

## TESTIMONY of PETER GEORGE – August 2005

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Having a 'testimony' is proof positive that God has chosen us. It describes the circumstances in which it has happened and recalls events of special significance that God has used to change us, with the purpose of making us more like his son, Jesus Christ. Every "born again" Christian has a testimony. It is the most powerful weapon God has given us to reach our friends. It says to them: "See what God has done for me!" To some it brings revelation that the pain and suffering they experience is not unique. To others it offers hope, encouraging them to persevere through trials. Most will be reassured to discover that God has a wonderful plan for their lives, one to prosper them - not to harm them. Finally, it's a promise that, as we discover and begin to walk in the plan God has chosen, we will gradually acquire through it all - tough times notwithstanding - what the old King James version of the bible describes as:

*"that peace which passeth all understanding" (Phillipians ch 4, v 7)*

How does one acquire a testimony? It comes as part of a process, often slow and painful, of **learning to hear God's voice** - more importantly of **wanting to hear his voice**. Then the realization dawns - and this I would aim at anyone who doesn't know him and has never experienced what I describe - that God's plan for our lives is better by far than any we may have of our own. Doing things 'our way' inevitably leads to destruction, whether it be in the areas of finance, family relationships, or health. God's plans on the other hand lead to life, and life more abundant, even in the face of trials.

"Hearing" God's word is the easy part. It's the "doing" which is tough. That's why scripture warns in James chapter 1, v 22 :

*"Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only."*

It is a sad reflection that on the big issues in our lives there is more often than not a time gulf between the "hearing" and the "doing", and delay inevitably carries a heavy cost.

It is the ability to bring the two together, by learning to draw on the power of the Holy Spirit, which distinguishes other religions, which are frequently only sets of rules, from the Christian walk, which is primarily a belief in the person of Jesus Christ and his power to transform our lives. Sets of rules can never do it.

### 2. MY BACKGROUND - from 1980

In August 1980 I was 38 years old, worth R6,5 million - probably R65 million in today's money - and living in Johannesburg, South Africa. I had garnered the above tidy sum by correctly predicting a major rise in the price of gold and using my position in the stock market to best effect - gearing up through bank debt, buying on 'time', and purchasing 'options'.

Mine had been a privileged background - not of inherited wealth, but of achievement. My Father had successfully run the South African and UK operations of a major international computer corporation, Burroughs Machines. Self-made, his credo was simple. If you put your mind to it, you can do what you want.

He sent me to the best schools and universities he could afford on the theory that wealth is transient but education is for keeps. It was Cordwalles 'prep' and Michaelhouse 'Senior school' in Natal, then Oxford University in England. There I read Politics, Philosophy, and Economics, before finishing off with an MBA at UCT in the Cape.

At prep school, if there was a "hard working" prize, I would win it. I had learned from my Father. He was fair, but a hard task-master. Our relationship depended in large measure on performance. When I did well, he was pleased and would reward me. When I failed or disobeyed him, I experienced his displeasure. He sent all three of his children to Sunday school at the local Methodist church in Kloof, Natal. Later we went on to Anglican Church schools. Despite these trappings, I do not believe he ever experienced a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as his Saviour. To that point, neither had I.

He was a lifelong Mason and Rotarian, ever willing to offer help and advice to those in need but, if you think Masonry innocuous, read "On route to global occupation" by Gary Kah, "The Hiram Key", a bestseller of '97 by Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas, or "Templar Revelations" by Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince. In his late teens and early twenties, my Father dabbled in spiritualism and visited fortune-tellers. In later life he always carried "good luck" charms and constantly spoke of the family's "luck".

When, after leaving school, I suggested becoming a doctor, he preferred I enter business, but left the decision to me. After completing an economics degree at Oxford in England, I returned to South Africa. I recall Wits University accepting me to begin afresh and switch to Medicine but, before I could start, I was offered a job in stock broking. Fifteen years later, by 1978, and at the age of 36, I had become Senior Partner of the then long-established stock broking firm of Saunders and Taylor.

### 3. THE OCCULT

For many years I enjoyed a passing fascination with fortune-telling and divination. I believe this was an inherited enslavement, resulting directly from my Father's own activities. At the age of 17 I visited a Johannesburg fortune-teller who told me I would marry my present (and only) wife. She fought me off for ten years but persistence was my long suit. Shortly after I took control of a broking firm, my brother phoned to tell me he had been studying astrology and had never seen stars like mine. He said:

***"In the next 18 months every gamble you take will pay off. You will make millions."***

I was already a risk-taker but his words fell on fallow ground and pushed me over the edge. I borrowed to the hilt and took every opportunity to travel and speak on my speciality, which was gold. I was convinced the market was about to explode. My strategies worked brilliantly. In short order the metal price soared from \$100 an ounce to my initial target of \$500, before racing on to \$880. Gold shares hit the roof. With success came a three-acre, triple storey house in Bryanston, with a pool, a court, five cars and a menagerie of animals.

There was a Range Rover, a V8 Morgan, a '47 MG, and two BMW's. Tagged on at the end, unsuccessfully vying for attention, were three children and a wife.

My son subsequently worked with me for five years. Until the age of 25 he still lived under the same roof, as on varying occasions both my daughters have done. Today, when we come together, we pray together. This is the greatest part of my testimony. God has restored my

family, but it was not that way in 1980.

#### 4. WEALTH, POWER and INFLUENCE

As wealth and power increased, so did influence. The head-hunters came and offered me the position as managing director of a major corporation. I turned it down. The Institutions voted me coal analyst of the year. I was invited to speak in America and, on January 29, 1979, made the front page of Barron's - a financial magazine with a circulation even then of 2 million a week. Let me explain how easily I was able to make money in those days. Whilst living and working in England, my parents had deposited a portion of their earnings, sourced out of Europe, in a Swiss Bank Account. It was a small amount - R1200. After a year of financial high jinks I had parlayed it into a respectable \$10,000. That was Stage 1.

Stage 2 was to invest the sum in a "call option on ASA" - an American registered Gold Investment Trust. I acquired a three-month call on 15,000 shares at \$29 a share, for an outlay of a mere 65 cents a share. Six weeks later, as the gold price rose, ASA doubled from \$26 a share to \$53. As the option was at \$29, three dollars above the market, there was an instant profit of \$24 per share against a cost of 65cents. On 15,000 shares this was equivalent to a profit of \$360,000, from a starting level of  $(15,000 \times .65) = \$9,750!$

Stage 3 was to place the whole amount of \$360,000 with the London Metal Exchange as a 10% deposit on a 'future's contract' on Copper to the value of \$3,6 million. Within a couple of months the price of the metal had rocketed 45% from 1100 to 1600 pounds a ton. The net worth of the 10% deposit rose 450% from \$360,000 to \$1,6 million in less than 4 months!

I grew so confident of my ability to do anything and everything in my own strength, that I began to challenge God's very existence. I went so far as to convince myself I had become an atheist. Chris Wienand, an ex South African from Durban, later Pastor of a church of 2,000 in Los Angeles, tells the story of sitting next to a man on a plane who was also convinced. When asked what he did for a living, Chris replied he was a preacher. Understandably the man expressed total disbelief. Seeing Chris for the first time one could sympathize. Hair down to the shoulders, he resembled "a wild man from Borneo". When his travelling companion stated he himself was an atheist, Chris responded:

***"I admire you. When we look at the world in which we live it takes far greater faith to believe it all happened by accident, than it does to believe in a Creator."***

The man immediately backtracked, denied he was an atheist, and said he simply didn't know. With me it took longer. I was stubborn and totally convinced God was irrelevant.

#### 5. INVICTUS

My favourite poem was INVICTUS, the anthem of atheism, by British poet, William Henley.

***"Out of the night that covers me, black as the pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul."***

***In the fell clutch of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeonings of chance my head is bloody but unbowed."***

***Beyond this place of wrath and tears, looms but the horror of the shade, and yet the***

*menace of the years, finds and shall find me unafraid.*

*It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishment the scroll, I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul."*

## 6. THE EYE OF GOD

By denying his existence, I had unwittingly poked my finger into the eye of God. In September 1980, at the peak of my power and wealth, I was awakened one night in the early hours of the morning. I felt as if I had been hit on the head and heard the sound of a massive church bell ringing in my head. Into my ears came words I'd never heard before:

***"Obadiah, 5 to 7."***

I woke my wife and related what had happened. Largely unnoticed by me, she'd become a Christian a year earlier. She said at once:

***"God has been speaking to you and has given you a scripture from a book in the Old Testament, but there's a mistake in it. There's no chapter reference, only verses."***

There and then - at 2a.m. in the morning - we turned on the light. She reached for her bible to discover that the book of Obadiah only HAS one chapter. What she read rocked me to my foundations. You will recall an earlier reference to my having been involved in fortune-telling. It was now GOD'S turn to tell me my fortune. This is what she read:

***"If thieves came to you, if robbers in the night -Oh what a disaster awaits you -would they not steal only as much as they wanted?"***

***If grape pickers came to you, would they not leave a few grapes? But how Esau will be ransacked, his hidden treasures pillaged!***

***All your allies will force you to the border; your friends will deceive and overpower you; those who eat your bread will set a trap for you, but you will not detect it."***

What a prophecy of coming doom! Shortly after that I met a man called Dudley Daniel. He was Pastor of my wife's church, a small Baptist fellowship, later to expand into what became known as New Covenant Church, Bryanston. Today he heads up over 5,500 relating churches throughout the world and lives in Australia, having spent time in Los Angeles planting churches throughout the US. On hearing my of my experience he said:

***"Peter George, you'd better hurry up and give your life to Christ because you're about to go through fire like you can't believe."***

I ignored him.

## 7. THE CRASH

Within a month the stock market began to crash. It was October 1980. The pressure was on and I needed cash fast. Through hot shot dealing I had juggled my wife's share portfolio from an original R2,000, to R1,5 million in less than 18 months. Now I needed her signature to raise an additional R500,000 overdraft on what was left of it. Her first reaction was to take the million which remained and leave for overseas, taking the children with her. Instead she

prayed to a Lord I had yet to meet. She distinctly heard him say:

***"Sign the form. Within months the money will all be gone but your husband will have come to know me."***

This was confirmed some weeks later when she went to listen to Evangelists Dave and Dale Garrett from New Zealand. In the middle of the service she had a vision of me preaching to hundreds.

To her remarkable credit and my undying gratitude she signed the form. I had threatened to leave her if she refused.

## **8. MEETING DEREK PRINCE - and his Ministry of "Deliverance"**

Apart from my wife and what I had thought were her wacky friends, Dr. Derek Prince was the first real Christian I was to meet in the flesh, and observe at work. It took place at a packed 'Assemblies' meeting in Linden, Johannesburg. (The term "Assemblies" being an abbreviation for a church denomination called "The Assemblies of God".)

Derek Prince was not your typical "yammer, yammer" American evangelist but a restrained ex-Cambridge University man and a "Brit". I could relate to him. I have since come to maintain that he is the greatest bible teacher I have ever met. An incident from that meeting has always stuck in my mind. He told the gathering that the Lord had given him a special ministry for praying for people with back problems and proceeded to invite members of the congregation onto the stage. He sat them down and told them that most back ailments stemmed from the sufferer having one leg shorter than the other.

