

# The Kingdom Storybook

Stories from the Heart



Short Stories of  
Life, Love and Poetry  
Somewhere in the

**KINGDOM of HEAVEN**



The Narrow Road

By: Steven G. Kennard





# The Narrow Road



A Journey to Forgiveness

Rev. Steven G. Kennard

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The Kingdom Storybook Series

The Narrow Road

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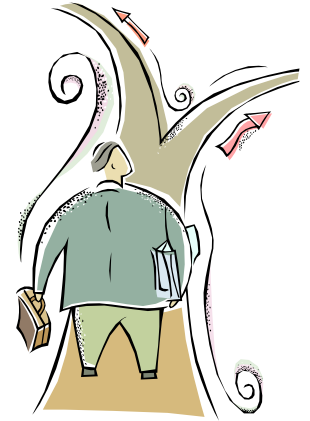
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# The Narrow Road

Matthew 7:13-14 (NASB), <sup>13</sup>“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. <sup>14</sup>For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.



he road of life is different and unique for every individual and yes it does come with its own kind of personal Tribulation. There is a road that is special to all men, but that road is one you have to choose. It is the hardest of roads a person can go down, but it brings its own reward.

The roads we walk in life are personal and they are eternal because the end result is that you will have drawn closer to Jesus. You will have become more like Him.

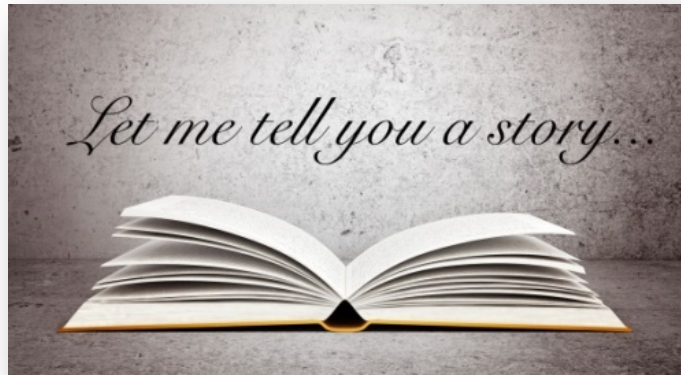
Of all the roads a man, or a woman can choose there is always an easy way which is called the “**Wide Road.**” You really don’t have to do anything to be on this road; you just live your life your way and see where it takes you. This is the road most people take, but it has its issues and it almost always leads to ruin.

There is another type of road a person can choose and believe me you do have to choose this road; it has been called the “**Narrow Road.**” No one goes down this road by mistake because it’s not an easy journey to be on. The person who travels this road will learn to deal with “self,” with the real issues of their life which are the things that bind them, but it always ends in a better version of themselves. The end result is that in the journey they will have drawn closer to Jesus and that always equals rewards. Every narrow road is different for the individual who walks it. Here is one story.



ne Sunday morning as I laid in bed thinking I should be getting up, I suddenly found myself thinking and imagining the strangest fantasy anyone could imagine, or at least I think it was just a fantasy, I became so wrapped up in the vision I saw before me that getting out of bed had vanished from my thoughts. As it has been said, pictures are worth a thousand words. For those who know me, you will see snippets of my life in the story. I

will leave the telling of the story to the great story teller, through whom many things have been revealed.



## Part 1



### THE GARDEN



As it is the way of the story teller, I heard of a dream that had come to a young man who I will call John. It was the kind of dream you have with your eyes wide open. It was early in the morning one day as John lay in his bed thinking he should be getting up when he suddenly saw in his mind's eye a garden and in that garden there was a girl whose name we shall call Ann, for she was fitting of such a grand name. John had never met Ann, but somehow in his spirit he felt like he knew her, because he felt comfortable being around her. Personally though I believe Ann was an angel who comes into a life for a season and then is gone again. I should have saved that for the end. Now I'm getting ahead of myself.

The garden was new to both of them having never been there before. As John looked around in every direction as far as he could see there was beauty beyond what he had ever imagined. It was magnificent in every detail and beyond his ability to describe it.

Ann was very happy and delighted with all the beautiful things that were all around her also. She immediately ran over and picked a flower and put it in her hair. As soon as she picked the flower another one grew back in its place, so that there was never a bare stem in the entire garden. There was a variety of fruit trees mixed in with the flowers, all pleasing to the sight. John reached up and picked the fruit of one of the trees and began to eat it and no sooner had he picked the fruit than another one had already grown back.

In the center of the garden was a well that ran very deep, so John decided to help himself to the water of the well. He pulled on the rope that ran down into the well and then pulled it back up. The bucket had just enough water for the two of them. They took turns drinking the water and were surprised at how good it tasted. They never had water like this before, as they were quick to have a few more drinks from the bucket.

As John and Ann finished drinking the water, they leaned back and looked around at this wonderful garden. They suddenly heard a voice, “Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again, drink of the water that I give and never thirst again.”

