

Ambassador

The Best Gateway Into A Spiritual Life

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Glossary

Ambassador - someone who comes from one nation and resides in another nation, dedicated to extending the policies of his home government into the nation he lives in, as opportunities arise.

Gate Opening - these are spiritual gates between heaven and earth, naturally closed between God's Grace and the difficulty that needs that Grace. As with all gates and doors between heaven and earth, kingdom gates are all closed up by we human beings, perhaps down the centuries, and can only be opened from below, as God has no wish to force his Grace onto anyone. Once the prayerful kingdom ambassador has waited to hear which particular gates need opening in God's view, discussion in trust will open that gate by God's Grace and allow the inflow of his love and mending intentions.

Kingdom - this is not a worldly organisation but the kingdom of God, a human life influenced as much as possible by Jesus Christ. It is, by definition, a life free of slavery to poor health, lack of abundance, the fear of dying and the cares of the world. Living in the kingdom of God brings a life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control.

King's ambassador - anyone who devotes his life's main priority to being in a prayer partnership with God through Jesus Christ, worshipping, waiting, listening and praying along the lines thus prompted by God.

Prayer - Prayer is not a matter of overcoming God's reluctance or an attempt to persuade him to move his hand. It is a matter of laying hold of His willingness.

Prayer is not listing but listening. The common understanding that prayer is a function of working out what we need and then asking God to dispense the solution is not prayer - it is the expression of a wish list.

All righteous prayer emanates from God, so real prayer is waiting for God to dictate his prayer direction to us in readiness for our asking.

Prayer-Giver - anyone who decides to talk over a problem with God and then prays for it as God suggests.

Kingdom Nudge - one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit listed by St Paul. He refers to it as the 'Gift of Faith' as it results, in any kingdom Ambassador, in a rising trust that heralds a kingdom result.

Kingdom Nudges can be recognised as a pointer for prayer by its extraordinary nature, i.e. a sudden peak of emotion, some sensation well outside the normal. Rarely, this might be an audible voice of guidance but is more readily felt in the form of a noticeable and quite overwhelming emotional spike in the ambassador's sense of injustice or fear of danger for God's children. It should be taken joyfully, as the soul's recognition that God is wanting to hold hands with the ambassador on this one.

Trust rises at such nudging moments, when the Ambassador sees the divine source and the exciting potential of any prayer on the subject to hand.

Proclaiming the kingdom - the listing of simple statements being made by the kingdom Ambassador that lay down the overall policies of God that deal with our difficulties. The checklist of H O P E may be a useful way to start to learn what subjects to cover but continuous practice creates a tighter working relationship with God, through the ambassador's resultant rising trust. This proclamation has three immediate effects: God is honoured; the prayer-giver's trust rises to meet constantly descending Grace; a corresponding rise in trust occurs in anyone else who is listening.

Author's Note

For almost thirty years, since I found myself in Christianity, I have wanted to see works of the kingdom happening of such staggering benefit that there would be great change around me in the world's condition, changes so amazing that Jesus would

be glorified by everyone who took notice of them. My own idea, for what it is worth, is that this was, and still could be, a wonderful dream for everyone.

I hope that together we shall look at being a kingdom ambassador, a special role in a very special relationship with God, recognising that we fall very short of God's standards and in need of his Grace.

There is an agreement which God offers us and he is faithful to that agreement. The basis of this agreement is only mercy and grace. If we pretend we have any sort of relationship with God other than our being a poor soul in need of this grace, we pervert the agreement.

God even wants the best for us when watching us pretend we have any other kind of relationship with him. If we do, he will not be thinking of us as being his fruitful people. This kind of unfruitful branch is soon broken off and new growth is grafted in, raising the sap of his own life in our fresh branches.

Are there any rules? We only have to learn one law in the kingdom of God - the law of Grace. It is not for King's ambassadors to pretend that we might have a relationship with God which is anything other than being in constant need of his Grace and mercy in exactly the same way as the New Testament's 'publicans, sinners and tax collectors'.

