us this as we read the word of God and pray in the spirit. In 1 John 5: 14 it says, - “Now this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” Once, late Mr. N. Daniel started praying that the school their children were going to, and located far away from home might be shifted closer to their house! This happened as the spirit of God revealed and prompted him to pray even before that happened. Later, the school was shifted next to their house! Once in my prayer, I was praying for Rs. 10, and finally at the end of the prayer, I said, “Thanks for sending it Lord!” After coming back home I asked my wife if she received any money, and she said, “Yes, ten rupees!”

Wrestling Prayer: Epaphras prayed this kind of prayer. I know a man; after he used to pray people had to squeeze sweat off his shirt, before rinsing and drying it! He used to do such kind of wrestling prayer. In the early days of the Fellowship they brought a woman suffering from Asthma, for prayer to an evangelist, Mr. Sundar Rao. He used to pray, “blood, blood, ...get down, get down...!” He used to get a special indication like seeing an umbrella getting down - in answer to his prayers! That day, after wrestling in prayer he finally said, “Thank you for getting down Lord!” And the asthma disappeared the next day! When my father was born to our grandparents, my grandmother did not have milk to feed him with. So, my grandfather prayed in God’s presence asking for milk. Later there was abundant supply of milk. So they dedicated my father and gave him the name - Samuel.

Late Mr. B. John used to say, that once in answer to a wrestling prayer he had made, God said to him, “You are an adamant fellow John, I gave what you asked me for!” Sometimes my wife says to me, “we lost grip on wrestling prayer; we should not leave until we see the problems solved!”

Praying - understanding God’s mysteries and revelations: When you pray in spirit and when your heart is in tune with the Lord, you will understand His mysteries and revelations. If we become blind spiritually this is not possible. Many times I search my heart and pray, “Lord I came to this place and started the work; now did I lose your touch and contact? Did I become spiritually blind?” In Acts 10 th chapter we see Cornelius calling Peter to his house as a result of the vision he had had. Are we getting visions from the Lord or have we become blind?

May the Lord help us humble ourselves and become prayerfully matured people that we may grow into His likeness.

8.3 MR. ABEL'S MESSAGE – III

“Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls.”
Proverbs 25:28

In those days there used to be fortresses with doors around cities. The width of the fortress around Babylon city was 30 feet!

In Chennai, there is a Fort built by the British, which has a fortress around it. Around the fortress there used to be a water filled moat to keep off the invaders. These are the physical fortresses. But then there is another fortress to shield us from the attacks of Satan. It is prayer! Do we have this Prayer fortress to protect our homes and our minds to keep off Satan's attacks? As a young boy of 16, I asked my uncle if it was possible not to get evil thoughts and lustful desires into my mind, and he said, “It is not possible for you; but God will give that power to you!” If you and I are not in a position to control our thoughts and minds with the power of God, then we are like those ‘cities broken down without walls.’

Now there are other kinds of walls, which should not be there among us. After the Second World War, a wall was built up between East Berlin and West Berlin. Even among us are this kind of walls, and caste is one of them. There are Christians who seek for same caste alliance in marriage!

One lady used to say that she was a Brahmin Christian! There is nothing like a Brahmin Christian or some other Christian; we are all one in Christ, bought by his precious blood.

Some of the women who reside near the cinema halls (*harlots*) lead many into a treacherous life. Rahab was a harlot living on the wall of Jericho. If she had lived inside the city, probably, she might not have lived such a life. But by God's grace she trusted in God and stood with His children in their need. Some people live where they have temptation to unclean life. In some homes the spirit of adultery rules. In such homes, when the father lives in adultery, such spirit dominates to rule others as well. In some places there will be unclean evil spirits. If we read filthy books and do friendship with people living in adultery, we cannot control our looks and thoughts. Living a clean life then becomes impossible. Our bodies are not meant for fornication but for God. I do not know how many of you have fortresses to your eyes, minds and bodies!

In Jeremiah 35th chapter, it was mentioned about Rechabites, who were very orthodox people. They were not supposed to - drink wine or own houses, but live only in tents. They used to strictly follow the ordinances given by their fore-fathers. How many of you are able to say “no” to the wine and alcohol offered in parties? How many of you are able to have victory over watching movies and smoking, and are able to oppose them.

Many young people think their own bodies are their enemies. The age between 13 and 19 is very dangerous. During this time your body gets agitated by your thoughts, but you should keep your body and mind in control with the power of God. There are people who do things

to gratify their desires which are abominable in the sight of God: And some of these people are found in prominent places. What a sad thing!

In the Bible we see David's son, Amnon, who, after getting agitated by his sexual desires, pretended to be sick to sin with his own step-sister. After he succeeded in this, he got killed. Are your eyes and thoughts without control and fortresses? "Whoever has no rule over his own spirit - is like a city broken down without walls." Young people, there is power in Jesus which makes you control your minds.