Holding their legs in his hands, side on to the audience, he began to pray for each in turn. He would point out the disparities in length, which in some cases were quite marked. One after the other the shorter legs grew out. Today this is commonplace. Then I couldn't believe it. This was not the weak, pathetic Christianity I had been told of. This was different. Then came what for me was the "coup de grace". As Derek Prince began to pray for one woman in particular, he suddenly said;

***"Woman, God can't heal you while you are harbouring bitterness and un-forgiveness in your heart. Whom do you hate?"***

***"No one." she replied.***

***"Woman, I want to ask you once again, whom do you hate?"***

***Finally she admitted;***

***"It's my Father, but he's dead."***

***"If you forgive him from your heart", Derek Prince went on, "God can begin to heal you. Speak it out boldly, right now."***

She did so and began to weep. Simultaneously Derek Prince commanded the "spirits of bitterness and un-forgiveness to leave, in Jesus name". Her leg began to move. This was my first introduction to the reality of the spiritual world and the fact that there are two forces to which we can turn, one for good, the other for evil. I had always thought they were one and

the same and that it made no difference. Minutes later Derek Prince offered to pray for people, right where they sat. The man behind and to my right raised his hand. I had met him before. He was from my wife's church. He was a hunchback. Suddenly there was a loud cracking noise from where he was sitting, followed by a cry of pain. This was blowing my mind.

During his address Derek Prince made reference to coming events in the world economy. This was an area familiar to me. It was what had driven my gold market so, at the door; I shook hands with him and said;

***"Dr. Prince, I can't speak for the spiritual but as to your economic views I wish to say I agree with you completely."***

Derek Prince answered.

***"What is your name, young man?"***

When I told him he replied very simply.

***"I shall pray for you."***

From behind I heard a quiet comment.

***"That's the end of Peter George."***

There is a verse in the book of James, ch 5 v16 that reads:

***"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."***

In the case of Derek Prince I was rapidly to learn the truth of it.

## **9. COMING HOME TO GOD**

Months went by. Financial pressure increased. More and more my life had begun to represent what I was later to read about in the Book of Ecclesiastes ch 2 v 11.

***"Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Nothing was gained ..."***

By this stage I had begun the occasional visit to my wife's church because she kept telling me that: "if you place your problems in God's hands he is powerful enough to take care of them - he specializes in restoration".

One Sunday morning, the Pastor, Dudley Daniel, to whom I referred earlier, gave a very specific 'altar call'. He said:

***"There is a man here whom God is calling right now to make a commitment."***

As he spoke I felt as if I was being immersed in hot oil. My hand developed a will of its own and shot into the air. I was in. Jesus had become my saviour. The following weekend, in obedience to God's word as explained to me, I was baptized - full immersion in the church swimming pool. I still have the picture and will treasure it for life. Listen to the words of the

Gospel of Mark chapter 16 v 15.

**"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."**

On being admitted, some weeks later, as a member of the church, Dudley publicly read out a scripture, which he felt the Lord had specifically laid on his heart for ME. It was taken from Jeremiah chapter 17 verses 7 and 8. It read as follows;

***"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream.***

***It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."***

My immediate reaction was one of disappointment. Who wants to have to bear green leaves in a year of drought? I was already in a period of drought and I wanted it to end - not keep recurring. In time I would learn that God was going to give me spiritual 4-wheel drive. Paul describes the gift in his letter to the Philippians chapter 4, v 12.

***"I know what it is to be in need. I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."***

## **10. THINGS FALL APART**

Within three months my new found faith was tested to the limit. Share prices were collapsing by the day. Clients were refusing to pay for losses. As their share cover dropped, our own banks were reneging on previous undertakings to us and calling in their loans. Behind the scenes, and unbeknown to us, fellow stockbrokers, both here and overseas, were stealing our money. I came in one Monday morning to learn that our main bank had changed their minds about honouring a cheque for R210,000. The cheque had been explicitly cleared the previous Friday. We had no alternative but to declare ourselves "defaulters". It was all over. I felt God had let me down.

It was a long time before I learnt the truth of Isaiah ch 55 v 8 :

**"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways".**

He sees the end from the beginning. We do not. I no longer have regrets as to what took place. I absolutely know that what he allowed to occur was a vital step in changing my life for the better and preparing me to do "good works" for Him. Are YOU angry with God? Listen to His words in the first book of Thessalonians chapter 5 v 16.

**"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."**

## **11. IN COMES THE PRESS**

The day after my default, Tuesday 16 June 1981, is indelibly etched in my memory. I awoke to find a face I recognized emblazoned all over the newspapers;

***"Top Brokers axed by stock exchange" The Rand Daily Mail***

*"Stockbrokers Default" The Citizen*

*"Stocks man will lose all to aid clients" The Star*

I remember calling in my children - the eldest was only ten - showing them my picture on the front page of the morning newspaper, and explaining to them that, as a family, we had lost everything we owned. But I told them that we still had each other and that, even though times might become very difficult, God's word, in Psalm 37, makes a very specific promise to those who trust Him:

***"I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread."***

I told my children that in the same way we could now count on God to feed and protect our own family. Some of their friends might tease them and it would not be easy. It was very difficult for me to speak so humbly and in such a frank way with them and it was the first time I had ever done so, but it was a start. With this initiative, and as their earthly Father, I had for the first time begun to fulfil my God-given role as Priest in the family. More and more I took them into my confidence. Every problem was an opportunity for us to pray together. Even the intrusions of the press had their funny side. The first weekend after the crash, the Sunday Times carried a prominent banner headline on many of its billboards:

**"Downfall of the Golden Boy".**

The journalist who wrote it was Neil Hooper. Some years later, he and fellow journalist Kit Katzen shared the honours for exposing the so-called "Information Scandal".

Within weeks of meeting me Neil Hooper had given his life to the Lord and was in my 'home group'. It is the one and only time I can recall a person sharing a particular aspect of Paul's 'Damascus Road' experience, his blindness. As he made his commitment in church, he lost his sight. He remained blind for 24 hours and had to be led around by the hand and even shown to the bathroom.

For the next six years my name was rarely out of the press. Most of the comments were snide and mocking, in a sense a reaping of what I myself had sown in my newsletters, in earlier days when a stockbroker. I used to churn out a quarterly article in which I liberally poked fun at selected targets. I had called it: 'Apples for Aunt Sally'. Today I have three lever arch files full of press cuttings. It was to take twelve years, before the tenor of the articles written about me, began to change from negative to mildly positive.

## **12. NEWFOUND CHRISTIAN FRIENDS**

As most of my business associates in the world melted away, God surrounded my family with a whole new circle of Christian friends. I had never known anything like it. They gave us money. They came to visit and drop off groceries. They gave their professional time for nothing. They encouraged and prayed for us and stood beside us as the world turned its back.

The day after the closure of my business one of the elders in the church brought me R100 in cash. I knew he and his family were surviving on a diet of jungle oats lashed with soya and to use a 'B.C.' expression: 'It nearly killed me to take the money.'

I felt a choking pride, but there was no alternative to accepting the gift. All my life I had enjoyed giving but never learnt to receive. Now, with my bank accounts frozen, I was penniless. I was later to learn that Godly giving is best entrusted to those who've learnt to receive. They make the most sensitive givers because they know what its like to be on the other end.

### **13. SALVATION - BUT FROM WHAT?**

I knew I had been saved but I didn't know from what. I had no conception of the sin in my life. I knew I had made a mess of my finances but thought that with time and patience - a major effort on my part and a little help from God - circumstances would correct themselves and everything would revert to normal.

Little did I realize that God had specifically chosen me, that he was fully in charge of my circumstances, and uncompromisingly intent on using them to change me. I would never be the same again. The old Peter George was dying, but what a hard road lay ahead!

My state of delusion deepened when a well meaning Christian told me that my troubles reminded him of the Old Testament story of Job. I went and read it. Ch 1, v 1 starts off:

**"In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil."**

The story then proceeds to describe how Job, despite being blameless and upright, had nevertheless been stripped of everything, in an argument between God and Satan, as the latter was given the right to probe the extent of Job's faithfulness to God - to test whether it was simply a function of the blessings he'd received. I thought, yeah that's me, the original Mr. Innocent, caught in the middle.

Before losing my money and giving my life, I had purposed to give R500,000 to my wife's church. Even the papers mentioned it. Now I was saved I could scarcely understand why I was seemingly being punished for such overtly generous intentions to bless God's people. I was still firmly of the opinion the rest of my life was blameless.

I had absolutely no idea of the extent of my sin in God's eyes. Yet all my life I had been a slave to pride, anger, fear, depression, lust, impatience, intolerance, rejection, un-forgiveness and more. I was also a mocker but, above all, I was a REBEL.

In 1 Samuel chapter 15 v 23, the sin of REBELLION is compared to the sin of divination, or what the King James calls "witchcraft". In the same section the sin of arrogance or PRIDE, another major weakness of mine at the time, is compared to the sin of idolatry and in James chapter 4 v 6 we read :

***"God opposes the proud."***

Now that I look back, what I should have been reading instead of Job, was the book of Daniel where the writer interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream and warns the king:

***"You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven."***

***Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign***

*over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored when you acknowledge that heaven rules."*

It all happened as the prophet foretold. Nebuchadnezzar relates the story:

*"At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honoured him and glorified him who lives for ever.*

*His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing.*

*He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: What have you done?"*

Eventually Nebuchadnezzar was restored. At the end he says:

*"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble."*

I had the same coming to me.

#### **14. THE CHRISTIAN WALK BEGINS**

The Christian walk has often been compared to the Old Testament travails of the Jewish people - essentially a threefold experience.

- (1) Deliverance from Egypt.
- (2) Preparation in the wilderness,
- (3) Taking of the Promised Land

In spiritual terms we translate this as:

- (1) Salvation
- (2) Sanctification

And finally:

- (3) Taking hold of our full inheritance in Christ.

Although in God's eyes I had received 'Salvation' and forgiveness of my sins, in worldly terms I was in a financial mess and seen as beyond hope of rescue.

Those who had felt the brunt of my barbed tongue in earlier times were set to enjoy every minute of my destruction now the tables had turned. One of my Swiss banking friends gave me what he felt was sound advice.

***"Emigrate. Start a new life in America."***

It was at this point that the Lord gave me clear hope and a word of encouragement. It came as a voice in my head to read Isaiah chapter 43, verses 2 and 3, and from now on scriptures followed thick and fast whenever I needed help. Sometimes I received them directly, other times they came through friends in the church. This is what I now read:

***"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire you will not be burned."***

I stayed to face the music and God was faithful. He had told me I would pull through.

## **15. DEALING WITH FEAR AND DEPRESSION**

There can be few occupations as conducive to stress as the stock exchange. By 1980, and at the age of 38, I was controlling a stock broking firm with 7,000 clients, a staff of 70, with three branches and two more on the way. I thought I was about to become the broking world's equivalent of 'Pick 'n Pay', one of our retail chains. To cope with the pressure I had become a chain smoker. My consumption eventually rose to 60 'Ritmeester Quicks' a day. At night I'd reach for a big fat cigar, or even a pipe. Only after I became a Christian did I begin to understand the link between SMOKING and FEAR.

In the aftermath of default I faced regular interrogations from the Johannesburg Stock Exchange Committee. There was no love lost. They were after my blood and to the ongoing market pressures was now added the increasing threat to my financial survival spearheaded by the JSE themselves. At first my newfound faith was unable to cope. I became subject to recurring bouts of FEAR and DEPRESSION. Most of my Christian friends were non-smokers but I was unable to stop. They could smell my presence a mile off and took to making jokes to the effect that: 'there's something burning'.

Then I came across a little book entitled: ***"Fear and Depression"***.

It struck a chord. The author referred to a scripture in 2 Tim chapter 2, v 7.

***"I have not given you a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind."***

The author went on to give advice to those who felt they suffered from spirits of fear and depression. He explained that, if they were prepared to pray a prayer of "self deliverance", God would set them free. This was the prayer he recommended:

***"Lord, your word says that you have not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind. Therefore if I have a spirit of fear it is not from you. It is from the pit of hell and as your child I no longer have to put up with it. I don't want it and your word says that in the name of Jesus all demons have to flee. So in Jesus name I command the spirit of fear to leave me now!"***

I spoke the words out for myself and felt instantaneously freed. I repeated the prayer for the spirit of depression. The writer warned that the spirits would try and return and that one would need to be on one's guard. "Keep the 'house' swept clean by regularly taking authority". In coming weeks, whenever renewed pressure caused fear or depression to resurface, I would pray against both with increasing success. Three weeks later, as I was

having my 'quiet time' with the Lord in the early morning, I felt Him speak to me in an audible voice - in a way he'd never done before.