“What was that?” said John. “Did you hear that voice?”

Ann answered back, “Yes I did, but it was meant for you.”

“And why do you say that?”

“Let me tell you something John, I can’t tell you anything about what will happen next. I can tell you that I won’t be going with you. You have a calling on your life and you must walk this road yourself. To discover what is beyond this place is to discover so much of who you are.”

“Out beyond the last gate is your road to travel and you will learn much. I cannot say any more, just remember what you were told, to drink of the water along the way, and it will sustain you. I will meet you again where the road ends.”

Ann reached over and gave John a big hug and then turned and walked off through the garden and then she was gone. After Ann left, John noticed the ground he was standing on starting to fade away and the beginning of a path appeared. His curiosity was to follow the path and see where it would take him.





## THE ROAD

It didn't take long and soon he came to a gate that seemed to be the dividing line between where the garden path ended and a road began. Feeling the need to follow this road, John took a deep breath and opened the gate and proceeded out of the garden. The gate closed and he heard it lock behind him. Being curious, he reached back and tried to open the gate, and found it would not open. Now he had no other choice but to follow the road.

This road seemed by all appearances to be an easy one to travel with very pleasant surroundings. There were flowering vines that came out of the garden and out onto the path and wrapped themselves around the small fence that lined the road. There were meadows of grass on each side, but also areas that were dirt and looked like they had been plowed and made ready for planting. Large shade trees overhung the road giving shade areas to stop and rest. The road was smooth with very few rocks and those that could be found were too small to worry about. The road and everything around it was very beautiful and a pleasure to be walking on. If the road had been traveled before, then there were very few people that had traveled it.

Not far outside the garden gate was a bag full of seeds that looked like wheat sitting next to a post by the edge of the road. John wondered what kind of seeds they were and if he should do something with them? They are here for some reason he thought, but then maybe he should just keep going and enjoy his walk down the road. His first thought was that someone else more qualified should plant these seeds because he had never planted a seed before. Anyway, he didn't even know what to do with seeds and he believed it would take a lot of time and a lot of effort.



Suddenly in his head he heard that familiar voice again, "Sow the seeds John, for this is my will for you"

With the words spoken also came the understanding of what he must do and a wave of conviction came in like a flood. John was suddenly ashamed for almost passing up what he knew was the right thing to do. So John went back and picked up the bag of seeds and walked over to a part of the road where the dirt was and began to throw handfuls of seed into the air. Just as he did, a gust of wind came and took the seeds and caused it to go much higher and further than he could have thrown them. The seeds blew all around and as far down the road as he could see.





There were seeds of wheat flying everywhere in the air, much more than John had thrown. As John watched the seed being blown down the road he realized that as the wind blew the seed it also caused it to multiply. What was sown in faith and obedience, the Spirit was causing to increase. John felt that his job was done so now he was free to continue down the road with the bag of seeds over his shoulder for safe keeping.

After a while John came to various places where the seed had finally come to rest. This place was beautiful with many beautiful trees and a stream of water running alongside it. John wasn't thirsty right then so he decided to pass on the water. The sight of the water reminded him of what Ann had said, "The water will sustain you," but John decided to pass on the water this time.

After looking at the condition of the seed that he had sown, he could see that some of it had already taken root. In some cases a plant had started to grow. John thought this was a good thing and so he continued his journey down the road feeling that he had done a good job.

## THE SEEDS



After sometime passed, John noticed that the birds had come and landed in the fields and began to eat the seeds that he had thrown out. As he watched the birds eating the seeds John remembered what he was told, "Sow the seeds." It wasn't his fault the birds had come and anyway there wasn't much he could do about that. The birds would just come back or go somewhere else and eat those seeds. There was a nice waterfall there and the purest water that John had ever seen. "I bet the animals and the birds will love the water but right now I'm not thirsty."



So believing that everything would work out in the long run,



John turned back onto the road and as he did he felt a slight rumble under his feet, but ignored it and went back to the road. When he got back to the road he saw that it had changed. Its color dulled as it lost its appeal. Then the wind began to blow and it blew away a layer of the surface dirt revealing sharp stones. John stood there with great surprise watching as the weeds begin to sprout up in between the stones. The stones and the weeds made the road unpleasant, but it didn't prevent John from pressing on.



As John walked a bit further he saw more places where the seeds had blown. These seeds had landed on the ground without much dirt to grow in, but at least they had started to grow. This place had its own small pond that was full of water, but very little of the seed fell close enough to the water to do the seed any

good. These plants didn't last very long so they withered and died because of the shallowness of the soil and the lack of water. Again John thought to himself, "What a shame that there is no one here to water the seeds," he couldn't do anything about it. Again he heard a small voice in his head, but this one sounded different to him. "It's not your fault there isn't enough ground for the seeds to grow. It's not your fault there is no one here to water the seeds. You were only told to sow the seeds and so you have."