Some people say that they do not get angry, but if they do, they do not behave like human beings! One Telugu poet said that our anger is our own enemy. May be your anger towards someone is developing ulcers in your stomach! Parents should not beat their children at the back of their heads. You should not express wild anger. There are some children, who leave the dining table without eating in retaliation to their parents; while there are others, who toss the dinner plates even with the food in them - if they do not like the items. If you do not control your emotions, you are like a city with broken down walls. An unsaved person should realize that he is in the premises of Satan.

Israel soldiers are very skilled in the battle field. Some time ago a few Israeli people were held hostage in Entebbe airport in Uganda. To relieve them, Israeli soldiers had to go and raid the place. In that operation all the hostages were rescued and all the terrorists were killed: but two Israeli soldiers lost their lives. So, those two soldiers paid the price by losing their lives to save the hostages. When you and I are like a city with broken down walls, Jesus came into this world and paid the price by shedding his sinless blood on the cross to relieve you and me. There is deliverance in his blood. In Proverbs 18: 10 we read, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." At the time of Moses, the death angel did not enter those houses, who applied the blood to their lintel and side posts. They were like nuclear bunkers. Your bank balance, Gold you have, position you hold, and the prominence and support you may have – cannot save and shield you.

There are many, who dress like women and jump over the compound walls of ladies hostels. If you are one of them, you should repent and confess. A converted woman from a Hindu family used to attend prayer meetings here from another place. Her bus charge itself used to cost eighty rupees. She used to stay in a rented room but prayed much – day and night; but because of that the owners of the house got her vacate the house. After she left, there was a theft in that house and the owners felt so bad for making her vacate and thus losing a free security guard to their house! Abraham could build a fence of prayer around his house; so Abimelech feared to touch Sarah. Some people go to places where they can hear a sermon which satisfies their taste; but is there any prayer fortress? Could you get warnings at the right time? Are those sermons shielding you from the attacks of Satan? Did you ever hear forecasts of dangers in advance at any time?

Some people boast about the amount of dowry their daughters in law brought. But did they bring the fortress of the Lord? To which things are you giving importance? In Jeremiah 15: 20, we see the Lord calling Jeremiah a fortified bronze wall. When you walk in the will of the Lord, He will give you victory to overcome the works of the devil. But when we allow sin into our minds the fortress will fall.

In Psalms 51:18, David says, "build the walls of Jerusalem." Sometimes Satan drags our children into his captivity. When fornication and wickedness took over the children of King David, the fortress of prayer he built around his home collapsed. Did you build a firewall of prayer around your house? Are you careful with your prayer life to keep the fortress of prayer in place?

St. Paul says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." (*2 Corinthians 10:4*). The truth is - whenever sin enters our hearts, we cannot win Satan. The US wants to increase its fire power and advance further. If you do not build a fortress of prayer around your own house, how can you bring down the walls of the enemy? Parents should be like fortress to their homes. They should be able to build a wall of fortress around their homes to shield the family members from the attacks of Satan. If you yourself cannot withstand the tactics of Satan, he will catch hold of not only you, but also your entire family. If your eyes, ears and tongue are not under control, it is an indication that Satan has already taken control of you. God gives us a spirit that controls all our body, mind and spirit.

Bible Reading: Numbers 10: 1 – 18

When the Israelites struggled under the Egyptian bondage they interceded with the Lord. The Lord gave Moses, Aaron as a helper, and under their leadership the Israelites were led through the wilderness. The Israelites had the red sea before them and the Egyptian army behind them. When they faced this situation they grumbled against Moses saying, “Have you brought us to kill us here?”

The Lord has delivered us from sinful life with a purpose. Prayer is needed much in the life of a believer, and the Lord will be close to us if we pray. Some believers like a smooth life; they do not like tests of faith at all like the Israelites. If we sleep most of the day, with just little prayer, how can we overcome the attacks of Satan? Only because of prayer, Jesus won Satan and all his attacks even though he was tempted like us. We too have to win like him. The mind of a praying man is very sensitive; even a little mistake can make him restless. When I faced problems with the girl who used to help me in our house I was disturbed, but later I realized that it was the work of the enemy (*devil*). When you are in the Lord and growing, Satan will use your neighbor or someone else to spoil your peace.

Moses walked a long distance leading the people; he asked and got many things from the Lord. But after walking patiently some distance, he was fed up with the behavior of the people of Israel and did a mistake, and as a result, he could not enter the Promised Land. After all, what are we before Moses? What is disturbing you - someone saying something bad about you? Do not get disheartened. Carry on your salvation with fear and trembling. We never know which happens first - whether our leaving this world or the Lord's return!