Writing this little book has led me back through the twisting and turning lanes of a very old question: Does prayer influence God? I have never heard of any question being discussed quite so often and in such a variety of expression.

I have heard sceptics with sharper intellects than mine say, "No!" But then I have heard fine Christian theologians with strong faith say, with equal assurance, "Yes."

Both these sides of the argument have been right. Not right in all they say about prayer or in all their thinking about it but right in their finally concluding, "Yes" and "No".

I became very excited, early on in my search to be an ambassador of the King, discovering that prayer does not influence God. Our shopping lists do not necessarily introduce him to any new plans (that is the "NO") but..... our prayers certainly do affect what he does do and can do (that is the "Yes").

Every right thing that has ever been prayed for has always been in God's plans. Many of these plans have been slowed down or prevented by our lack of willingness to be part of his action plans rather than trying to engage him in ours. When we learn about his plans and make them the focus of our prayers we are giving him the opportunity to act.

This kingdom approach is a complete reversal of the common assumption, that prayer is a hit-and-miss 'Father Christmas' type of activity. Real prayer is not giving God a list but waiting for him to give us one! Effective prayer, for me, was always a question of my asking God to step down here and help but nowadays, as an ambassador of the kingdom, prayer is more a question of my asking how I might step up into his dream for his people.

As it might be with any earthly ambassador, our willingness to go along with our own King's plans in any difficult situation

checkmates the opposition. In kingdom terms it opens the path to God and rids it of the obstructions And then the road is cleared for the free action already planned in heaven. When we take the time and the trouble to find out what God already wants to do and pray accordingly, we open kingdom gates of grace over the problem and we begin to win victories far greater than we might ever have thought possible.

Within the depths of his love, God has a great deal of prayer work for each one of us to do and I continuously look to discover each day what particular work is being required of me. I need to live in the world as I do and be there, aware of the ambassadorial business of the kingdom in the world on my doorstep. I must learn the business of being an ambassador for the King and know it well. What always matters most, though, is my relating to, and opening myself up to, our extraordinary God. He is capable of doing more for the world than I could ever dream of and longs to show us even greater things if we will work with him.

As always, I ask the reader to compare everything I say or write with what is written in the Bible and, if at any point a conflict is found, always to rely upon the clear teaching of scripture.

Mike Endicott

Introduction

Every Childhood December at home was time again to think about Father Christmas, Santa Claus. Every year we knew he would be coming soon, down the chimney, apparently Sootless, looking out for his mince pie and glass of Sherry on the hearth, carrying a substantial sack across his shoulders - the riches of his homeland ready for distribution to his child-like fans and friends. Before he was due to arrive on Christmas Eve we needed him to know what it was we wanted and so, to the whole family's enjoyment, the Father Christmas ritual was performed.

Mother sat in her armchair while we children sat on the hearth rug, cross-legged in a semi circle around a blazing log fire. Our first job was to write a list of things we wanted and pass it up to Mother so that, ostensibly, she could check our handwriting. After all, she explained every year, if Father Christmas could not read it then the wanted gifts could not happen for us. We dutifully obeyed. We children never suspected for one moment that her true reason for checking was to see for herself what our desires really were, to allow for the possibility of parental provision. It did not seem to matter. The important trick was to perform the ritual correctly and so we did.

Leaning up against the edge of the stone fireplace lay the family brass toasting fork, two and a half feet long with three prongs on the end for piercing chestnuts and holding them in the flames. Each of us in turn impaled our lists on the prongs of the toasting fork and reached out to hold the paper inches above the tips of the flames. Here they curled, blackened,

disintegrated into ash and flew upwards in the smoke, all the way to Santa Claus' factory beyond the sea where they could be re-established into prime condition, apparently.

The annual ritual was completed, it was all down to him now. All we children could do was ask and it was entirely up to Father Christmas what he then decided to distribute on Christmas Eve. It was not so much that we trusted him to come up with our demands or even that we hoped he would. It was simply that the ritual was completed and that was all we could do. There might have been nothing to gain by this exercise but there certainly was not anything to lose.