John turned back onto the road and as he walked further he saw the road become even rougher. The smaller rocks rose up higher and became additional obstacles for him to navigate around. As he focused on the larger and sharper rocks, several potholes began to appear in places along the road. Some were just small little dips but others were very large and could easily swallow you.

John looked back at the road that he had come down and then the road that was ahead of him, all the time thinking to himself "What a pleasure this was in the beginning, but now it had become hard and not so enjoyable." The road of his life was becoming marked with many obstacles and potholes. John was given a job to sow his seeds and so he was determined to continue on.

## Part 2



### CLARENCE

**I**t seemed like John had been on the road for a long time sowing his seed and getting tired. He especially didn't like what had happened to the beautiful road. He thought the road he was walking on was going to be a good one the entire way to wherever it was taking him. Now it's filled with many obstacles and for reasons he couldn't understand.

After some time John came upon an elderly man sitting on a bench under one of the large shade trees. As he came closer to the old man, the man looked up and motioned for John to join him and rest from his journey.

"Hello John, I am glad to meet you. My name is Clarence and I have a lot to share with you, but first tell me where are you headed on this road?"

John was surprised, "How did you know my name?"

"That is not important right now," said Clarence

"Well as to your question, I'm not sure where I'm going. I started this journey from the garden not knowing where it led. I found a bag of seeds and I heard from the Lord telling me to sow the seeds, so I tossed them into the air and the wind blew them all around and down the road beyond where I could see."

### THE SOWERS

**C**larence was deeply focused on what John was saying, nodding his head in agreement for he understood the things that John was sharing. He thought for a few more minutes about all that he had heard then looked over at John saying, "So you are called to be a sower then? All sowers are Guardians. Do you know what a Guardian is John?"

John thought for a minute, "Well I'm not sure, it could mean so many things. I guess someone who guards things?"

"Let me explain John and maybe then you will understand better, it's important. In our case, because you and I are sowers, we sow the word of God and we do that by speaking the words to people, sharing the Gospel message that God has given us. Then to be a Guardian means we are the ones who have to guard the

words we speak because words are powerful. They have the power to change lives and sway people's opinions. They can also tear down and do much hurt. Remember you are responsible for every word that comes out of your mouth, so guard them well. Does that help?

"That was good, thank you for sharing that," said John.

"John, I sowed seeds for many years doing what I could with what God has given me a talent to do. Many of these trees and all that is green as far as you can see are from the seeds I sowed, but my time is past now. I sowed the truth I knew for the time in which I lived and I have traveled my road and it ends right here on this bench. The crazy thing about it all is that I knew you would be coming. I don't know how I knew it, but I did. I also believe that you are my replacement starting right here on this bench, right now."

John was surprised to say the least, "You think I'm your replacement? That is wrong; no one could ever replace you. I don't have it in me to do that, nor do I have the knowledge you have."

Clarence thought a moment about what John said. "John can you wait a few minutes before you turn away from God's calling on your life?"

"What do you mean, I'm not turning away from God's calling, and I'm sowing the seeds aren't I?"

Clarence grew a big smile on his face, "I can see the Lord's hand in this and now I understand why we are here."

"You mean ... just like that you understand? Understand what?"

"Yes John ... just like that. God's timing is an amazing thing. For a moment, the Lord gave me the understanding for this time, to see a picture of you and another servant of the Lord named Moses. Oh, he was a great man of God ... yes, but he was not perfect. Did you know that John? Moses had some issues and it caused him to do what you just did, he doubted God."

"Several times Moses asked God to send someone else, or use someone else, because he could not speak well and so he didn't want to be the one speaking for God. He had confidence in God, but not in himself. His lack of faith was showing, just like yours is. You doubt that God will use you; you compare yourself to others and then let defeat come in and stop you. That is not of God."

"The Lord has something He wants you to understand. If God has called you to do such things for Him then He will equip you and teach your mouth what to say and you will have His wisdom and you will bring honor and glory to the Lord. Let go John and give your mouth and your words to God."

John did not know what to say, and for the moment was speechless. Many things were running through his mind. “There is something else John, I believe God has given you my mantle and you will build on what I have done. Those who teach build on the knowledge of those who came before them.

## CHOICES



he more Clarence shared with John, the more questions John had. “Clarence I have a question of my own to ask and before I forget too.”

“Sure John, go ahead. Like I said, I’m not getting off this bench, my road ends here.”

John didn’t know what to think about that, but here was his chance to ask a question. “Clarence, why is the road changing so much? What seemed like a peaceful road in the beginning has now become almost dangerous to be on.”