You may say that so and so is responsible for my bad spiritual condition today; but remember that everyone is personally responsible for his own spiritual condition. Without your willingness and actions nothing can happen to your spiritual condition. We do mistakes and try to blame others. When God said to Moses in Exodus 17: 5-6, to strike the rock, he did it. It is a blessing to do what the Lord instructs us to do. He will give us anything we ask for - for His Glory according to His will. But in Numbers 20: 8, God asked Moses to talk to the rock to get water; but Moses hit the rock! Who is the one giving the water there - Moses or God? And God said to Moses and Aaron, “You did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel.” If this is how the Lord dealt with Moses, what about us?

Some people are very weak in money matters. Some believers cannot talk to each other, while others talk nicely keeping grudge in their hearts - both are dangerous.

Once when a lady asked me for country chicken eggs to use for hatching, I said that the children used them for omelets. What I said was partially correct as the children did so; but I had one or two more! Since I did not have the mind to give those eggs, I said like that. But that evening after going into the presence of the Lord I could not pray; and the reason: a partial lie. God looks at our inner heart.

The Bible says – “He that endures to the end shall be saved” and, “To him that overcometh will be given the fruit of the tree of life.”

Recently I heard that a lady died - who was considered a good believer and doing gospel work when she was alive. Now, after that, I was told that she is coming out of others as evil spirit and asking, “Do you not know me?” What a sad thing! We have to search our ‘walk and talk’ thoroughly in the presence of the Lord.

Many of the Israelites grumbled going to the Promised Land and were destroyed. We should be faithful till end and not give up half way through. Our two boys were with their father in the last few hours of his life. They said that he did not sleep but was seeing the men of God and the angels, bringing crowns and flowers. What kind of nature are you living with? Are you keeping grudge against those who did harm to you, and getting depressed? Are you wishing bad things to those who treated you badly? That is not the mind of God.

One lady told me that she could not sleep up until 5 AM the following morning as she was not happy with the way things happened between her and her neighbor. Only sensitive people will be like her – not others. The Bible says that greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. A sensitive mind might enable you to set things right both with God and man.

Finally we have to fight with Satan till the end. Late Mr. B. John went out with his grandson. There this boy saw two groups – one with the angels and the other with the devil and screamed out loud. After coming back home, Bro. John took bath, prayed and laid himself on bed before leaving for eternal glory. Are you clinging to little things until the end of your life? Do not lose peace. Are you on your way, make sure that you reach the goal.

Bible Reading: Mathew 14: 22 - 23

Here we see the Lord prompting his disciples. Earlier after feeding the 5000 people, the disciples were tired. We like to do work when fresh but not when tired. At such a time like that Jesus was prompting the disciples to go to the other side of the lake. To finish certain things, sometimes we need to put some pressure on people. In those days Jesus was physically alive and he used to ask his disciples to do certain things. But now, his spirit leads us and prompts us. Sometimes the spirit of God says – “go;” while at other times it says – “do not go!” The thoughts of our Lord are different from ours. We may think that if a particular problem we have is solved, we could live perfectly! But do you have the guidance of the Lord and his leading in your life?

Some people talk about strange guidance. One lady went to a gentleman and told him that the Lord was asking her to get her daughter married to his son! When the gentleman was suspicious about it, she said that his poor spiritual condition might be preventing him from knowing the same from the Lord! He said to her that the same Lord, who prompted her about this, would also prompt him – if it is really His will; so he asked her to keep praying about it. That marriage never came to pass! Many times, God’s will is not like as we expect it to be.

In 1956, in the May retreat, late Mr. N. Daniel asked those who attended to know the Lord’s will for their lives. When I was praying, the Lord spoke to me through – Isaiah 42:7: “You will open the eyes of the blind. You will free the captives from prison, releasing those who sit in dark dungeons.” Then I realized the call of the Lord. In those days, even in small things we used to ask and seek the will of God. So, even before going to a shop to buy clothes, we used to pray and the Lord used to guide.

When one evangelist was on his way to another place to preach, he was prompted by the spirit of God - not to get into the bus which was ready to leave – even though it was empty. So, he waited and took the next bus with a great difficulty; but on his way, he saw the first bus meeting with an accident with all the passengers suffering fractures. Immediately he thanked the Lord for saving him from that accident. Some people like taking the easiest route. The disciples took the boat as per the instructions of the Lord. When they were going the Lord was on the mountain alone and praying. Solitary prayer is needed much in our lives. We might not be able to mention all our personal and family issues when praying in a group; but in solitary prayer, we can do so.