Christmas Day itself was always full of excitement, most of it caused by our having no idea what was coming in the way of gifts from relatives or from Santa himself. Whatever the eventual source of joy, no one ever suggested we might need a ritual to offer thanks to Father Christmas. We did not even think of it!

I now find this Father Christmas listing to be an exact predecessor of my earlier prayer life. Growing up and becoming a churchgoer, I carried this exact attitude and approach into my religious life, easily confusing God and Father Christmas, taking my Santa Claus approach from everyone around me - wait for the need and send up the shopping list. I followed two ways into prayer; the private one in my own thoughts and the public one in church. In my private world of prayer I would wait until I saw a need, either in myself or in others, and then sent, as it were, a letter up the prayer chimney asking to be given something quite specific and certainly never crediting God with any answer.

Public prayers in church were led from the front. My role was to listen, usually with only half an ear, to people's names and world situations I had little knowledge of, waiting to the end to say 'Amen'. I grew later to know that each of these types of prayer is only the expression of a wish-list and not prayer at all. Both approaches are always referred to as prayer but the real meaning and depth of the true prayer process is lost in the general cover-all use of the term. Both these approaches to the idea of prayer are not prayer but statements of wishes. The distinction between the two is vital to my own growth in the ambassador's role.

We are not given the whole business of prayer to tell God what we need. God's thoughts are not necessarily like ours, he wants us to know his plans and seek their progress. We honour him by asking to get involved, just as he is honoured by our thanks after involving us in that portion of his plan. Despite the way I was using the gift of prayer, I have since discovered that Prayer is not intended to change God's purpose or to persuade him to take on any fresh purposes. God has already decided that certain outcomes will happen through the methods and channels he has appointed to see them happen. Those are his plans, not mine!

The prevailing idea of prayer seems to be; that I should come to God and ask Him for something I want. Unhappily, this is a most degrading and dishonouring concept. The popular understanding of prayer reduces God in our minds to being a servant, our servant: serving up what we order, performing divine tricks for us, granting our desires.

No, I think of prayer as a coming to God, talking over with him the things that trouble me, committing my prayers into

his thoughts and leaving him to deal with it in the detailed ways he knows best.

Real prayer has little to do with the sending up of shopping lists, however small or lengthy. It is time, given up by King's ambassadors, to dissolve their minds and hearts into God so that there will be a common stream of thinking between his mind and theirs. What they need is for him to fill their hearts with his thoughts and then his wants and plans will become their wants and plans flowing back to him.

So prayer is not an act, private or public. It is an attitude—an attitude of dependency, dependency on God. Being involved as a confidential ambassador of the kingdom of God, involved in spreading his plans through the world, is not about getting what I want but being what he wants me to be. He does not want me to be neurotically dependent on him but he does want me to be, as a spiritually poor but working ambassador in prayer, willingly trustful in him.

‘Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.’ - Hebrews 4:16 (NIV)

‘Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.’ - William Cowper (1731-1800), *The Works of William Cowper: his life, letters, and poems*, New York: R. Carter & Brothers, 1851

1.

Prelude

The apprentice ambassador started out on the kingdom journey determined to make time, every day, to gaze on God and await his prayer instruction. Having completed the H O P E exercise he had been taught, (to be explained later on), he turned his pre-learned priorities upside down and actually prayed for himself before anyone else. He reasoned that he would have to be fit and well before being an effective prayer worker in 'kingdom growing' with Christ. What should he pray for?

That was easy. He had collapsed on the kitchen floor with a blood pressure reading that had sunk even further than he did. He was soon in hospital with a blood transfusion, undergoing every check and measurement in the book to determine the cause of it all. One week later, the cause having been surgically and medically solved, blood tests were showing a dangerously low level of haemoglobin. Strong diets and iron supplements were prescribed but the recovery was worryingly slow.