Clarence looked John straight in the eyes and said to him, “It is all about the decisions you have made along the way as you sowed your seed. Where your decisions were self-serving, then the road reflected the selfishness of your decisions. Choices that reflect the spirit of **omission** show how little you have learned and of what you believe. Choices that show **Faith** please God. John it takes faith to even call on His name. Choices that give people **Hope** for today and tomorrow and for the Kingdom to come shows the hope that reigns in you. Finally, choices that show people **Love** prove that you understand the greatest of all mysteries, that you know the heart of God, for He is Love. Sow faith, hope and love for these three are what make the road a joy to be on and the road will reflect that.”


“To the lives you have touched, let it be said that you gave unselfishly and that you lived the love that you found. Let it be said of you that you walked in a lifestyle and understanding of the true Grace of God. Do these things Guardian and you will finish well in the Kingdom.”

John thought about that for a few seconds as the understanding of it began to awaken inside of him. He never stopped to realize that the small decisions he was making would ultimately make his journey harder. He is the one who has made his own journey difficult.

Clarence continued, “It is a wise man that sees his own mistakes, and an even wiser man who will turn from them. You serve a God of great love and mercy that lasts forever and ever. Many have made unwise decisions and never

realized it. Their eyes have been blinded, but it is a blessing to have your eyes opened while you have time to change.”

### THE THREE WARNINGS

 larence was silent for a moment, then he told John, “My time is about up now and I must go. I want to leave you with these final warnings. **First** is about **sowing your own seed**. Many will come and though they mean well they will try to lead you down their path to sow their seed. Stay true to what you have been called to do for in it you will shine the brightest for the Kingdom. There you shall reap what does not fade away and cannot be taken from you.”

“**Second**, is that even now your seed bears its fruit and the road has become well-traveled. Many have grown from your seed and they too are now sowing as you have, but Satan has deceived many. There are those who error from the truth. They used **your seed for their own good**. They **took credit for things they did not do** and for things they did not sow and in the process tore down what good had been done. They have become blind guides, leading the blind and they all have fallen into the ditches that you will find along the road.”

“**Third**, soon you will have to make a **decision which path you will go**. To go as many do and just live life on your own terms, is to follow the broader road, it is well traveled. They have put up signs that light up and flash to get your attention. The signs are deceiving and meant to lure you down their wrong road. If you are not careful they will lead you to destruction as many have already gone.”

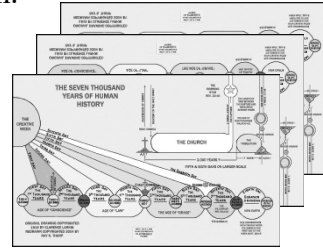
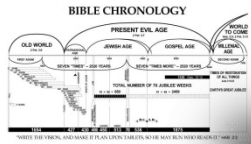
“For those who truly seek God, they will turn onto the narrow road. Be warned, you will be tested there. You will go through a time of self-examination, you will battle through the thicket of the things you have become by allowing hurtful and condescending ways into your life. For everyone it is a type of personal tribulation and it comes in different ways and various degrees. Do not be afraid of the testing, for He who is in you, is greater than he who comes to tempt you. Have no fear; remember you are a Guardian in the kingdom for which you serve.”

## A TIME TO STUDY



As John got up to thank Clarence for taking the time to talk with him, to his amazement Clarence began to vanish before his eyes until John could no longer see him. “He has gone home,” John thought, “his journey here has ended right here where he said it would.”

After Clarence was gone John noticed there was a large pile of books and all types of study material behind the bench where they had been sitting. “I don’t remember seeing that here before I sat down,” thought John.



This study material was the very thing that could give John more seed to sow and more truth to understand. John wanted to take it all with him, but it was impossible because it was too much to carry. He paused for a minute and sat back down on the bench and began to look through the books and charts taking his fill of Clarence’s work



While John was reading the books and going over the study material Clarence left behind, he suddenly remembered a dream God had given him. Now here he was doing exactly what the dream had showed him. There was an old man in the dream behind a mountain of books. The old man was Clarence. “This is what I’m called to do,” declared John. Finally his life felt right to him. With even more eagerness of heart John dove back into reading the books and memorizing the charts. As exciting as it all was, John lost track of the time and what seemed like a short time had actually been years.

With a new commitment in his spirit and a new truth to share, John headed back down the road. This wasn’t the same road he had started on back in the garden. What was smooth and easy and a pleasure to travel had now become filled with obstacles, rocks, weeds and potholes and ditches of various sizes that could swallow up many people easily. It would take faith in God to continue and each step seemed to take more faith.



## AND THE SEEDS GREW



As John looked around he saw that it was true what Clarence had told him. There were many more people on the road now, some were young and some were much older. They were from all walks of life and nationalities and races. The seed that was sowed had been taken by the wind to what must have been the far corners of the earth. Groups began to form and within each group there was a leader that rose up. Some of these came to John to ask where they might find seed that they may sow also. John reached into his bag and gave them some of the seed he had and so they too sowed the same seed as John was, but some kept it for themselves and in time lost it.