Here we see the disciples travelling by boat. At that time, there was wind and the boat was in turbulent water: and the disciples were afraid. May be some of them said to others, “This is the very reason why I was against starting in the first place. See now – what is happening!” If they had done so, it was all against the will of God.

Who is the lenient person for a woman of the home? Her husband! If something is not there, or if any problem arises, or even if the boy does not do well in his studies – they blame the

husbands. All right, women generally may have to do more work than men at home, but should that become the reason to blame men? To some other women, if it is not husband, it is their servant girl; but they dare not blame their children who retaliate! The Lord is able to keep us alive if we get problems or hit by the tides of the sea!

Here we see the Lord telling the disciples to go to the other side! Sometimes, we ourselves may have to swim the lake to go yonder. If the Lord promises, without doubt things will come to pass; but it is your duty and mine to trust Him and pray for their fulfillment. Some people say that the Lord prompted them to do something about an issue, but when they face hurdles on the way, they stop trusting God and run here and there to share their problems with everyone.

A man died of witchcraft. Someone else told his daughter in law that her father in law has become a devil and staying in their house as spirit. The daughter in law became alarmed and went to someone else. When she met him, he told this lady that if he goes to Rajasthan and pray in the desert there, the devil will come into his hands and then, when he runs, this lady should also follow him!

When she told me this, I said to her, “who told you all this rubbish? Do not get alarmed by this evil talk; I will pray for you and God will help you.” After I prayed for her, all her problems were solved one after the other.

When there is death in a home, Satan attacks both the children and the grownups. There will be tides and cyclones, but we have to rely on the word of God. When you spoil your mind, prayer does not sink deep into your heart. Satan makes you restless by removing the peace in you. At that time, you lose your faith to rely on God’s word.

In the passage we read, the disciples were being tossed in their boat at 4 in the morning. When the Lord was approaching them - walking on the waters, if they had carefully observed, they would have probably recognized him; but they did not seem to have done it and that’s why they were thinking that he was a ghost. In the past, they saw evil spirits leaving people, when they were prayed upon. But notice them now! And the Lord is patiently bearing with them.

Later, only Peter, out of all other disciples was asking Jesus to permit him to go to him - walking on waters. Out of all of them, only Peter had the desire to walk like Jesus on water. When we have a desire to walk like Jesus, God will definitely help. Peter managed to walk only a little distance on water, but after seeing the wind and sea, he started to sink. Satan tries to divert our attention from God. When we are in this world people try to blame us, but do not lose faith. Those blames, people make against you, do not last long. In those days people blamed even Jesus! When we try to walk with Jesus, Satan creates disturbance even in your own house. At times like this, we should not look at the situation. Here we see Peter calling for help when he started sinking. Are we calling for help when we realize that we are going down in faith and in prayer life?

I used to watch the TV news after watching Mr. Joshua Daniel’s message, which was followed by Mr. T. D. Prasanna Kumar’s message. But later, since I was missing my solitary

time with the Lord in the morning, I stopped doing so. When I was healthy, I used to do solitary prayer from 3 to 5 in the morning; at that time, even if I had watched the above programs following my quiet time with the Lord, it used to be O.K. But what I realized was – that I could not do without solitary prayer in the morning. Give God - the time that belongs to Him. Should there be a need to fast and pray, do so. Sometimes if you do not pray aloud Satan tries to divert your attention. You should pray - that atleast you could hear your own prayer. Look to God; no one meets you on your way to meeting God. You should shout, “Save me Lord!” Many times we do not have faith and the timely energy to stand; so we have to plead for strength. If you pray and meet God, you should get victory and grow into the likeness of our savior; but unfortunately many people are not getting this experience.

Peter’s shouting was loud enough and Jesus immediately responded to it! Is your shouting like that? Blind Bartimaeus shouted loud enough from the crowd that caught the attention of Jesus. After Jesus pulled Peter out from the water, both of them got into the boat. They adored Jesus that he was the true son of God. People may praise us, but may immediately blame us too! In Acts 28: 3 and 4, we see the local people of that island suspecting St. Paul as a murderer; but in the same book 28: 6, we see the same people thinking that he was an extra-ordinary person! The treatment of people will be like that; so let us look to our Lord and press on in life!

May the Lord help us

Bible Reading: Genesis 13 th Chapter

Abraham gained the good name of 'Father of the Faith.' Genesis 15:6 says, "Abraham believed in God and it was credited to him as righteousness." The righteousness and faith that Abraham had had - were both strong and unshaken. In Genesis 12: 1-2, God was asking Abraham to go leaving his own people and relatives. He was not sure as to what he would eat, where he would stay and what he would wear! In circumstances like this it is very difficult to follow the Lord. But Abraham trusted God and followed His command. Many times we follow God only if everything is O.K. Before moving to another place, we make all the enquiries like - is there a good house to live in, a servant to help us and so on - to make sure that we have everything we need to live comfortably. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him." Abraham loved the Lord with all his heart that despite facing many hard times, problems, and hurdles in following Him, he committed to doing it. We see in Genesis 12: 10 - 20, Abraham going to Egypt to survive the famine in the place where he was at that time, and thereby he brought upon himself a problem. In Genesis 12: 12 - 13, we see the king of Pharaoh taking Abraham's wife, Sarah, to his house.