***"You will never smoke again and I want you to cut down your drinking."***

I ran downstairs to tell my wife. Understandably her response was sceptical. She'd been pressuring me to do both for months – but so far without success. She retorted:

***"I'll believe it when I see it."***

She had to. I was instantly and totally delivered from the desire to smoke and it has never returned. My drinking was curbed and largely restricted to wine.

I picked up the book again. The next chapter was headed:

## **16. "HOW I TITHED MY WAY OUT OF BANKRUPTCY"**

It was to revolutionize my financial affairs.

In the book of Malachi chapter 3, v 10, the last book in the Old Testament, we are commanded to 'tithes', giving away ten per cent of what we earn to the "spiritual storehouse" or the "place that feeds us spiritually". In modern day terms this would logically refer to our local church. In the book of Nehemiah, chapter 10, v 37, it sets out how we are to calculate the tithe – it is to be our 'first fruits'. This suggests 'pre-tax and off the top'. If we do this, we are promised both PROTECTION and financial BLESSING. God goes further, and it is the only place in his word where he invites us to 'test him':

***"Test me in this" says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the Lord Almighty.***

In 1 Chronicles chapter 29, v 14, Solomon tells us why tithing works:

***"Everything comes from you and we have given you only what comes from your hand."***

I began to tithe on EVERYTHING that came in - earnings, gifts, even debts paid back. Some of my erstwhile associates began to criticize what I was doing, accusing me of tithing on monies which rightfully belonged to creditors. I challenged them:

***"Where do you think the money's come from in the first place? It's coming from God!"***

Their problem was that they could not deny the fact that my needs were miraculously being met, at times on a scale which boggled the mind.

## **17. FIRST FINANCIAL MIRACLE - R210,000**

After watching me battle to repay debts for almost eighteen months, the JSE eventually lost their patience. Without warning they issued a summons for R210,000 - for a cheque which our bank manager had initially agreed to 'guarantee', but which his 'Head Office' in Pretoria subsequently refused to honour. I turned to my Building Society for help, applying to increase the bond on my house from R30,000 to R240,000. The house had earlier been valued

at R380,000. The application was mysteriously turned down - no reason given.

A week later a close friend informed my lawyer that at a Christian prayer breakfast the Chairman of the Building Society had told those present of a problem he had. Peter George had applied for a bond to pay his debts to the JSE but, when he approached the Senior Partner of his broking firm for advice, he'd been told to leave well alone. The broker confidentially informed him the JSE Committee were about to launch sequestration proceedings against Peter George and that, if the Society provided me with the funds with which to pay my debts, it would frustrate their efforts. The Chairman of the Building Society said he had decided to reject my application.

Within a day or so the summons arrived. Two hours later I received an unsolicited call from a Christian friend. He said the Lord had given him a scripture the previous night from the book of Numbers, chapter 7 verses 12,13 and 14. It concerned offerings brought for the building of the first temple by Nahshon, son of Amminadab. The offerings were itemised and valued in shekels. If you added them up they totalled 210. He said the Lord had told him to ask me.

***"Do you need R210,000?"***

I told him the Stock Exchange had that afternoon sent me a summons for the exact same amount. We both knew God had spoken. He said:

***"The money will be in your account tomorrow morning."***

When it arrived the first thing I did was lop 10% off the top, and run to my church with the cheque. It was for R21,000. Then I told the lawyers what had happened. Instead of being excited, they were furious. They told me:

***"You had the money, now you don't have enough."***

I reminded them that what was left was a miracle in the first place and that we could therefore trust the Lord for the balance.

Later that same afternoon, the liquidator of the British stock broking firm of Sebag & Company, with whom we had previously done business, phoned to ask for our bank details. They said we were due money from the estate and were now authorising a partial payment of R25,000. Once again, and the same day, I drove to the church as fast as I could. This time the cheque was for R2,500. I then phoned the unbelieving lawyers to inform them that, within a matter of hours, their R21,000 shortfall had been covered. On top of it I had a surplus of R1500 - spending money for the family for a month. How things have changed!

## **18. JSE COURT CASE - R850,000**

When my lawyers tendered the R210,000 to the JSE, unlike the response of normal creditors getting paid in full, the JSE were both dumbfounded and angry. They upped their demand to R250,000, to include interest and costs. When that was duly met, they claimed a further R850,000 on behalf of clients as well.

The night before the matter was due to go to court, the home group I was attending gathered for their regular weekly prayer meeting. Their leader at the time was an old friend of mine.

When asked if anyone wanted prayer, my wife and I - admittedly with some trepidation -

quietly mentioned the R850,000 desperately required for the following morning. With a degree of nervousness they prayed the prayer of faith. My wife and I went home. Within two hours we received three unsolicited phone calls. The first was from a Christian friend who said he felt the JSE had been unfair and he wished to help. He would be out of town for a couple of days but had left his company secretary with a blank cheque and instructions – should I so wish - for him to make it out for up to R500,000. The second call came from a member of my church, offering to lend R100,000, interest free, to be repaid as a debt of honour. The final call came at 11 pm from a wealthy Jewish friend, Benny Slome of Tedelex. He began by saying he'd returned that day from Hong Kong. Whilst there he'd seen and bought a big green jade bull. He said it reminded him of me. Draw your own conclusions as to why! He asked:

***"When is your court case?"***

I replied:

***"Tomorrow at 10 am"***

***"How much are you short?"***..... he continued.

***"R250,000"*** ....I said.

He replied:

***"If you are at my offices by 9 am tomorrow morning you can pick up a cheque."***

When I asked him why he was doing it, he said:

***"That's what friends are for."***

Some years earlier, in 1976 if I recall, South Africa was about to launch television and he had the franchise for Sony. The parent company in Japan had advanced him R130 million payable over 180 days. I warned him the rand was about to devalue and advised him to cover his foreign exchange exposure. He cut his orders to R100 million and covered forward, saving R15 million when the rand fell 15% in the week that followed. Five years afterwards, the day before my default, and thinking I had 'earned' my way into his gratitude, I had asked him to lend me R250,000 against my house. He had refused. When I reminded him of how I'd saved him R15 million he simply said:

***"The past is the past."***

It was now two years on. There had been a total change of attitude but entirely unprovoked. An employee who'd worked for him for years, on hearing what he'd done to bless me with a gift of R250,000, said in amazement :

***"I can't believe it. He's the hardest man I've known. He's never done such a thing in all his life."***

God had touched his heart.

## 19. THE UNJUST JUDGE

The next day I walked into Court with a total of R1,100,000, being the initial R250,00 for the JSE, plus guarantees of another R850,000 for clients. The JSE were flabbergasted. It was not what they had expected. It was certainly not what they wanted. In desperation they alleged some of my 'would be' donors were men of little substance. The irony was that the JSE's own advocate was acting for one of my donors in another matter in which the Advocate had asked me to testify. He was well aware that our mutual friend was worth millions. To lend weight to the JSE's case he then alleged I owed an additional R5 million to other creditors. He continued to demand my 'sequestration'" despite knowing that the R1,100,000 I had tendered in settlement was conditional on his application being withdrawn. His client, the JSE, would rather forego the money to the cost of their Guarantee Fund, than see me survive their efforts to wipe me out. Their utter vindictiveness totally took me by surprise.

To my amazement and despair the judge sided with the JSE. My partner and I were placed in provisional sequestration with a return date set for the week ahead. We felt God had let us down. My Pastor cautioned us to be patient, warning that 'God's ways are not our ways'. When our day in court arrived the 'unjust judge' was miraculously declared 'unavailable'. His replacement took one look at the papers and commented:

***"What's going on here? If the JSE don't want his money, what DO they want? "***

Local magazine Finance Week gave him the answer:

***"JSE wants George's head!"***

The Judge extended the provisional sequestration three months into the New Year. He told us to get a full audit done. Doubtful debts were to be ignored. One of the benefits of a provisional sequestration is that everything gets frozen - including bank accounts. They were not allowed to sell our shares.

## 20. JSE COURT CASE – Demand upped to R2,300,00

From October 1982, the date of our provisional sequestration, until February 1983, the return date set by the Court, the gold market enjoyed a major rally. The shares we had pledged to the bank rose sharply. Loraine went from 350 cents per share to 1100. By the time we met in court my share portfolio had risen by R700,000. There were further unsolicited gifts from friends and family. Someone even offered to stand surety for my overdraft. The man who'd given R210,000, chipped in a further R190,000. I walked into court with cash and guarantees totalling R2,300,000. The application for sequestration was withdrawn. I was declared "solvent". I can still recall seeing the JSE Committee members huddled on the steps of the Supreme Court after the decision had been handed down. God had done a miracle and they were nonplussed.

As per the promise I had received from Isaiah chapter 43, v 2, many months before:

***"I had passed through the rivers. They had not swept over me. I had walked through the fire. I had not been burned."***

## 21. NOT BY MIGHT but BY HIS SPIRIT

My escape from the clutches of the JSE reinforced an important but painful lesson learned some months earlier. When faced with financial difficulties, look to God, not to men.

Zechariah says it best in chapter 4, verse 6:

***“Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit”, says the Lord Almighty.***

When first saved I had done the opposite and been terribly disappointed. As a new born Christian, I had approached close friends, irrespective of their spiritual condition, and asked for help - just as I would have expected them to do had the circumstances been reversed. There is one occasion I shall never forget. **I received a summons for R47,000.** I rang a friend who had already volunteered assistance should I ever require it. He offered to do a “round robin” of my five closest business friends, requesting they all chip in to settle the summons. One of them had recently made R250,000 cashing in a share option. Another was about to install a sprinkler system for R14,000. The other two never even bothered to return his calls. He was so disillusioned he backed off and refused to get involved. It was almost a literal outworking of the first scripture God gave me from Obadiah, verse 7.

***“All your allies will force you to the border; your friends will deceive and overpower you; those who eat your bread will set a trap for you, but you will not detect it”.***

Almost all my “unsaved” friends had abandoned me.

I did not defend the summons. Judgement was taken against me. When the messenger of the court came to my house a week later there was nothing I could do. He was about to start carting off my furniture when I felt the Lord say:

***“Offer him a post-dated cheque”!***

I openly told him what I had been led to do and offered him a cheque for R47,000, dated one week AHEAD. He said he’d never done such a thing before, but on this occasion he agreed to bend the rules but said he didn’t know why he was doing it.

One week later, the morning we were due to meet at my bank and in the space of an hour, I received a series of phone calls from friends I hardly knew and relations who had previously been rather distant. All offered help. Here is an example. A woman from church rang to tell my wife:

***“MY husband says God has told him to give YOUR husband R10,000 and that you need it right now, so he’s got a cheque waiting for you.”***

We arrived at the bank with minutes to spare and all the money to hand. When told what had happened, the bank manager was so amazed he called in his second in command to hear the story. On hearing the chain of events, the latter commented:

***“Why don’t you just keep on writing out cheques?”***

The following week the court messenger asked to join our regular prayer meeting in the office. He was Jewish. He poured out his heart. He confessed to having stolen money and goods from takings repossessed on behalf of the court. Having witnessed a demonstration of God’s power, he wanted to give his life and trust God to help him pay his own debts.

## **22. OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT**

We had emerged victorious from a successful court battle against the JSE. Unbeknown to us

at the time, there would later be a string of further cases – some even with the JSE over other matters. We never attacked. We simply defended. Each time God gave us victory. In Stock Exchange circles it became something of a joke, the members poking fun at their own committee for always losing and never learning to leave well alone.