Now there were others who found what could only be called “False seed” which was as poison to the spirit of anyone who received it. What John did not know was that while he was talking to Clarence another sower had come and he sowed different seeds that became weeds in those same fields. This seed had the ability to choke out what John had sown and poison its message. It caused people to journey down different roads that did not lead to the Kingdom of Heaven, but led down roads that only served the sower.

Again John heard that soft familiar voice speak to his spirit.

“Sow the seed I have given you, for this is my will concerning you.”

This time John had questions, “But Lord, what about the false seed that has come up like weeds choking off the seed you told me to sow?”

And the Lord spoke to John through his thoughts, “Take heart Guardian, for in the time of judgment it will be divided out.”

## EVERY ROAD HAS ITS DITCH



It is said that “The road we all walk down in life is the same for everyone, ... just different!” It is the same because we all travel in the same general direction and share in life’s various experiences. There are those whose road gets skewed and they veer away from the truth and in their own rebellion write their own truth based on what has become important in their lives. Lovers of self and of pleasure more than lovers of God, error greatly on the road they travel.



When men take their focus off the one true God and focus on something else, they lose sight of their eternal goal. As men ate the bad seed, they could not get enough. The more of life’s pleasures and corrupt doctrines they received, the more they craved. They fought and accused their brothers falsely as each claimed they were of the Kingdom, but their hearts were far from it.



There were many different groups that formed because of the false seed sown among them. They had a truth unto themselves, but it was not of God's making so they were blind. So blind guides lead blind followers and they stumbled on the rocks of the road that is of their own making. The followers and the leaders all fell into the ditches and potholes along the way. These groups became wise in their own knowledge and never came to the full understanding of what the truth was. Professing to be wise they only made the potholes and the ditches deeper and almost impossible to get out of. Without even knowing it they had become addicted to their own seed of choice and they rationalized the wrong away until what once was wrong now seemed right.

As John walked his own road, he began to realize areas in his own life that he did not like, that he had just been awakened to. The thicket of things he had become was more involved than he realized. Again, John heard the voice of his old friend, speaking to him in whispers of thought.

"John, do you love Me more than these?"

"Yes Lord, you know my heart, you know I do."

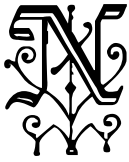
"Lay your burdens down, and give them to me."

The road had become riddled with pot holes and most were filled with those who followed the blind leaders. The road was also littered with rocks to slow your journey and many sat on the rocks and rested, but of those who rested too long, they would never get up again. The road had thorns to make the journey troublesome and to get their eyes off the goal, which is the Kingdom of Heaven. Surely there has to be a better way because this road had become burdensome for John now.

The voice spoke again to John, "follow the road least traveled and sow your seed, for straight is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads to life and few there will be that find it."

John reached into his bag and grabbed a handful of seed and sowed it and again the wind took it as far as he could see.

## TO MEET AN ANGEL



ow there came a point when John realized the road was too hard for him to change or to fix by himself. In his spirit he knew there was a better way and he had been going down this road for so long that he knew that a change was needed.

Soon John came to a juncture in the road and standing next to a wooden fence was a beautiful creature glowing in a glow of brilliant white. This was an angel of God and John's heart was suddenly humbled to see this wonderful angel. This meant that God had not forgotten about him. John stopped as he could not take his eyes off the angel.



"John, I have been sent from the throne of heaven to give you understanding so you will choose the better way. I am he who watches you and walks with you. The road to my left is just more of what you are experiencing now. Many stay on this road because it is comfortable for them. Some parts are good and some are not. It is all up to your own making."

"The road to my right is called the 'Road Less Traveled.' It's less traveled for a reason, but it does have the greater rewards. The foundation of this road is not dirt or stone, but of love and those who walk it will need to be full of love and forgiveness, or they will not get far. You have fought the good fight so far. You have been an overcomer, but there is a greater fight just ahead which will test you as never before."

John was a little unsure of what to do, so he asked the angel, "Which road should I go down? What do I do now?"

"John, I will only ask you this question, do you love God as you say?"

"That's the same question I keep getting asked all the time ... of course I do."

"Then the decision is already made. The road to my right is the road you have chosen. My words are true, focus on that love for perfect love cast out all fear and fear is the root of your problems. This road will make you deal with what you have kept secret your entire life. He who tempts all men is waiting. He seeks to sift you like wheat and set your feet on a path of inward destruction, but let it not be said of you. Stand tall and know who you are. You are a Son of the King."

Then as John watched, the angel vanished before his eyes.



## Part 3



### THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED



As the angel vanished John noticed he was already standing on the road which was to the right, the road he called “Less Traveled.” John stood there for a minute and looked down at it. The angel was right, it wasn’t made of dirt or grass, it was something that was hard to explain, but it could be felt. It was John’s own personal road; it represented his walk through life. If you seek, you will find and it will open your eyes to whom or what you have allowed yourself to become. Now is the time you will deal with self. Those who chose the narrow road are on it because they seek the truth in whatever form they find it.