Satan always tries to make us fall into critical situations. First he starts with a small hitch and makes it bigger later. He brings in doubts into our minds. With 'Eve' he started with a small question, ("*Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?*" Genesis 3: 1), and made her and her husband commit other mistakes one after the other later. In the case of Abraham, even though he did a mistake, God intervened to save Sarah from Pharaoh. From there Abraham went to a different place but did not stay in Egypt. Since God was with Abraham he was able to go back even after committing a mistake.

Some people start their spiritual journey well but do not continue till the end. We have to follow the Lord till the end and not stop halfway through. Satan may tempt you by making you think like - "You are O.K.!", or "The other lady is not praying at all, but you are not like her!", or "You are so tired now so you can pray later, go to bed for now!", or "Why go to that meeting every week? Since the pastor is not feeling well today another man is preaching and it is not going to be that good!" You should be in a position to discern the tricks of Satan. He always tries to pull you back in your walk with the Lord. After we finish our journey in this world we are not going to take anything with us. When I die, probably you may give a decent burial and there ends my journey. I am not going to be with you but God will. Do you have the everlasting grace of God with you? The spirit of God should follow you throughout. You should not have leakages to your prayer life. Abraham did not leave God wherever he went. He followed God and God blessed him abundantly because of his faith. The Bible says, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Mathew 6:33.

Recently I became very weak and was unable to sit for long. Even going to the washroom next to my room - was getting difficult. I was unable to conduct these women's meetings

and I even stopped for some time. But the Lord was saying to me to seek His kingdom and His righteousness.

Recently I saw a man going in a wheelchair. Then I felt sorry for not being able to go like him - as there were steps and other hurdles to move the wheel chair around. Later I was surprised when my younger son made arrangements to push the wheelchair around. Recently I prayed, "I am getting weaker day after day Lord, I did this journey with my husband for 26 years and later, 22 years alone; I do not know how long I should continue this; please help me continue with your help till the end!" Abraham shared half his property with Lot. A righteous man shares his wealth even with his brothers. He will help those who are really in need and in the Lord.

We see in Bible that there was strife between the herdsmen of Abraham and those of Lot. In these days we see strife among the believers. They talk when they meet but they blame each other after leaving. Satan does not allow us to grow fully into the grace of God. A little mistake in your heart can make you commit more mistakes. Some people ask their children to inform those, who come for them, that they are not at home (*even though they are right there!*). That is a perfect lie. Sometimes we tell partial lies! Are you obeying your conscience? Are you washing your heart on a daily basis and setting things right with others, if needed?

In Proverbs 20:3 we see, "It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel." Some people like creating strife among believers! They say, "You have been coming to the church for this long, did they say that you are not good? If you keep quiet, things will get worse, so defend yourself!" This is not a good thing to do. If someone rudely talks against you - even by making false accusations, try to gently deal with it but do not make the issue bigger. Isaiah 53: 7 says, "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." To avoid the temptation of retaliating to her husband's abuse and talk, a lady used to get into her washroom and bolt it until he used to leave.

Here we see the problem between Abraham and Lot starting as a result of strife between their herdsmen. Sometimes Satan creates disturbance using our children, or servant, or someone else.

The Bible says, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Once two boys had strife when they were playing in the sand: the older one destroyed the sand structure the younger one built! The younger boy cried and told the older that he would bring home the issue to their father. After crying for awhile, he went back to the older boy and started playing with him again. Later, he complained it to his father and forgot the issue. See, the younger boy did not feel long the injustice done to him. To whom are you complaining the injustices done to you - the heavenly father or everyone around?

The Bible says, "Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs." Some believers keep hatred in their hearts forever. If two sisters in Christ cannot talk to each other, what

does it mean? Can you not forgive your own sister? Romans 2: 24 says, "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

As a result of the strife between their herdsmen, Abraham and Lot had to stay far away from each other. Satan tries to destroy the peace so that he could get hold of things. Proverbs 20:3 says, "It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel." Some people feel much offended if others comment on them, or if someone corrects them. Think of our Lord: he was dragged and punched along the way; yet he did not respond. Even some believers say, "He asked us not to go to his house anymore!" He may have said it when angry, but, as a believer, would you keep grudge against him without forgiving and forgetting? Abraham said to Lot that they should not continue with the strife, and asked him to choose what he wanted! He gave the first choice to Lot only. Some people never compromise. If you do good to others you never miss the benefits that follow. Some people are crippled in their conscience; the prayers of such people are never answered. Lot chose Sodom and Gomorrah, a place that looked green but was filled with people with filthy habits. Choosing something outside the will of God is never good. When Balaam went to Balak according to his own liking, the Lord made a donkey teach Balaam. God gives his best to those, who leave the choice with Him. We do not know how the things would have been, if Lot had said, "Does not matter, give me any one of them" - when he was given the choice.