At the conclusion of this first case, and by mutual agreement with the JSE, we instructed our auditors to form a Trust to pay out creditors. The JSE announced that once that had been done, we could re-apply for membership. In due course - and without finding out what God wanted - we went ahead. A friend put it this way: “no decision without God’s permission”. God had other ideas. The morning we were due to hear from the JSE, the Lord gave me a scripture from Exodus chapter 20 v 2. The words rang clear in my head:

***"I am the Lord your God. I am taking you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."***

An hour later the JSE's response to our application for re-admission was on my desk.

***"At the ordinary meeting of the General Committee held this day you were declared NOT elected."***

Whether we liked it or not, and despite feeling aggrieved at what we considered the unjust nature of their decision, God was taking us ‘**out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage**’. The JSE refused to give reasons. Thirteen years later the new Constitution changed all that. Today if a man is deprived of his livelihood he is entitled to an explanation. When my partner re-applied for membership 12 years later, in 1995, he was rejected a second time. Once again they refused to supply him with a reason. This time he successfully subpoenaed JSE records, all the way back to 1983. There was nothing of substance to support their decision, neither in 1983, nor in 1995. They were forced to open their doors and allow him back. He re-established a thriving business which later became ‘Anglorand’.

Over the years the Lord has repeatedly given my wife and I a promise from the book of Joel chapter 2, v 25.

***"I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten"***

I trust he will do so but cannot clearly imagine the form it will take. In Isaiah chapter 49 v 25, in answer to the question:

***“Can plunder be taken from warriors, or captives rescued from the fierce?”***

This is what the Lord says: ***“Yes”!*** We trust Him for restitution.

In the meantime God had something else in mind.

### **23. VISION FOR WIT NIGEL GOLD MINE**

One of the causes of my default was a major overnight trade in the shares of Wit Nigel Gold Mine. I had been pressured into taking a position which went the wrong way and left me stuck. A broking associate – since deceased – had threatened to cut off his business unless we swallowed the block of shares. Three years later I still owned them. Some months before re-applying to the JSE, the Lord spoke to me concerning this investment. It happened on a Sunday morning and was to have significant consequences.

***"Go and get powers of attorney and take control of Wit Nigel Gold Mine. Run it as a Christian mine with a Christian Board of Directors. It must tithe. Do a two for one share swap with Afrikaner Lease"***

When I arrived at church that morning I was excited and could scarcely contain myself. I buttonholed one of the elders and told him what I felt God had said to me. He urged caution:

***"Such a dramatic word requires confirmation. Wait for it."***

It came quickly. After the service a lady approached me. We hardly knew each other. She said God had given her a word for me:

***"I see you taking over a public company and running it on Christian lines"***.

She was overwhelmed and excited when I told her my story. No sooner had she turned her back than another member of the church approached me. He said:

***"God has told me you need money for a business project and I'm to give you my savings."***

When I told him of the vision I had received for Wit Nigel, he requested I buy him R40,000 worth of shares and agreed to grant me a power of attorney to vote them. His was the first and the fight was on.

## **24. BATTLE TO TAKE CONTROL**

Having been declared 'solvent' by the Supreme Court, our Trustees, Price Waterhouse, disposed of the claims against my estate, leaving me with a surplus of R250,000.

I rented premises and employed staff - all committed Christians. We began to page through the share register of Wit Nigel. Every holder was canvassed and given our Christian vision. In those days there were only 6,5 million shares in issue. Today there are in excess of 150m. Within a month we had 10% of the company under our control. I approached the Directors, explained the vision I had for the company, and requested a seat on the Board.

They agreed and promised to contact me. Nothing happened. When I queried their lack of action I was told they'd changed their minds. By the end of the second month we were up to 20%. I raised my request for Board representation to three. Again they agreed and again nothing happened. By the third month we had reached 30%. I went back to the Company but this time insisted on the Chairmanship and sufficient directors to control the Board. Instead of playing games, they angrily refused.

We called a public meeting. One of the men I had recently led to the Lord was Martin Summerley of 'Magnum' fame. His knowledge of the Company's Act was exceptional and he helped plan my corporate strategy. By the time we were ready to move I had obtained powers of attorney over 40% of the company's stock. I had done exactly what God had told me. Everyone with over 1000 shares had been given the vision – Christians, Jews, Moslems, Hindus, Atheists and Agnostics alike.

The first meeting was held in the Wit Nigel Board room. It was packed tight. Shareholders overflowed into the passage. There were emotional scenes when the old Board of Directors rejected our powers of attorney on the grounds they had 'expired'. No such thing of course is

possible. That only happens to 'proxies'. The meeting was postponed for a month and transferred to the Stock Exchange Auditorium to accommodate greater numbers. The place was filled to overflowing and the atmosphere electric. The remains of my Trust had been spent on salaries and fees. Apart from long outstanding debtors from the now defunct broking company, our funds were exhausted. But we tithed, persevered and the Lord supplied. Fresh powers of Attorney were obtained from shareholders. They were now all fired up and ready to go.

The night before the meeting a woman in my home group - I was now running my own - said God had given her a 'vision', but she didn't understand what it meant.

She had seen a picture of a huge breadboard covered in crumbs. Then a giant hand came and swept them off. I felt certain God was prophetically giving a promise of victory. It was like the conversation Gideon overheard the night before his first crucial battle - the enemy predicting Gideon would win. The following morning, as I prayed for the meeting, I felt the Lord give me a scripture from Psalm 23 v 5.

***"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies"***

Within an hour the JSE Auditorium was full. In front was a long table. 'Sitting like crumbs', on it and round it, were the existing Directors, including the then Chairman of one of South Africa's major banks. An hour later they were all gone, swept off by the giant hand of God. As the meeting closed someone pressed a button, curtains opened behind the board table revealing a large plate glass window. As it slid away we peered down and were greeted by the noise rising from the floor of the stock exchange. Members stared up in disbelief to see Peter George's new Board already seated. God had been so faithful.

***"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."***

The next morning the Rand Daily Mail business section carried a banner headline:

**"Peter George sweeps the Board."**

I still have a copy.

## **25. BATTLE FOR HEARTS AND MINDS**

God had been faithful. He had given us control of the mine. We had entered the Promised Land; now to subdue the enemy. The battle for the hearts and minds of employees had begun. The press articles started over. They mocked our plans - particularly our Christian vision. Directors were ridiculed for their beliefs and particularly for the Board's commitment to tithe. The Press described our church as 'a sect in Bryanston' but the comment had an amusing sequel. When our Pastor read the article he reacted angrily saying:

**"If they call us a sect, they'll find we're a sect that bites."**

How does one run a 'Christian' company? We had been landed with an existing operation. Most of the staff were loyal to previous management and profoundly suspicious of our intentions but, as a Board, we were in a powerful position. Mining structures were still very 'authoritarian' so little by little we were able to take the land. There was a lot of drunkenness amongst senior staff. Wives could be seen sitting in their cars outside the recreation hall bar 'til midnight - waiting for husbands to call it a day. In a burst of zeal our new mine manager

summarily closed the bar. Wives and children rejoiced. Outside members of the bowling club left in a huff. The following night, in a fit of revenge, they ploughed up the greens with a tractor and plundered the R20,000 cash in the till. We had to learn to be gentler.

My ex-Senior Partner of our broking company Saunders and Taylor – prior to my taking control - had been Chairman of a major coal group. He related taking over another colliery to discover that not a single member of the Board had been to the mine in 15 years. He urged me not to make the same mistake. I began to visit the mine every Wednesday and at weekends took a horse and rode over every inch of the property, acquainting myself with the various ‘outcrops’ and all the old vertical shafts and ‘inclines’. I made a special effort to get to know the staff. I went underground and visited each of the working faces in turn. I acquainted myself with conditions in the black hostel. Being a ‘marginal mine’, they were dreadful. I visited those in hospital. The Manager initiated daily prayer meetings for the men, prior to them going underground. In addition we organized a weekly prayer meeting for all the senior staff but, as Christians, we felt our first priority was to improve conditions in the hostel.

We built a new ablution block, a dining hall and a church. We appointed eight black pastors. They were instructed to counsel our people against homosexuality and prostitution - both of which, in single sex hostels, were rife. They were also to help our staff with their domestic problems and for migrant workers this was a vital service.

On May Day 1985, when many mines faced violence and strife and scores had been killed in the previous 12 months, the Lord told me to declare a ‘Day of Thanksgiving and Celebration’. It was to be a fully paid holiday, but no one was allowed to leave the mine. We set up amusement stalls and arranged sports programmes for all the staff, blacks and whites together. White managers were seen playing soccer with their underground black workers. Rumours spread that something was amiss. Shortly thereafter a helicopter flew overhead and within an hour a group of police arrived in a ‘Casspir’ military vehicle, fearing a riot. Instead they stayed to watch and enjoy the fun. They commented that if everyone else behaved this way, South Africa would solve its problems.

With the benefit of hindsight, and viewing the changes which followed the country’s move to ‘majority rule’, these achievements in retrospect seem insignificant. But in the tense situation then prevailing, they were crucial. Our initiatives kept bitterness at bay and the mine at peace.

## **26. THE “INDABA” SYSTEM**

Inspired by Albert Koopman’s book “Corporate Crusaders” and his views on “Participative Management”, I asked to meet him. After a lengthy discussion and careful thought, we introduced the ‘Indaba system’. ‘Indaba’ is a Xhosa word literally meaning: ‘a gathering together for the purposes of having a discussion’. Later the system became known as ‘Work Place Forums’. We offered them as an alternative to unions, not because we wished to ‘bash’ the latter - we acknowledge they frequently have a valid role to play - but we had to have an alternative. We needed to find a way to avoid being contaminated by the poisonous confrontational climate then existing between Mining Unions and the major Mining Houses. More importantly, by adapting the Indaba system to our own purposes, we would have an opportunity to implement Christian principles as we learned to operate as a ‘Christian Family’.

We arranged an open vote in the hostel. The response was more than overwhelming, it was unanimous. The workers chose the Indaba system and the mine secured its peace. During the

next two years we experienced no violence and not a single day's strike. When the local union rep arrived he was politely told his services were not required.

After the system had been introduced we had an occasion when a white 'Section Leader' assaulted one of his black workers. Under OUR management this practice had become absolutely taboo. Rather than face expulsion, the workers offered their 'boss' an alternative. He could apologize to the men - but in public and in front of the entire hostel. After considerable soul searching the section leader swallowed his pride and did what was required. It led to an amazing outpouring of goodwill. The man kept his position and the mine retained its peace.

On another occasion, as I was leaving the mine late one Saturday afternoon, I came across an accident. A man had been knocked down on the way to Heidelberg. Both his legs looked broken. I stopped to pray for him in the middle of the road. When I discovered he was one of our workers, I called for an ambulance and had him taken to the local private hospital. I said the mine would pay his costs. The following week I received a call from the Mocambique Labour Delegation. The man in charge told me the person I'd helped and prayed for had been his brother. He said in view of what I'd done, if the mine ever needed help, I was only to ask. He would ensure we got what we wanted.

Three months later we were back in financial difficulty. We had contracted much of our labour from Mocambique because our church was running missions there and had requested we help with a job creation project. Part of labour costs were then paid, not to the man, but to the Mocambique Government. At this point we owed them in excess of R2 million. We made a representation to our friend and begged for time. He said his Government was happy to wait. We paid him six months later when our cheque for 'State Aid' arrived. If you sow mercy, you reap it.

## **27. THE AFRIKANDER LEASE DEAL**

Part of the original vision God had given me for Wit Nigel was to effect a share swap with minorities in a quoted gold and uranium company called Afrikander Lease, then controlled 65% by Anglo American Corporation. A week before submitting my scheme to the Stock Exchange, the Lord gave me a stiff lesson in submission. At the time our local church was attempting to raise finance to buy the property next door. The seller was a friend and the banks were about to foreclose on him. Had they done so he would have lost both the property and any potential profit. The original owner was keen to repossess it. I personally offered to bridge the deal to give the church time. When insufficient funds were raised, my own bank forced me to sell. I proposed splitting the profits three ways between myself, the church and the man who'd owned it previously. He was one of my closest friends. The church was delighted but my friend refused. He wanted the lot.