John now felt a bit of hesitation. He was being drawn down this road because at the end it will draw him closer to Jesus. John understood that on this road, if he was going to make any progress, then he was going to have to change and if anyone needed to change, it was him. He needed to learn to step out of his comfort zone and trust God.

Again he heard a voice say to him, “I will complete the work I have started in you.”

It just dawned on John why this road is less traveled, because change isn’t easy. It makes you dig down to your deepest fears. It demands you deal with hurts of the heart and it cries out for forgiveness. John hadn’t even taken one step on this road when suddenly the fear of change reached into his chest like an evil hand

and suddenly he could feel the fear and anxiety had returned. The box of his comfort zone suddenly closed in around him. He was suddenly frozen stiff in the very spot he had been standing.

He looked down just in time to see a hole begin to open and a ditch appeared. The next thing he knew he had fallen into his own ditch and like everyone else, this one was of his own making and it had been a long time in the making.

### BEGINNING TO LOOK AT SELF



he ditch John had fallen into took him off his road less traveled and he found himself standing on a grassy cliff that overlooked the ocean. Day had turned to night with thick dark clouds moving quickly across the sky. A storm was blowing in and thunder could be heard close by and then lightning strikes began hitting all around him. The rain began to come down hard and he found no place to take shelter from the storm. All he could do was to stand in the rain and wait to see what happened next.

The ocean was violent and waves could be heard crashing onto the cliffs John was standing on. He could see nothing in front of him, but darkness. As the lightning would strike, John could see for brief moments the images of the landscape around him and he began to feel even more afraid.

A different feeling came over John, and at first it was a strange feeling of a distant evil coming towards him. Then the distant feeling changed and he felt the hand of something evil reach inside his chest and grab him. John was suddenly concerned with his own safety and had completely forgotten everything the angel had told him. Right now fear had hold of him. John fell onto the ground and in the muddy rain soaked field he laid frozen in place. For a moment he laid there overcome with fear, but he didn't even know what it was he feared. With the strong winds and rain pushing against him, it was all he could do to lay there and say nothing, focusing only on his own breathing.

John had no idea of time and he was not sure how long he had been there, it was very dark and he was soaking wet. He fought the wind pushing against him to the point that he physically was getting too tired to resist it any more. He couldn't speak a word except that a lump came up in his throat each time he thought to call out for help. This had to be his darkest hour, "but why me?" he thought to himself.

If he doesn't get some help quickly, he believed he might die right there, but then ... at this moment would death not be better?

John didn't know what was wrong. He could only think the words, "Oh God what is happening?" Something evil was holding him and he couldn't move. The cry of his spirit was now "Where are you God? You promised you would never leave me or forsake me."

### AN UNWANTED VISITOR



John could not determine if he was seeing things that weren't there, or if it was really happening, but with each strike of the lightning he thought he saw the silhouette of a man in front of him. This man somehow was the source of the evil John felt. Could it be that it was evil itself that was now standing in front of him. A clearer picture began to come into focus in front of John, it was a dark shadowy creature, stinking of ashes from a fire and his breathing was hard and labored. John still could not move because of the fear that had overtaken him. The source of it, John's fear he believed, was now standing in front of him.



With the sounds of the storm in the background and the wind and rain in his face, John heard this creature begin to speak.

"Who are you to stand in my way? You claim to serve God? You serve me and you don't even know it."

The lump in John's throat had relaxed enough that he could at least say something now. So he gathered all the strength he had left and screamed back at the evil in front of him.

"You are a liar. I love God and I serve Him, not you."

"Love," shouted the evil. "Like all the rest, you are a hypocrite that makes up excuses to justify your selfishness. You are no different than they are. You have an excuse for every selfish thing you do. If you knew God as you claimed then why are you full of fear?"

"You're a liar" John shouted back.

"Why do you think you are here? You are full of fear and doubt. This is a gift that I gave you and you use it every day in how you deal with others. Your fear feeds your anger and has driven you to walk over other people who got in your way. I am the one who has made you successful."

As John lay there soaking wet from the rain, he thought back to the times he had decided issues or made decisions that benefited him at someone else's expense. Was he really guilty of what evil was saying? How could God even consider using him now? John began to cry for the failure he felt he was.

Evil looked down on John laying in the mud and the rain, “You have hardened your heart and gone the way of the world. You are no different and in fact you may even be worse. You are a hypocritical Christian of the worse kind and someone I can use too. When I finish with you and those like you, then I will come for your sons and your daughters as well. As I have done in the past so I will do again.” Then the evil leaned back and let out a horrible laugh.

“Nooooo” John screamed back.

“Now ... worship me and I will take this pain away. You will be the cause of the fear in others who oppose you.”

“You’re the cause of it!” John shouted back. “I may have problems in my life, but I choose ... I choose ... God.”