Psalm 106:15 says, "So He gave them what they asked for, but sent a wasting disease upon them."

The Lord promised Abraham that he would give his descendants and him, the promised land. When we do good to our others, we reap it several fold. Even if problems follow, your mind remains stable on God.

Abraham gained favor from the Lord in his life. People always try to find faults with us. Do you have the nature to forgive and forget the injustice of people? Do you have love or, hatred and grudge?

May the Lord grant us to check our hearts and make us always ask Him for a kind and loving heart.

OPINIONS OF A FEW

Sofar I have been sharing with you many things as the own daughter of Mrs. & Mr. Abel. Now let us see what others say –

REV. DR. WITSON PAUL:

(He is a senior evangelist of our church and son-in law of late Mr. N. Daniel)

Mr & Mrs. Abel surrendered their lives for the sake of winning souls to the Lord. They started their ministry in huts. They toiled for the sake of winning souls. If Mr. & Mrs. Abel had continued with the regular jobs they were doing, they would have earned money and led comfortable lives; but they learnt discipline. They expended their lives to help others and to win their souls to the Lord.

I know Mr. Abel even before his marriage, we were good friends. We used to share our victories and defeats with each other. We used to share our burdens of the ministry with each other and pray together. The main thing which encouraged me in Mr. Abel's life is – his continued ministry as a sanctified person. He used to pray much alone and God ordained and used him as a result. The church here in Machilipatnam was blessed to grow and bear spiritual fruits and I thank the Lord for the same. After Mr. Abel was called to eternal rest, Mrs. Abel prayed and labored to gather the spiritual harvest.

Mr. Abel got married a little before I did. Mrs. Abel was beautiful and humble person. I congratulated Mr. Abel for getting a good wife from the Lord.

Mr. & Mrs. Abel were praying people, who had love, and good understanding between them. Mrs. Abel was a disciplined lady. Both Mr. & Mrs. Abel prepared themselves well for the Lord's kingdom. Right from their youth their lives were not wasted in Sin and the World. May the Lord grant us grace that we too might grow with unselfish and dedicated lives in God's ministry that we might inherit the spiritual blessings.

MR. R.A. SUNDARA RAO:

(He was the co-son in law of late Mr. N. Daniel; he worked as the correspondent of Noble High school, Machilipatnam)

When Mr. Abel first arrived in Machilipatnam, he stood here driving away the evil spirits with the power of prayer. In spreading the good news of the Lord, he suffered much without money, food and clothing. Only one family welcomed him during those days; and God made his efforts successful. It was predetermined by God that Mr. Abel be used in this town.

In December 1963 when my co-son in law, late Mr. N. Daniel went to be with the Lord, I was introduced to Mr. Abel. After I came to Machilipatnam, he met and showed his love towards me. Late Mr. N. Daniel prayed as a student for this town, and Mr. Abel started, stabilized and developed the work. Though he is much younger to me, I do not have even half the spiritual experience he had had. Even to this day this church is known by his name in this town. Mr. Abel could lead the students into deep and stable experience of salvation.

I was shocked to know about his demise when at a time I was anxiously looking for his safe return from Chennai. Mr. Abel lived only for 52 years but lived a blessed and meaningful life.

MR. G. S. NATHANIEL:

(He was the eldest son of late Mr. G. A. Samuel of Kakinada. Mr. & Mrs. G. S. Nathaniel were the first to welcome Mr. Abel into their home, which paved the way for establishing the Christian work by the Fellowship.)

The purpose of God is wonderful and surprising. It was the Lord's will that Mr. and Mrs. Abel be united in wedlock, which is evident from their lives. God blesses those who yield completely to His will. Both Mr. & Mrs. Abel led many young people to the Lord through their sacrifice and faith. God has given them many spiritual children. We can never forget the time when both of them stayed at our home. We took care of them like our own brother and sister. I cannot describe in words their love, intimacy and admiration.

The way our children and their children played together when both the families lived next to each other, was a memorable and pleasant experience. In times of trouble they gave us the prayerful support. Sometimes, they used to come to our house immediately to comfort us when we were in problems. Though they faced many problems and tough situations in their life, they never shared them with us. The Lord saved and helped them in all those issues, and through them He gave them the training.