The church said: "Give it to him."

I refused. I said:

"You're wrong to give in. My friend is being unfair and has no right to expect 100% of the profit when I've taken the risk and the church paid the deposit. Without our intervention he would never have been able to take delivery of the property. He would have earned nothing at all."

The church persisted and sent the elders round to talk to me. I threatened to leave the church.

The next morning, in my quiet time, the Lord laid it on the line.

***“Listen to your Elders. Do what they're asking. This is your ‘submission test’. Submission is only submission when I ask you to do something you don't want to do.”***

The following week I submitted my Afrikaner Lease ‘takeover scheme’ to the JSE Listings Committee for approval. They were still smarting from their recent defeat in court. They had enjoyed refusing me permission to return as a member of the JSE, but were now miffed at my miraculous rise to the Chairmanship of a ‘quoted company’, Wit Nigel. Once a year, being Chairman of a company listed on their market, they had an obligation to invite me to their Christmas Party! They threw the scheme out and called for a load of new conditions. The ‘Old Peter George’ would have objected and gone into orbit. The new one submitted and complied. The deal had been made doubly difficult. No one thought we would pull it off.

We were bidding for 30% of the shares, but requiring a minimum acceptance of 25%, or the deal would be off. It was a 50-year-old company. 65% of the shares were in the hostile hands of Anglo American. Another 5% were presumed ‘lost’ in deceased estates. We had less than a 5% margin for error if our scheme were to succeed. Under normal circumstances our target would have been considered impossible but I had absolute faith for victory. We were subsequently told that Anglo directors were laughing at the difficult task we had set ourselves. We on the other hand knew we were doing the deal exactly the way the Lord had directed.

Prior to the offer the press had depicted Afrikaner Lease as being ‘overpriced’ and ‘uninteresting’. For good reason therefore certain shareholders were sceptical of the merits of our proposed transaction. They were not Christians and would not have been impressed if I had simply stated: “God has told me to do it.” They needed a sound worldly reason to persuade them to change their minds. Out of the blue Anglo unwittingly supplied it by responding to our offer with an announcement of their own. They placed a ‘tombstone’ advert in the financial daily stating the company was ‘on the mend’ and strongly advising shareholders not to accept the offer from Wit Nigel. This was our ready-made justification for recommending the purchase to shareholders. Opposition melted. Then, in the final run up to the closing days of our offer, a buyer miraculously appeared for Wit Nigel. He pushed the price way up in relation to our original exchange offer for Afrikaner Lease. It became ‘an offer they couldn’t refuse’. To every one’s surprise we ended up with 28% of Af Lease, worth R7 million, out of a maximum possible total of 30%. It was a miracle and gave us the financial strength to proceed with expansion. The transaction provided us with a parcel of ‘quoted’ shares against which we were able to borrow, without having to pledge the operating assets of the mine itself.

## **28. SIN IN THE CAMP - the cost of confrontation and the *faithfulness* of God**

Down the line our new ‘carbon-in-pulp’ gold plant experienced teething problems. For three months we had extracted little gold. It all flowed through the screens and onto the dump. It cost us millions. We were in dire financial difficulty. A member of the JSE began phoning our creditors, encouraging them to sue us. He had sold our shares ‘short’ and wished to repurchase them lower down.

In the book of Proverbs, chapter 6, v 3, God’s word states that if we owe money we are unable to repay, we ought to humble ourselves and go and make a ‘representation’ to our creditors. We decided to do just that. We would invite them to the mine’s Head Office for a meeting. We would explain our problems in detail, request their patience, and undertake to

dispose of our newly acquired shares in Afrikander Lease. The proceeds would enable us to meet our obligations in full.

A few days before the meeting I discovered that my Financial Manager was having an 'affair' with our creditor's clerk. She knew every one of our creditors by name. In view of the financial threat to the company, there was a strong temptation to turn a blind eye and wait for the storm to pass. God had other plans. At the risk of losing their services, he insisted I confront their sin. As a company purporting to be run on Christian lines, it would be hypocritical to condone adultery in our head office. I spoke to each in turn and read them God's word. The affair ended but the financial manager's wife was nervous at the thought of her husband continuing to work in the same office as the woman with whom he'd been having an affair. She insisted he resign and find other employment. In desperation at the thought of losing him I cried out:

***"Lord what are you doing to me?"***

Within an hour the ex financial manager of the biggest single gold mine in the country - rang to offer his services. He was from Vaal Reefs and his opening gambit was:

***"Peter George, you don't know me, but you need me!"***

I said to him:

***"Consider yourself hired as of yesterday!"***

I was stunned by God's faithfulness. Two days later, assisted by a new Financial Manager, we held a meeting with creditors and successfully persuaded them to give us time. I published an announcement in the press to the effect that we would sell our Afrikander Lease shares to settle our debts. We made various efforts, totally without success. To the contrary, the same member of the Stock Exchange who had sold Wit NIGEL 'short', now turned his attention to Afrikander Lease. Knowing we were a forced seller, he smashed the price 33% by knocking out 100 shares a minute before the market closed. This was a clear case of share rigging and contravened JSE Rules against 'undue price fluctuations'.

I reported the matter to the JSE Committee. They refused to take action. The broker who bought them was a friend. He phoned to tell me he had been offered the shares on condition he bid 100 cents below the previous price! The position looked bleak and there was such pressure on the Board that one of my Directors threatened that unless we placed the Company under 'Judicial Management' he would resign. I was convinced the Lord would not abandon us. I reluctantly asked him to leave.

## **29. SOW FORGIVENESS - REAP A BLESSING**

That night the Lord led me to phone an old broking associate in America. He and his firm, a major name in New York broking at the time, had jointly stolen \$160,000 of misplaced scrip from me in 1979. He had later confessed and apologised but by then he'd lost everything. Now the Lord told me I was to phone him up and forgive him. I did so and he was deeply touched. He asked me what was happening in my life. I told him of the mine's financial crisis. Out of the blue he offered to help. Within 7 days he reported having placed the shares with institutions in England and the US. Miraculously he had persuaded them to pay twenty five percent above market, in defiance of the JSE broker's attempt to smash the price and prevent us from selling.

Within a week we netted R6,8 million in cash. Creditors were settled in full. Our press announcements, both before and after, brought a public demonstration of God's faithfulness. We knew from beginning to end, the Afrikaner Lease deal had been a 'God idea'!

### **30. TITHING THE PROFITS OF THE MINE**

In my entire spell as Chairman of Wit Nigel, nothing generated as much heat and light, in the press and amongst shareholders, as my determination to tithe the profits of the mine. In the end - as I early suspected - it would cost me my job. Before being thrown out, my commitment to tithe allowed God to perform an amazing miracle.

Following the Afrikaner Lease deal, the Board passed a resolution permitting the company to 'tithes'. The next month we made a profit, albeit a miserable R120,000 pre tax. We duly paid a R12,000 tithe to the Chairman's church - my church - being our 'spiritual storehouse' or the place that was feeding us 'spiritually'.

The month following our payment, the grade of the mine exploded. Each day we did a gold 'pour'. The daily average had been three kilos. During this particular month the pour inexplicably increased. On occasions it rose to seven kilos a day. We extracted considerably more gold than ever before. Word spread. I began to receive requests from shareholders wishing to visit the mine and watch the gold 'pour'. Profit for the month rose ten fold, to R1,200,000! Word spread of our intention to increase the tithe from R12,000 to R120,000. Before we could make the payment, certain shareholders went into revolt. I was accused of jeopardizing the mine's assets. They said I was about to give everything to my church! Sadly, the rebellion was stirred by a Christian director who objected to the tithe being paid to my church, rather than his. I appealed to him.

**“God doesn't need our money. We are trying to bring a demonstration of His financial principles to those who don't believe. His word instructs us to pay it to the place that feeds us spiritually. The argument should not centre on whether the tithe is going to my church rather than yours. It should focus on the principle of being obedient - doing what God has told us - and encouraging unbelievers to put God to the test. The area of tithing, Malachi chapter 3 v 10, is the only place in the bible where God invites us to 'test him.'”**

My words fell on deaf ears. Jealousy and Resentment had entered his heart. Satan had won.

In the process of conducting the original takeover of Wit Nigel, the issue of tithing had been thoroughly canvassed, both in the press and with shareholders. Every person had been phoned and given the vision. Few believed we were serious. Most didn't give the matter thought and were more concerned with the excitement of a change in management.

Despite opposition at Board level we felt the time had come to raise the issue once again. We would use the opportunity to bring a demonstration of God's financial principles to both shareholders and the general public. We drew up and posted a circular to explain our motivation and called a special meeting of shareholders. A copy of the original document is available on request, together with a more detailed eight page letter, produced for the benefit of those who might wish to apply the principles for themselves. We emphasize why the tithe is to be paid to:

**“The spiritual storehouse - the place that feeds us spiritually”.**

The moment we called a meeting of shareholders, the director who wanted a share of the tithe for his own church, opted for total opposition. I had no alternative but to request his resignation from the Board. He then proceeded to stir up most of my Jewish friends and many of the non-believers. Amazing how destructive is disunity among Christian brothers!

In the circular I challenged shareholders:

**"Let's test God for a year. If, after a year, God has failed to come through and shareholders are still unhappy, we stop".**

Opposition became so strong that one of my major shareholders, an erstwhile old friend who was Jewish, became totally embittered. He insisted on seeing me the night before the meeting. Knowing tithing must be done joyfully or not at all, I agreed that if he presented me with sufficient proxies against the motion, I would withdraw it in advance.

That same night, an hour after he had left the house, I received a call from the mine. They had suffered an underground collapse in their richest production area. When my friend presented me with his proxies in the morning, I told him what had happened. He wasn't interested. It only added fuel to the fire of his anger. I gave in to him but the damage had been done. Relationships between the Board and their non-Christian shareholders became permanently soured. To my knowledge, the mine never again made a profit. Two years later it closed and allowed to flood. 1800 people lost their jobs. It has remained that way since 1989, but that was still in the future.

### **31. CONFRONTATION WITH THE JSE**

The Lord had given me a way to finance the mine's expansion without borrowing against the asset itself or attempting to find an underwriter for an issue of shares for cash. The strategy was to exchange new shares in Wit Nigel for other quoted investments – shares for shares. It required friendly parties on the other side, willing to accept Wit Nigel shares as “currency”.

We had successfully concluded one such transaction with Afrikander lease. In early 1987 a phone call from the head of the Shareholders' Association, Issy Goldberg, presented us with a second opportunity. He proposed a share swap with Johannesburg Mining and Finance, at that stage controlled by “mining magnate” Joe Berardo, the so-called “Portuguese market gardener from Madeira”.

Goldberg's statement to me was as follows:

**“Joe admires your management. He doesn't want control. He won't interfere. He just wants a stake. He's got a block of shares in Cons Modder. He'll swap them for an issue of shares in Wit Nigel.”**

At a company's Annual General Meeting it is common practice for Directors to request shareholders permission for authorised but un-issued shares to be placed in the hands of Directors for the ensuing year. This gives them the authority to issue them for whatever purpose they see fit. At the time we held our meeting we made it clear that we needed shares placed at our disposal in order to conduct further swaps during the year ahead, as and when opportunities arose. We needed fresh assets which could be pledged as security for new borrowings to finance expansion. In the event of being unable to generate sufficient income, we could always dispose of the quoted investments so acquired. In terms of JSE rules we

were entitled to place up to 15% of present issued share capital at any one time.

We now issued and swapped an extra 14,5% of existing share capital by way of new shares in exchange for shares in Cons Modder worth R5m. The funds would have enabled us to reopen two old shafts.