Suddenly the pain in John’s chest got worse and he fell back onto the muddy ground grabbing his chest. “Don’t ever say that name in my presence again or it will be even worse for you than it is now.”

Then this evil creature reached out and hit his fist on the ground beneath them both and a hole opened up. As the hole expanded, John began to slide into it and eventually fell for what seemed to be many miles down into the earth. In his mind he knew where he was going. The walls of the pit glowed red and the flickers of fire danced on the walls as he felt himself descending down.

Finally John landed at the bottom and realized that he was now in Hell. He found himself standing at the entrance in front of large gates. It was extremely dark except for the flickers of light from the distant fires. The air was thin and stinking of ashes and sulfur making each breath almost impossible to take. John did his best to look around. As he did he got a front row seat at the worst of the worst among human pain and suffering.

There were prison cells full of the dead being tormented by demons who were very large and grotesque creatures beyond the imagination. Their only job and joy seemed to be in the tormenting of the poor souls who were locked up with them. Somehow, I knew there was no hope for them. They would never get out, for without Jesus there is no hope of any kind.

As John looked onto the scenes of Hell he saw the masses of humanity whose numbers could not be counted all suffering for eternity. No one there had any hair or clothes for the heat of this place had burned it all away. John saw a face that looked familiar to him, someone who he remembered from college that had died from an overdose of drugs. He was looking right at John and called his name out.



“Go back,” he yelled. “Do not come to this place. The heat and the torment are unbearable.”

Then he let out his own screams as waves of fire rolled over those in the pit with him. One last word John heard from him,

“THERE IS NO WAY OUT ... F O R E V E R.”

The screams of lost humanity became deafening. The heat, the terrible heat and torture from the demons of all sizes and of horrible descriptions were too much to bear. The demons took on different shapes and grotesque images. Some were like spiders and tormented people they had in webs on the walls. Others were like worms that slithered on the ground and into people that were being tortured by many demons.

It was all about the pain and suffering. The sounds of screaming were in all directions and then there was the dreaded thought that there was NO WAY OUT forever.

Then John heard a voice inside his head speak to him saying,

“Call on the name of the Lord! John.”

The evil didn’t hear these words, but John did. John was too focused on his situation so he ignored it. He was alone and images from his past began to play themselves out in his mind. Words he had spoken in anger, he now wished he could take back. Acts of lust and fits of anger, attitudes and actions that were only selfish and self-serving were all he could see in his mind’s eye.

Again John questioned himself like he had so many times in the past, “Why am I like this? Why can’t I stop?”

John had no sooner asked the question than the answer was in his mind. “This is the baggage of your past that you refuse to forgive. They are the memories of past hurts that go unforgiven that bind you.”

John now understood. The issues from his past were his life’s baggage. They were the things he could never get victory over and the guilt of it all that he was still holding onto. Their memories had him bound up and imprisoned in unforgiveness. He had been living with the guilt that fear brings and the anger for things he had no control over many years ago.

The evil got right in John’s face, “Your unforgiveness fuels your hate. You are not so holy are you? God could never really love you” said this large creature.

John just fell on his knees and cried with his hands over his face as he thought “I will never be holy or good enough for God.”

“Call on the name of the Lord!”

There it was again. John heard it loud and clear.

“God is that you?”

Again the pain shot through John.

“I said never to mention that name or your suffering would be multiplied many times over. You are not holy and He has left you to me. If you will worship me, I will take your anger and turn it into riches for you.”

A third time John heard that same voice deep inside of him and somehow John knew this would be the last time he would hear it.

“Cry out to Me John.”

John had never been so torn as now. His flesh wanted the pain to stop and have the good life for his family and he didn’t seem to care how he got it. It became very clear that John’s problem was John. “The creature was right,” John thought. He was more concerned about himself and what was his, than about God.

John realized he needed to change. He wanted what God had waiting for him, but he felt so lost and empty. He lay in the hot dirt totally broken and he thought he deserved exactly what he had seen in hell, but there had to be a way out for him. He laid there for a moment and gathered all the strength he could. As he thought to himself again “There has to be a way God.” Again the creature yelled out to John.

“I am losing my patience with you boy. Decide now or it shall be worse for you than it is for them who are already my prisoners. I demand an answer NOW!”

“**J-E-S-U-S!**” John screamed out as hard as he could and fell back onto the ground exhausted.





## Part 4



### DRIVEN TO FORGIVE



ll John could feel was the rain and the wet ground he was laying on. He looked up and the figure was gone and he found he could move. John was free from that place, but he was still here in the rain. Jesus had saved him from Hell and all John could do was to shout over and over “Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus.”

John still had to deal with his baggage. Memories of the past that haunted him felt like chains that were crushing in on him, holding him down.

Then John heard an old familiar voice say to him “Why do you hate that which I love?”