MRS. PURUSHOTTHAM:

(Mr. & Mrs. Purushottham started the Fellowship work in Vuyyuru)

Even though Mrs. Abel was younger to me in age, she was older in spiritual level. She is a very prayerful lady with much faith. She used to say that we have to pray and wait until we get a green signal from the Lord. She used to pray without ceasing. We used to share even the little things related to our family with her to get her prayerful support and suggestions. We noticed her living according to what she preached. She did not have the discrimination

between the rich and the poor. She used to talk to us like our own sister, and share her experiences in the ministry.

MR. G. DAVID:

(He is one of the early converts of the ministry of our parents. He worked in Railways, Vijayawada)

I came from Chitti Guduru, located close to Machilipatnam. I know Mr. & Mrs. Abel right from 1960. I came from a Hindu family but came to the light of the Lord in their ministry. Mrs. Abel used to help us with our needs, and Mr. Abel helped us grow in solitary prayer life. In those days meetings used to be held at their rented house, which is located next to the old post office in Malkapatnam. And I was one of those who attended those meetings and got blessed; my work at that time was spreading the mats and rolling them back – before and after the meetings. Though I lost my parents, Mr. & Mrs. Abel treated me just like their own son and helped me settle down in married life.

MR. C. PUSHPARAJ:

(He was a retired lecturer in Noble College. When alive, he took part preaching in the church and helping in Sunday school)

I heard great things about Mr. Abel, but only after coming to this place did I see him as a person of humility, meekness and great spiritual discernment. The love and concern I observed in him were more than what I had expected to see. I came from Cuddapa as a new person to this place, but Mr. & Mrs. Abel showed their concern and love towards me that not even my own father and brothers showed. They were mindful about both my physical and spiritual needs. Wherever he used to find me, he used to lovingly greet and talk to me. We used to share all our family needs with him; his prayerful suggestions strengthened us. He helped me become a family man when I was single. I cannot forget the love which he showed towards the end of his life towards me. He used to show the same kind of love towards everyone, but was precise and serious should anyone needed correction.

MR. M. JOHN CHRISOSTOM:

(Son-in-law of Mr. & Mrs. Abel)

Though Mrs. Abel was mother in law to me, she used to treat me like more than a son; she loved me and showed her concern by giving many prayerful suggestions. She was not only a lady-preacher but a person with spiritual maturity to know and discern the will of God. Though I can mention several incidents, I limit to mentioning just two here: She prayerfully decided my marriage issue after waiting much on the Lord and after consulting senior God's servants. Secondly, before I got a transfer to Assam, she had a vision and she knew that I would be going to that area.

I can say without doubt that she is a lady who relied on the will of God even in small issues.

When I saw Mrs. Abel much of the time with wet eyes, I thought it might be an eye problem; but only later on did I come to know that she always prayed with tears and burden. She

prayerfully supported the ministry with Mr. Abel and continued it faithfully after his demise. After the home call of Mr. Abel, all through these years, she lived with faith, spiritual wisdom and hope. I am sure her life would be a blessing to many.

MR. G. JEEVARATNAM:

(He is retired headmaster of Noble High School)

Mr. & Mrs. Abel were introduced to me by Mrs. Ahalya Nathaniel in 1967, when we were neighbors. Since I grew up in organized churches I was a bit hesitating in the beginning to attend prayer meetings here. But after experiencing the concern and love of this couple, I started attending regularly. They had respect and admiration for me. Gradually we started sharing our own personal and family issues with them for their prayerful suggestions. Mr. Abel not only used to preach whole-heartedly, but also lived according to what he preached. When once after knowing and surrendering to the will of God, they never used to regret and back off - even if things were tough. They followed the will of God in all issues of their family life - including the studies of their children. Mr. Abel used to pray and sing in spirit.

MR. A. DAVID RAJU:

*(He was strengthened in the early ministry of our father,
and has been working as a pastor)*

I know Mr. Abel from 1952, before he entered the Lord's ministry. Mr. Abel always used to spend time in prayer and greet elders and young people with great love, concern and humility. I experienced their love as from my own family members. I was greatly attracted by their love for the Lord, and the happiness he enjoyed in the Lord's presence. I observed him many times praying with meekness, and with a broken and contrite spirit. They used to lead people into the deep experience of repentance and salvation, even if it took several days, weeks or even months to get such experience. Mr. & Mrs. Abel also used to help people become matured Christians and settle well in their lives. Those who were led to the Lord by this couple, stood firm in the Lord, and in turn became soul winners for Christ.