When we approached the JSE for permission to list the shares we had issued, they refused. They demanded we first hold a General Meeting of Shareholders to obtain permission. We pointed out we had already obtained their permission from the previous Annual General Meeting. What the JSE did not tell us was that hostile shareholders had led them to believe our sole purpose in doing the deal was to entrench our control – by issuing a major block of new shares to a person or persons who would back us. We took legal advice - in fact from the very advocate who had once acted against me in my personal capacity when he represented the JSE Committee in their efforts to sequester me! I reckoned that if a top establishment lawyer gave us clearance, we had nothing to fear from the JSE themselves. We were convinced they were once again acting in bad faith with deliberate intent to harm us. They appeared to be colluding with hostile shareholders to assist them in removing us from control of the company.

We also took advice from a top broking member of the exchange. He had sound merchant banking skills and a good knowledge of JSE Rules. He advised us to proceed in defiance of the JSE. We issued the new shares irrespective of whether or not the JSE granted us a listing. The JSE were furious and responded by delisting ALL our shares. We took them to court and won. They were forced to re-list our shares but not before they had blackened my name in the press, describing me as ‘the controversial Mr. George’. As a direct result of the articles, particularly comments made by the President of the JSE himself, my largest institutional shareholder ceased supporting me. It was an American mutual fund specialising in gold. Before he bought the shares I had told him of our plans to tithe. He appeared to indicate his support and at the time had said:

**“I agree. Cast your bread on the water and it will come back multiplied.”**

I don’t think he ever thought we were serious. Only after he had switched sides did I discover he was a believer in a cult implacably opposed to Christian principles.

Having lost their first round in court, the JSE appealed. By the time it came to be heard I had been voted out of Wit Nigel. The Portugese market gardener Berardo was now in control. Despite his efforts to settle out of court with the JSE, they insisted on a full vindication in court to clear their “name” and remove the stain of defeat. To limit costs the JSE suggested that each party restrict its defence team to a single Junior advocate. Berardo eagerly complied. In fact he actively tried to lose the case to appease the JSE. We later discovered the JSE subsequently hired THREE advocates, a Junior AND two seniors, including ex Judge Mostert. Witt Nigel under Berardo was left with our original Junior. ‘We’ won hands down. In his final summation the Judge found that the JSE had acted with ‘MALA FIDE’, that means ‘with bad faith’ in that they had set out to ‘punish’ me. Furthermore the judge found that:

**“the whole substratum of their arguement was without foundation”.**

It was all in vain. By the time the appeal was heard hostile shareholders and Berardo had been in the driving seat for months. Here’s what happened.

### 32. NIGHT OF THE LONG KNIVES

Within a week of my deal with Berardo, and encouraged by strong support from the JSE, disaffected shareholders banded together determined to throw me out. Most prominent amongst them was the Jewish friend who'd come to dinner. In the middle of the battle I received a letter from the bank informing me they intended calling up my overdraft. No reason was given. At the time I owed them R1.8 million.

The sum was covered by shares in Wit Nigel, then worth R600,000, and my house, later sold for R1.1 million. The cover was thin but a friend had independently guaranteed the debt. He had originally offered to do this when the JSE threatened to sequestrate me. I recall that even then the bank was reluctant to accept his help. They later let slip that the JSE were urging them to pull the plug. With the guarantee in place, I was nevertheless required to service the interest. This had been a major feat but, with transfers from my mother's deceased estate, I had managed to cope. The bank's action was therefore a great surprise to me. When I asked them for a reason they refused to give one.

At the time we were renting an old Victorian holiday cottage in the Drakensberg Mountains in Natal, for R54 a month – less than \$10. I took off a long weekend and travelled down on my own to fish for trout and pray. For the first few days the heavens were brass. I heard nothing. On the last day, an hour or so before heading home, the Lord led me to chapter 52, verse 10, of the Book of Isaiah:

***“You were sold for nothing, and WITHOUT MONEY you will be redeemed.”***

When I returned to Johannesburg, the Bank informed me they intended SELLING my overdraft to a third party for a million rand - a discount of 45% on face value. I asked them the name of the would-be buyer but they refused to divulge it. I reminded them I had never attempted to renege on any of my obligations in the past and had always purposed to pay the bank in full. “Why throw away your money?” I asked them. As I said that, I recalled how, the day after my default as a broker, the whole family had paraded in front of the bank's senior management in their boardroom.

We were all co-signatories to the investment company overdraft. I had opened the meeting by emphasizing to the bank that everything I possessed was on the line and that I would leave no stone unturned in an effort to pay them in full. I had told them that not a painting would be removed from the walls of my house. Everything I owned would remain in place. All would gather dust, even though a number of my unsaved friends had urged me to strip the house and give things of value to friends to ‘keep’. My wife then removed her engagement ring and placed it on their board table, offering to let them have it. At the time they had declined in embarrassment, protesting it was ‘not necessary’.

It was now three years on. The entire proceeds of my mother's estate had recently been paid across to the Bank. It made no difference. Their attitude had hardened. In fact the nearer I drew to solvency, the keener they were to liquidate. I made a counter proposal. If the Bank was determined to dispose of the overdraft at a discount, would I be allowed to buy it if someone else offered to loan me the money? After all, at a purchase price of a million rand, there was definitely in excess of single cover. It was a bankable proposition. They said they'd give it consideration.

Within an hour they were back. I had 24 hours to raise the money if I wished to avert a sale.

They still declined to identify the potential buyer but, without being told who it was, they admitted having successfully persuaded the ‘friend’ who’d guaranteed my overdraft, to withdraw his backing. There was otherwise no justification for the bank to pull out. It was also obvious that, however he wished to describe his actions, my ‘friend’ and the ‘secret buyer’ were acting in concert and had joined forces.

At this stage I need to give background. Some months earlier a mining friend called Loucas Pouroulis had rung to enquire how I was coping and had offered his technical and financial help in running the mine. He controlled Consolidated Modderfontein Mines, similar in size to Wit Nigel but, at that stage, far more profitable. On one occasion, during the mine’s financial crisis, he had freely supplied us with steel balls for our mills when liquidity considerations made it impossible for us to pay.

The two of us went back a few years and both belonged to the ‘rebel’ mining fraternity – neither being tied to established ‘houses’. In my stock broking days I had been his sponsoring broker, having successfully raised him R20 million through the London market for the launch of his mine, Consolidated Modderfontein. In a belated response to his earlier offer of help, I contacted him and described my predicament. I emphasised that the management contract of Wit Nigel was not on the line and that, if he came to my rescue, it would simply be a personal deal between the two of us. It was necessary to make this clear because he had always had his eye on Wit Nigel’s management contract.

The next morning he phoned and offered the million rand the bank had demanded. What a friend! When I rang the bank’s legal department they were stunned - and noticeably cool. They said they’d have to ‘check’ with head office to confirm that their offer still stood. An hour later I had their answer - they had changed their minds. In order for the bank to be persuaded to cancel the sale of my overdraft, they now insisted I come up with the full amount of R1.8 million, or no deal. There is no honour amongst thieves. I rang the Bank’s managing director, and compared the rough treatment they were dealing out to me, with the generous, un-backed loans his bank had recently granted to a high profile member of the ANC. At the time these loans had received considerable publicity in the newspapers. I was given the brush-off. Twenty years earlier, he and I had spent a week together on an Afrikaans farm. We were not close friends but we certainly knew each other. He confirmed the bank’s decision. It was the full amount or nothing.

There was no way I could expect Pouroulis to accept such unfair terms. He backed off and I was beaten - just as the Bank intended. They then proceeded to dispose of my overdraft. My worst fears were confirmed. The ‘buyer’ was a company called ‘Datasys’, owned jointly by three of the most hostile of my Wit Nigel shareholders - those most opposed to tithing and the Christian Action Programme.

### **33. A DOUBLE VICTORY IN COURT**

The following morning I was faced with a deputation in my head office. It was two of the above gentlemen. They produced the loan agreement they had purchased from my bank and reminded me they now held both the title deeds to my house, and my share certificates in Wit Nigel. They also had in their possession signed transfer deeds enabling them to sell or reregister the shares into their company’s name. They demanded my immediate resignation as Executive Chairman of Wit Nigel and insisted I cede control of the board. Should I refuse, they threatened to sue me for the full amount of R1.8 million, before applying for my sequestration. I told them to leave my office and do what they had to do.

A day later Consolidated Share Registrars, Wit Nigel's share transfer company, phoned to inform me that my personal holding of Wit Nigel shares had been submitted for transfer - from my name into the name of 'Datsys'. It was the company which had purchased my overdraft. This would have enabled them to vote my own shares against me. The Transfer Secretaries informed me that, as Chairman of the company, I was entitled to instruct them to delay transfer for a limited period of time until satisfied as to the legality of the transaction.

I informed them the cession would be challenged and instructed them to place the transfer on hold. Datsys responded by applying for my sequestration and that of my entire family - brother, sister, wife, and the family company. They made an 'urgent application' for a 'summary judgement'. We responded by applying for an interdict against their move to transfer the shares. We were determined to prevent them voting my stake until there was a decision on the legitimacy of their purchase of my overdraft and threat to sequester me. Until that happened, they were being presumptuous. For their part they required rapid transfer of the shares into their company's name in order to vote me out of office.

I felt like David facing Goliath, but again God broke through in miraculous fashion. The Court rejected their application for summary judgement because the Datsys lawyer had forgotten to request a supporting affidavit from the bank. The court needed to know how the debts had arisen in the first place. Without this evidence they were not in a position to 'verify the ceded cause of action' - whatever that means! In effect they were unable to prove they had a case. Not for the first time our opponents accused their own lawyer of incompetence. We knew differently. The Lord had intervened.

Our enemies now faced a lengthy delay before the matter could go to court - a year or even two! Meantime we proceeded with our interdict. In a landmark case, subsequently written up in the Bureau for Mercantile Law, October 1988, the Judge in brief decided that:

***“The contract of a banker and a customer obliges the banker to guard information relating to his customer's business with the banker as confidential. This duty of secrecy means that the banker's claims against his customer are not cedable without the consent of the customer. The holder of a pledge cannot constitute someone else as the pledgee of the shares without the consent of the debtor.”***

In short, although Datsys had bought our family overdraft from the bank for a million rand, they were prevented from doing anything with it! The bank meanwhile refused to take it back. They no longer wished to be involved. The claims against us had disappeared into thin air. Datsys had physical possession of both the share certificates and the title deeds to my house, but were nevertheless unable to do anything with them. They could neither vote the shares nor sell them. Nor could they sell the house.

#### **34. SUPPING WITH THE DEVIL**

In section 30, headed 'Confrontation with the JSE', we mentioned the share swap Wit Nigel concluded with Joe Berardo of Johannesburg Mining and Finance. A week after the deal, and contrary to his promise of not interfering with our management, he made a public takeover bid for the entire company. It was done on the pretext that the JSE had unofficially requested it in view of his having acquired a 14% stake. There was absolutely no justification for placing such an interpretation on their rules. It was simply his excuse for breaking his word. Either he was lying or the JSE was misleading him. Our relationship was already off to a rocky start. When his offer failed to attract sufficient interest, he began secret negotiations with the same hostile group of shareholders who had been attempting to throw me out

because of their objections to the Christian Action Programme. All of this was done without my knowledge.

For months the same shareholders had been endeavouring to call a special meeting of shareholders to vote me out. I suggested they wait until the next annual general meeting. When they refused, we locked horns and battle was joined. On three or four occasions the process they followed for calling a meeting failed to comply with the requirements of the Company's Act. Each time they were forced to restart the process from scratch. First they used the wrong name for the company, confusing it with another. Then they named the wrong shareholders - they were not registered. Then they failed to come up with the minimum quantity of shares required to call a meeting. Their comedy of errors reached a peak when they successfully persuaded my largest American shareholder to switch sides. The problem came when he tried to vote. He misunderstood the motion before the meeting and voted the wrong way. He voted FOR me instead of against me and it was sufficient to swing the vote.