“I don’t hate anyone Lord,” John responded. Suddenly he recalled names and saw faces of those who he had treated badly, spoken down to, thought wrong of. He saw the hurt he had brought into the lives of others. Most of all he remembered those in his life who had done wrong to him also.

“These are the ones I love,” said the Lord. “Love them as I do and put away evil hateful words from your mouth.”

At first John started to argue with God, “But Lord, they hurt me so much and they were supposed to be the ones who loved me. And I have tried to forgive, but I just can’t. How do I forgive so much hurt? Teach me to forgive.”

Then John saw a vision of Jesus standing before him. Jesus was holding out his hands to show John the nail holes and then pulled open his robe to show the large hole in his side where He was pierced. “Forgive as you have been forgiven,” Jesus said. “John, will you give your hurt and pain to me? Give me that which burdens your heart and I will give you my burden. It is easy and light and it will lift you up.”



Then it was quiet for a while and all John could hear were the waves crashing on the shore. John was totally focused on the picture of Jesus he had just seen and the scar in his side ... “How can I not forgive?” As John lay in the field soaking wet he began to cry and weep before the Lord.

“Oh God, I am not better than you, I don’t want to hate. Forgive my unforgiveness Father and help me to forgive. Help me to love. Help me to change. Please God, I can’t do this anymore. Please take this from me. It is yours, I don’t want it ... please God, forgive me.”

The true desire of John’s heart finally came out and suddenly he felt something like a wave go through him and it swept away the pain and the burdens of his heart. As it did he heard the Lord say to him “I’ll take these.”

John cried “Thank you Jesus” he actually felt clean for the first time in his life.

John now felt a new John alive in him. A new man had been awakened in place of the old. He thought to himself, “forgiveness will no longer be an option for me, I am compelled to do this, JESUS ... I choose to forgive.”

#### FEED MY SHEEP



After another few moments of quiet as John was soaking it all in, again he heard that voice inside of his head.

“Do you love Me John?”

“Yes Lord, I do.”

“Then Feed my sheep. Teach them to Love one another as I have loved them, for the time is short. You shall be as a lamb among the wolves. Go in my name and I will be with you wherever you go. Take no thought of the words you will speak for it will be given to you in the same hour that you speak. Go now Guardian and do as I have commanded you.”

John felt something he had never felt before, he felt peace and calm in his spirit. It was like the weight of a thousand pounds had been lifted from his shoulders. John felt loved. He could now feel that deep inner love that his spirit had been longing for. He had always told people that he was loved, but that was his head knowledge talking. This time it is a love that he could feel deep within him. This is the love that changes a person.

## ANN RETURNS



he rain had stopped by now and as John lay there soaking wet he looked up at the dark clouds moving quickly overhead. He could easily see many small dots of blue lights flickering in and out of the dark storm clouds. John knew this meant that the Guardians were close by. He became fixated on one of the small dots of blue light because it seemed to be coming closer to him until he could no longer see for the brightness of the light. John lowered his head towards the ground and looked at the feet of the one who stood before him. The feet were different and the sandals ... why ... these were women's ... Then John heard, "I thought you understood me in the garden, when I told you to drink a lot of water along the way."

Oh, no! it was Ann. "There is life in the water John. You needed to drink from the water."

"What are you doing here" John asked her ... she did not answer him. "And why was I alone anyway?"

Ann stood there looking at John lying on the wet ground, "John I think you should stand up now. I also think you're a big softy. You're alive aren't you? I hope that your experience on the path has helped you, and given your insight into many things. Most people are forever changed on the road less traveled, but it's always a good thing. Positive change is always good.

"I am happy for you John in that you learned something about yourself that you need to forgive. The foundation of all Christianity is forgiveness. I think that if you can forgive then the things you fear will begin to vanish. By forgiving you break the grip fear has on you. You need to think about that."

"As to your question of where we were while you were on your journey, well we had to hold back until you settled the matter in your heart. You had to work through your issues and yes, it is painful, but God always has a plan. All I'm going to say is to remember the scriptures John, 'All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.' Remember your trials only serve to make you stronger."

"You made the choice to love and to forgive, good for you. You finally got it. Now you can teach others what you practice. You are a teacher, so teach men to hunger for truth and to love God more than self"

Suddenly a loud noise was heard ... B-A-N-G, and John came up from off of his bed and wide awake. He had dosed off to sleep while trying to read a book on his bed. This day certainly had a different kind of beginning for him. John was acutely aware that there was a message for him in the dream he just woke up

from. Without even another thought John slid from his bed to the floor and on his knees he prayed. There would be much to forgive as he began to wrestle through the thicket of the things and issues of his life. John was now ready to lay down his baggage at the foot of the cross and let it all go.

It will take some time to let a lifetime of hurts go because for some who have dealt with broken hearts, damaged emotions and life's disappointments and failures will need time to really forgive. Satan will argue with you over it, but the last word has to be ... "I choose to forgive."

Matthew 6:14 (KJV), "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:"