MR. T. PRABHAKARA RAO:

*(He is a retired lecturer; he now takes care of the church
our parents started.)*

I came to Machilipatnam as a student in 1963. Though I lost my parents, Mr. & Mrs. Abel treated me like their own son. I gained the love I lost, and God's mercy and blessings through the ministry of Mr. & Mrs. Abel. Both Mr. & Mrs. Abel were very amicable with all the churches in Machilipatnam. They never coveted money, but loved and comforted the poor and needy. They were faithful servants of God. When we first started coming here, we could hear prayer from every corner of this compound. Mrs. Abel was a prayerful lady. Mr. & Mrs. Abel prayerfully build their own family, besides helping us all.

When Mr. Abel was called to eternal rest, none of the children was settled. But Mrs. Abel prayerfully managed things and thus she showed much faith and courage. She was blessed to see her grandchildren. We asked for her prayerful help and shared with her all our problems after Mr. Abel passed away.

MR. B. NOBLE:

(He worked as manager, Noble College)

I am a spiritual son to Mr. & Mrs. Abel. The spiritual relationship between us was strong and great. I came to Machilipatnam without knowing the Lord. But the love and concern Mr. & Mrs. Abel showed towards me, despite our poverty, did not allow me to leave this place. While Mrs. Abel was mindful about my physical needs, Mr. Abel led me into the experience of salvation and strengthened me with spiritual suggestions. I moved in their house like their own child, they never suspected me but always treated me like their son. All our family members could come into the light of the Lord after I got the experience of salvation.

They led me like parents in all matters – especially, job and marriage; and I always shared our family issues with them for their prayerful suggestions.

MR. D. PAUL:

*(He was converted in the ministry of our parents.
He runs a school and is doing ministry.)*

I came to this place from a village to do my degree, but the love of Mr. & Mrs. Abel did not let me be a victim to this world. Mr. Abel taught me the word of God and prayed for me. It would have become difficult for me in those days to stand firm for the Lord, if I had not seen Mr. & Mrs. Abel proving the love of God in their own lives. My younger sister also studied in this place and came to the light of the Lord. When Satan tried to drag me back into the world, the couple showed concern and prayerfully led me into my married life, which helped me stand firm for the Lord to this day.

BRO. YESUPADAM:

(He is a retired teacher)

Mr. & Mrs. Abel loved me and my family, and prayed for us with tears. Because of the nature and seriousness of our problems, they probably would have shed more tears in prayer for us than any other family.

In the beginning Mr. Abel used to talk about God and His word – wherever he met me. Later when our family problems increased, and when I had to stay alone, he loved us like more than a father. Because of their continual prayers, God averted many bad situations at our home. Besides many blessing we received from the Lord, on a particular occasion, the Lord touched my only daughter when she was seriously ill and hospitalized - through the prayers of Mr. & Mrs. Abel. Mrs. Abel took personal interest in settling my daughter in married life when Mr. Abel was called to eternal rest.

MR. JAYARAJ:

*(He came to the light of the Lord in the ministry of our parents.
He works for APSRTC and also helps in the ministry.)*

Mr. & Mrs. Abel were like two sides of a coin to us. After we started attending the prayer services here, we forgot even our parents and relatives. There was none like this couple even in our own relatives. They were concerned about our spiritual and also physical needs. We can undoubtedly say that they loved the Lord with all their minds, souls and spirits. Whenever I used to come here, they used to talk to me about the ministry, me and my family issues. Before coming to preach here, I used to go and ask Mrs. Abel to pray for me; and many times I was uplifted by her prayers. Mrs. Abel was the one who took initiation in prayerfully settling my marriage.

MR. B. SATYANARAYANA:

(He came to Machilipatnam for studies and came into the light of the Lord through the ministry of our parents.)

I came as a Hindu student, but after attending the church services here I accepted the Lord and became a believer. Mrs. Abel always took care of me. I used to take breakfast in their house and go to the college. One day, Mrs. Abel was unable to prepare breakfast because of her ill health, so she gave me a rupee and said, "take breakfast with this rupee, which I earned by selling a bottle gourd grown in the compound." Frequently I used to go to the bus stand with Mr. Abel to leave him there and to bring back his bicycle. He was very careful about things and always used to keep his bicycle locked. Sometimes we used to leave our bicycles unlocked, but Mr. Abel used to lock them promptly!

They helped us with many of our family and personal issues.

MR. G. SUKANTH:

*(He is the son of Mr. & Mrs. G. S. Nathaniel.
He retired as a teacher in Hyderabad.)*

Both our families had a relationship, which is much greater than even a blood relationship. I was a little boy at the time of their marriage and I garlanded Mrs. Abel. There are so many people who preach now-a-days; but very few live according to what they preach, and continue till the end - like Mr. & Mrs. Abel. They were very exemplary. We had been blessed much by their ministry.