The two hostile shareholders who had bought my overdraft gained sufficient votes to be elected as directors, but I was re-elected to the Board and still retained control. The presence of these unsaved gentlemen totally destroyed our ability to operate as a Christian Board and it taught me a painful lesson. Christians need to be radical when it comes to forming alliances and taking partners. In my case it was too late. I should never have done the deal with Berardo. He never shared my vision. God's word in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, v 14 exposed my folly:

***“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?....Therefore come out from them and be separate.***

When God's word warns against being 'unequally yoked' we ignore the injunction at our peril. In retrospect I should never have entertained any sort of deal with Berardo. I did it for the money. I wanted to open more shafts. But, if I thought I had problems with existing shareholders, Berardo's presence made them worse. He was their natural ally in the spirit. Until I did the deal, God had miraculously protected me. Afterwards, having made my bed with the enemy, it was only a matter of time. Today I am convinced that, had I remained faithful to God's principles, I would never have lost control. In psalm 25 v 3 God makes a clear promise of his unwavering support:

***“No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame.”***

However hard, if we tackle our problems God's way, he is committed to taking us through.

For the benefit of my adult children - and for Christians generally who are involved in business - I urge the following. If God is in it, trust him to honour his word. Do not yoke with unbelievers unless it is outside your control – not in marriage, not in business. You ask for trouble. In business, apart from anything else, it would be most unusual if they allow you to tithe. They will not understand the concept of God as provider. When it comes to praying and asking God for wisdom, they will feel distinctly uncomfortable and will have no respect for spirit-led decision making - whether in management meetings or at Board level.

### **35. REDEEMED WITHOUT MONEY**

We return to the battlefield. Because the bank's cession of their claim against us had been

deemed illegal, Datasys were stymied. They weren't even able to ask for interest. An interest bill of R10,000 a month had simply evaporated. There was only one drawback - their PHYSICAL possession of both my Wit Nigel share certificates and the title deeds to my house, boxed me in - but at least the house was safe. That in itself was confirmation of a promise God had given six years earlier in the months following my crash. The thing I feared most was the loss of our house. My wife's response had been that we should GIVE God the house as in:

***“Lord, if you want the house, take it.”***

At the time I went ballistic:

***“If the Lord takes the house, all bets are off!”***

Six months later I was finally able to offer Him the house:

***“Lord, if you want to take the house, I submit to your will and I give it to you.”***

As I said that I again heard his audible voice:

***“Your house has become my house. It will become a place of healing for my people. You will call your house ‘GILEAD’.”***

Since receiving that promise he permitted us to live in an enormous house on three acres for eight years - totally without fear of ever losing it. On reading of my troubles in the press, numerous agents had tried to sell the house over our heads. On one occasion a bragging classmate at school told my youngest daughter, then less than 8 years old:

***“My daddy's going to buy your house and I'm going to have your room!”***

That particular family subsequently went insolvent. Four years had now gone by. We were still in the house but had always been aware of the Lord's condition, our constant preparedness to make it available to Christians in need of a roof and a place of healing. Over the years many in ministry had spent time in our house, enjoying what it had to offer. Our willingness to share it was our guarantee of being able to keep it.

Datasys was the last in a long line of those who had tried unsuccessfully to take it away. Despite our double victory against them in the courts, it did not prevent my being ousted as Chairman of Wit Nigel in a burst of controversial headlines. Four years later I was still without a job. Everyone was scared to hire me. Despite being vindicated by the courts in my battles with the JSE, the victories came too late to win back wavering shareholders, tempted by the secret and illegal offers made by Joe Berado, as described in Section 33. Labelled 'controversial' by the press, my reputation had suffered substantial damage, which - with the exception of the JSE - would only heal with the passage of time. My finances were in tatters. But for the fact that my wife was running a very successful dressmaking business from our triple garage, the family would have been in dire straits. One Saturday morning a friend from church gave us a powerful prophetic word:

***“God says he's going to deliver you NOW, NOW, NOW!”***

The following Monday morning, whilst my wife was out, an estate agent walked up the drive unannounced. She brought in tow the senior executive of Anderson Consulting. After a brief

look he offered to buy our house for in excess of R1.1m. I told him he faced a legal quagmire. He said he'd wait. I phoned the main shareholder of Datasys, informed him of the offer, made it clear that I had debts of R250,000 and needed cash to buy a second hand car and enough working capital to leave for Cape Town and start again. It was 4 years since they had ousted me from Wit Nigel. With interest compounding at 25% per annum, the original claim of R1.8 million would have grown to R4.3 million. He settled for R750,000, with a further 'debt of honour' commitment on my behalf, to pay a balance of R250,000, should the 'illegal' Wit Nigel takeover result in a financial restitution to shareholders.

So far it has not. The Financial Services Board fobbed us off. After retiring, their ex-Chief Executive one day made a surprise appearance in my ex-partner's office. He asked how our investigation was going. He then proceeded to tell us that in his opinion we had a very strong case against the JSE. Yet while in office he'd done his best to sabotage all our efforts to obtain a cash offer for minority shareholders of Wit Nigel. Berardo had paid Wit Nigel 'insiders' up to R4,80 per share. Some received cash. The takeover code at the time specified that all shareholders were entitled to receive the highest price paid in cash. The JSE President at the time refused to listen. He was Berardo's drinking buddy. Minority shareholders eventually received a share swap offer from Cons Modder, but only after their shares had collapsed. The President phoned to tell me but then smirked and said: "You finally got your offer but it is now only of historic value." May God bless him!

We return to Datasys. All three shareholders subsequently suffered major financial losses. One of them, a member of Lloyds, was almost sequestered. The lawyer who acted for the three of them, actually WAS sequestered. The major shareholder himself was later rumoured to have lost millions in a property deal that went sour. Years later the third shareholder became my friend but has almost lost everything. He finally prayed a prayer of commitment to Christ but his wife couldn't face the trauma of telling her friends. We are still good friends. What you sow is what you reap. In my case the Lord had honoured his promise given in the mountains, in Isaiah chapter 52, v 10:

***"You were sold for nothing, and without money you will be redeemed."***

With the sale of our house, a potential claim of R4,3 million had been settled for R750,000. We had been miraculously redeemed - and without money.

### **36. THREE BLACK CHILDREN**

Shortly after taking over Wit Nigel, we had converted part of the mine security operation, from patrolling in vehicles to riding on horseback. It was cheaper and more efficient. On a property comprising 10,000 acres of farmland and 50,000 acres of mineral rights, much of it was impassable – even in a four wheel drive. One could see far further from the saddle of a horse and get to places which were otherwise inaccessible.

At weekends I would drop in at the horse section with my children – teaching them to ride. During the course of these visits my youngest daughter, then nine years old, befriended a black family. Their father was in charge of the "Lamp Room". In exchange for the privilege of being allowed to keep his family on the property - most of our workers at the time were migrant labourers who lived in the hostel - he agreed to keep an eye on the horse section. My daughter became very fond of his two-year-old baby son. She initially mistook the child for a girl and greeted her: "Hello little girl girl!".

The mother intervened: **"No, it's not a little girl girl, it's a little boy boy!"**

‘Boy Boy’ became his name.

Two years later she had a second child, a little girl, and was pregnant with a third, when her husband was stabbed by a drunken woman trespassing into the horse section over a weekend. “Boy Boy’s” father was taken to hospital. He lapsed into a coma. Two weeks later he was dead. My daughter was heart broken. Being a “marginal mine” on State Aid, Wit Nigel had never been able to afford life insurance for its employees. Retrospectively we introduced a free one-year salary scheme and found a job for his widow. Three months later came the takeover battle. I was ousted. Within weeks, the insurance scheme was cancelled. “Boy Boy’s” mother was laid off and left jobless.

She now had three children, the youngest six months old. That night my daughter received a desperate cry for help. Our maid at the time was about to leave us to take a job in industry. My daughter pleaded with us to adopt the children. This required our family to be in agreement. More important, we needed to know God’s will. Each was asked to pray and wait on God for a week. At the end our decision was unanimous, and it changed our lives forever. We would take them into our house. We will never forget going to the mine to collect them – despite the mine no longer being under my control. They had nothing. The children were hungry and running naked. They were sick, their noses were dribbling, they were infested with head lice and covered in sores. At first we could hardly bring ourselves to touch them. It was as much of a culture shock to us having them in the house as it was to them moving from a hut to a relatively palatial house. What made it doubly difficult was that their mother only stayed a few months before abandoning them. We were then all they had. They became part of our family. We sent them to the Christian school attached to our church in Bryanston. They called us “Mum” and “Dad”. That was in 1987, long before the demise of “Apartheid”.

Three years later my wife had a clear word from the Lord to close her business and send our black children back to their granny in the Transkei. This was to prevent them losing their cultural identity. One of my wife’s black employees at the time subsequently supported our decision by saying: “Otherwise you will turn them into little coconuts – black on the outside, white on the inside.” The parting was very painful. A month later, as described above, our house was sold. Prior to making the decision, my wife was in agony at the thought of letting the house go. She found herself clenching her hands in determination to hold on. She had poured her life into it, particularly the garden, which she loved. Then the Lord gave her a promise:

***“Open your hands and let it go for I’m well able to restore far more to you.”***

In 1991 we moved to Cape Town. The house we left behind was a 500 square metre triple storey - on three acres - with a swimming pool, tennis court and six garages. A friend offered us a rented cottage in Kenilworth, Cape Town for R500 a month. It was near the station and definitely ‘on the wrong side of the railway line’. The inside comprised a miniscule 70 square metres of space. The entire backyard barely allowed room for a table and chairs under a lone mulberry tree, and an outside shower for swimmers. There wasn’t room to swing a cat. It was located on a busy intersection, which came alive at night to the screeching of tyres and the occasional grinding of metal as cars crashed into someone’s concrete wall. One half expected them to come straight into our bedroom, which was almost on the road. There was no way we could have accommodated our own three children – let alone our three adopted black children. The Lord had known what he was doing when he had told my wife to send them home to granny.

Ever since that first traumatic move, our black children have visited us twice a year, a month in July and six weeks at Christmas. They initially went to prep school at a convent outside Umtata, later on to Christian senior school. We pay for their education and send a food allowance. There have been times - even recently - when meeting the cost took all we had left but God has always replenished the jar. Twice a year they make the dramatic shift from a shack in the township at Libode to a comfortable house in Cape Town.

They were as shocked as we had been when they first saw our cottage in Kenilworth. I had to build my youngest daughter a massive triple bunk bed, suspended above the floor of her room and close to the ceiling, in order to accommodate her overnight friends and our three little black children when they came to visit in the holidays. Although a very humbling experience to start with, we grew to love our little cottage and had some wonderful times there. When friends from Johannesburg came to visit, they could scarcely believe the transformation of our circumstances. Yet, within two years, the Lord enabled me to develop a business in the bond market, which, for a brief period, put a million rand in my bank account!

We eventually moved, first to an enchanting house on a double plot in Newlands, built in a square round a pool, then to a 700 metre mansion in Bishopscourt, as a 'farewell present' to our children who briefly all came home. Finally we moved to an old house in Llandudno with a most amazing view overlooking the beach. All in turn were rented and each time we left behind an owner who had been blessed by our presence - their house had been improved.

Today we see the wisdom of God's decision to restore our black children to their Xhosa family. They now have the privilege of being able to relate to both environments. They are absolutely sure of our love for them and remain a vital part of our family. We are still their 'Mum and Dad'. Through getting to know and love them, our own attitudes towards other races and cultures have dramatically altered. They have taught us so much.

### **37. "GET ALL THE ALCOHOL OUT YOUR HOUSE"**

In late December 2002 my eldest daughter Chloe got married. While she was away on honeymoon, I had two unusual experiences which culminated in my radically giving up alcohol and being launched headlong into a ministry of healing.

Early one morning I was driving up Constantia Nek out of Hout Bay, dragging a trailer. As I rounded a sharp bend I came upon a slowly moving queue of cars. There had been an accident. As I drew level, I saw two motorcycles, one lying on its side. There was a rider prostrate on the ground, his face covered in blood. Two friends were sitting on the other bike, helmets in hand, and looking sheepish. They had clearly been racing each other down the hill, passing cars, when the one in the lead ran headlong into an oncoming truck.

As I drew alongside I felt the Lord say to me: "I want you to stop and pray for him." It was so unexpected I had driven past before I had time to react. There was nowhere to park - especially with a trailer hitched behind. The sound of an approaching ambulance let me off the hook. They'll be alright. They don't need me.

A week later my daughter Chloe returned from honeymoon. Because the marriage and reception took place on a wine farm, the black church she and her husband previously attended in Khyalitsha, felt excluded from the celebrations. They offered to hold a second ceremony. They led her into church from the street, accompanied by an old brass band. After the service, tables were brought in to serve lunch to the wedding party. The centre of the floor cleared as guests retired to the sides of the hall. At that point an elderly black lady was seen

hobbling across the floor on crutches, supported by a young teenager. As she reached midway, I heard the Lord's voice a second time: "I want you to get up and pray for her." Again I hesitated. As she disappeared into the crowd, I heard the Lord issue a strong warning:

"This is twice I've asked you to pray for people. I am going to give you one more chance. If you don't listen this time, you will never receive the healing gift I want to give you." That was Sunday.

The following Wednesday morning, at a ROTOP meeting, I told the men of my disobedience and undertook to step out in faith on any subsequent opportunity. I encouraged them to do the same. I asked if there was anyone present over 87-years old. No one responded. I reminded them of how the famous British evangelist and healer Smith-Wigglesworth had literally fallen asleep and died while preaching in church at the age of 87. I urged them to ignore the normal retirement age of 60 to 65. That instead, they were to minister with all the strength they have for as long as the Lord gives them years.

I left the meeting to return home. My wife and I were due to drive out for a braai at Yserfontein up the West Coast, at a beach cottage owned by my daughter's parents in law. It was to be a farewell lunch before she and her new husband flew off to start their married life in Chicago. As I drove back down into Hout Bay to collect my wife, I approached an animal rescue home on the right. There was a crash scene up ahead. Yet another motorcyclist was lying on the ground. A woman was covering him with a blanket. There was a van parked facing on the right, with a big dent in its right hand door. It appeared the bike had hit the van as the latter braked to turn across the road.

This time I didn't wait. I said: "Lord what must I do?" I heard him answer: "I want you to stop, turn round, go back and pray for him." I obeyed immediately. As I approached the woman I asked her: "Do you know this young man?"

She said: "No, the police asked me to fetch a blanket because the ambulance is late and the young man is suffering from shock. He's paralysed and they think he's broken his back."

I asked his name and she said: "It's Sean."

I approached him and said: "Sean, I'm a Christian. Can I pray for you?" He said: "Yes." I said: "Do you know Jesus?" He again said: "Yes". I then prayed as follows:

**"Lord, I pray that you would totally heal this young man in the next three days and that never again would he drive around like an idiot. I pray that you would give him a fresh sense of purpose for his life."**

I asked if I could come and visit him in hospital and left my cell number with the lady standing next to him. I drove away, picked up my wife in Llandudno, and set off up the West Coast for Yserfontein. Late that afternoon, with lunch over and a few glasses of wine under my belt, I retired for a snooze. An hour later the phone went and a woman's voice enquired: "Is that Mr George?" I replied: "Yes it is. Who's speaking?" She replied: "It's Cheryl from the accident." I asked: "What's your surname?" She said: "It's Cheryl Love." "Lucky you." I replied. "No" she said: "Lucky the young man you prayed for. He's had a miracle. After two hours in the intensive care unit at Constantiaberg Hospital, his paralysis had gone and they took a set of x-rays. When nothing appeared broken, they couldn't believe it and sent him back for a second set. When those were clear they eventually released him. He's had a miracle and it's because you prayed for him." I was overwhelmed. After putting the phone

down I said: “Lord, I thank you and praise you. What must I do?” I heard him answer, clear as a bell:

**“Get all the alcohol out of your house, because it wastes your time and breaks your discernment.”**

At this stage I need to recount an earlier event. That morning at the ROTOP breakfast one of the men had felt the Lord tell him that, when it came to spending large sums of money, as good stewards we ought always to ask his permission before proceeding. Two years previously – due to a severe cash shortage - I had stopped my life insurance payments. The company continued to deduct premiums from the retained earnings in the policy. Two years later the savings pool was all but used up. I attempted to reinstate the monthly payments at their old rate but the company informed me they required an upfront payment of R13,000 ‘to take care of the agent’. I had left the matter in abeyance.

Now I thought: “Well Lord, while I’ve got you on the line, there’s one more thing I’d like to ask, what ought I to do about my life insurance premiums?” The reply stunned me. “You don’t need life insurance. You’re going to live to 87 - the same age as Wigglesworth.” I said: “Lord, what about my wife” I distinctly heard: “Your wife has never wanted to be left behind. She will die a month before you.”

When I told my wife the news about my drinking, she was ecstatic. We cleaned out the house and I haven’t touched a drop since – that was more than 18 months ago. The most remarkable aspect was that the desire to drink left me instantaneously, and completely. Yet I had always loved a glass of wine. My wife’s reaction to the proposed cancellation of my life insurance was initially far less enthusiastic. It threatened her security. But a week later – and after praying about it - she realized God had spoken and we went ahead as one.

Sometime later the Lord instructed me to carry a small bottle of anointing oil, wherever I go. Since then I have used every opportunity to pray for those in need. So far I know of one man who has been healed of cancer.

### **38. A FAMILY PUSHES THROUGH**

As a family we have learned what it’s like to be on both sides of the fence – coping with both the good times and the bad. Being forced to do without has taught us to have compassion on those in need. Each member of the family has had their priorities in life radically challenged. All are today committed Christians. Prayer plays a vital role in their daily lives.

My youngest daughter Susannah worked for an organization which counsels young girls to cope with unwanted pregnancies. She then became a qualified ‘AIDS trainer’. At one stage, after learning Arabic, she did youth development work for the Coptic Church in Egypt. Today she is involved in spearheading ‘adolescent peer education strategy’ for the Western Cape Administration and is in the process of obtaining her Masters Degree in Management of HIV/AIDS. She has regularly visited schools and talked to hundreds of teenagers giving them hope for the future. She is currently preparing a ‘manual’ for distribution to schools.

My eldest daughter Chloe spent two years living with street children, in the same house and on church property, acting as their surrogate mother. At the time she was working as assistant editor of a well-known magazine. Today she has a BA, half a law degree, a Masters degree in TV journalism from Columbia University in New York, an MBA from UCT and is married to a South African accountant working in Chicago for an international accounting firm. All her

degrees were financed by her father in faith, from day to day and month to month. There were times in New York when she didn't know where her next meal was coming from. She learned to trust God totally. Prior to leaving South Africa she launched a value-based magazine targeting and training teenagers. The training side of her project has since been taken over by her sister. She and her husband attend a local church in Chicago and have recently launched an 'Alpha Course' to assist the pastor to encourage the presence of the Holy Spirit in greater measure in his church.

My son Quinton has followed in the stock broking footsteps of his Father. Today he runs his own asset management company. He has helped train the youth in a black church he attended for a year or so in Khyalitsha. He shares my vision for one day returning to the mine. For months on end, even when times have been tough, he has blessed his family. All of us have learned to be givers - both of our time and our money.

For a long time my wife Alison taught 80 small children, once a week, in a black crèche in one of the townships. My own time - outside of business - has been partially taken up running a Christian men's breakfast group called 'ROTOP'. The name stands for 'Round Tables of Prayer'. Assisted by a leadership team of 12, we meet weekly in Cape Town - currently at the Constantia Bowling Club. It's been going for more than 12 years and normally attracts between 70 and 100 men - every week. They are drawn from various age groups - largely the over fifties - and normally represent over 30 different churches.

The entire family is working towards a Christian vision for a united South Africa. Our adopted children have helped us bridge the cultural gap between the races and God's word in this regard is clearly expressed in Galatians, chapter 3 verses 26-28:

***“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ.”***

### **39. THE FUTURE**

The Lord long ago gave me a vision of returning to Wit Nigel and a command 'to leave no stone unturned in an effort to secure an option to repurchase the mine'. It was when running the mine back in the mid eighties that I took my first steps to bring Christ into the market place. Since receiving the promise that I would get it back, I have had to endure watching the owners make three or four separate attempts to dispose of it to others. Each attempt came to nothing. I continued to claim God's promise that he was reserving it for me. Initially my representations were fruitless. Then, back in 2001, with gold prices close to their lowest levels in 20 years, I took a group of intercessors to the mine to pray and claim it back. Shortly thereafter, the controlling shareholders unilaterally contacted me, enquiring as to whether I still wanted the mine back. I was initially amazed at the effectiveness of my prayers, and the mine owner's change of attitude. I asked for a twelve-month option to purchase the property. They readily granted me a free option. Considering my history of conflict with the shareholders who had evicted me, the unsolicited offer was a miracle. At the time, the price of gold was below \$300.

The option to purchase has since been renewed and extended several times in exchange for increasingly higher payments. It was finally due to expire at the end of May 2005. Out of the blue, the company offered to exchange their rights for a minority stake in my company. They are leaving it to me to raise the necessary finance and implement my vision for the mine.

In order to undertake the project, I conservatively need funding to the tune of \$100 million. I have devised an ‘option strategy’ to generate the necessary amount. The mine has a resource base of 3m ounces of gold. This will be ‘matched’ with an option on 1,000,000 ounces of the metal at a ‘strike price’ of \$500. An investor prepared to pay for the cost of such an option plus a further \$6million for exploratory drilling (a government requirement), will earn a 40% stake in the mine. I have selected an option, which will run until July 2006. Based on gold’s current price of \$435, the option strategy will cost approximately \$8m. The total investment would therefore be \$14 million. I am confident gold is on brink of a major long-term bull market. By end-May 2006, I expect the price to have risen above \$600. At \$650, gross profit on 1,000,000 ounces, at a cost of \$500 each, would generate \$150m –more than enough to re-open the mine. In due course, the operation would be worth many times the \$150m expended. At a substantially higher gold price, the 3m ounce resource base would be worth considerably more, as would the shafts and old workings. Each would have a replacement value in excess of \$100m. At a gold price of \$600 the three together would be worth \$300m, being cash of \$100m, shafts \$100m, and gold in the ground, \$100m.

I am confident the Lord will bring the right partner to the table and look forward to completion of a successful project. Thereafter I believe the Lord will so bless the mine as to allow me to bring a public demonstration of his financial principles in the area of tithing – on this occasion without the spiritual obstructions, which plagued me on my first attempt. The words of Malachi chapter 3, verse 18, encourage us to believe God will honour his promise to those who obey him.

*“You will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.”*

#### **40. A CALL TO THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW HIM**

During my twenty three-year walk through the wilderness, God has given me many miracles in the areas of finance, law and healing. The above are just a few. His process of testing and refining, never stops - ever on, ever up as our knowledge of God’s faithfulness improves. In the words of a popular Irish proverb: “Does the road wind upward all the way? Yes, to the very top.”

If you have read my story, and identify with the circumstances described, and if you feel the Lord Jesus Christ calling you too as he once called me, then take the plunge. ‘Call on him while he may be found.’ Place your life in his hands and your burdens at his feet. He never let me down. He will not let you down. If I can be of help, please phone. I would love to pray with you. My telephone numbers are as follows: [END]

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