Back at home in the presence of God and after the daily exercise of his trust-raising worship, he was asking God for himself first, knowing that a good result was on the way. Only a few weeks later the blood count had soared back from its low level to the middle of the 'normal' range. All was quickly well again.

“I know you are ready to work with me, Lord, but now I feel ready to work with you. Lead me on!”, the apprentice called into heaven. And God led him on.

Chapter 1

On the King’s Secret Service

God’s kingdom ambassadors, the movers and shakers around the world, those people who are really changing things, are not the ones we might expect. I used to think they would be the famous, the rich and influential, the household names, the media celebrities. The real and vital change-makers are, perhaps surprisingly, the people who pray.

I would not necessarily include, in such a moving and shaking category, those who show us they can teach about prayer, those who know only how to explain prayer or even those who can only say they believe in it. Some examples of the great results of prayer that have occurred during my own lifetime would be the settling of the Irish question, bringing down the Berlin Wall and abandoning South African Apartheid. Happily included in that list, before my time, might also be the winning of the Battle of Britain, a number of worldwide Christian Revivals and the evacuation from Dunkirk. All these sharp and unexpected turnarounds are known to have followed periods of anxious, determined and steadfast prayer.

Many great leaders of religion, household names, have struggled for many years to counteract such evils and then one

day, suddenly, the Lord had his way in it all. May he bless all our prayer-givers!

These kingdom of God secret ambassadors, the people who are really changing things in the world around them, make absolutely sure they find the time for private prayer. Ambassadors' usefulness in kingdom growth is determined through their times of private prayer. If they are too short of time in their busy lives they take it from somewhere else in their day. This 'somewhere else' may seem, at first glance, to be full of vital matters to attend to, more pressing than prayer. However, the apprentice ambassador learns about priorities, to practise putting the business of prayer first, arranging the other things in the daily schedule to go around it and after it.

These are the people today who are doing the most for God; winning souls for the kingdom, solving public as well as personal problems, awakening churches, supplying both the people and the money to fill mission vacancies at home and abroad and supporting those missionary lives.

Despite common experiences drawn from our own church-going or what we might like to imagine happens with other Christians elsewhere, King's ambassadors all belong to a Secret Service. It may be impossible for us to identify who these praying ambassadors are, although we may be able, sometimes, to make one or two shrewd guesses. For instance, It could well be that we catch sight of an old gentleman, a senior citizen, quietly leaving church after our Sunday Service, going unsteadily down the church steps and prodding the pavement with his stick, plodding along in the dripping rain. We might not usually give him a second thought. Actually, this one quiet old man may be doing far more for the

world and for God's kingdom than a lot of us who might be giving a more public impression of doing a great deal more.

He might seem at first glance to be quietly ineffective but the opposite might be far more accurate because he prays, really prays, as God's Spirit guides and inspires him.

Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint on his knees because God will do kingdom things as a result of the prayers of the most humble of us which he otherwise might not do. In fact God will do things in answer to the prayers of the weakest person which he otherwise might not do at all.

These are Jesus' own words in that last, long, intimate chat he had with the disciples in their final time together in the Olive orchard.

“You did not choose me but I chose you, and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, and then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

John 15:16

It seems that Jesus pictures some kind of cooperation between the Father and ourselves - the inference being that our praying makes it possible and practical for God to do what he might not do otherwise. It is the ambassador's willingness to be trusting, both in God's love and on behalf of the receiver, which is God's channel through to the world. God never pushes in where he might not be actively believed in and welcomed.. Everything that God does, for us and through us, he always does with our agreement. It seems that God can do nothing for those of us who have closed hands and closed hearts towards him.

Clearly, all righteous prayer actually emanates from God in the first place, not from we human beings. We can only generate shopping lists, wish lists. The kingdom ambassador is taught to listen to God, to hear and obey. Shopping lists are not bad things: they just have random results because they are randomly put together out of the goodness of our hearts or the requests of others, rather than meeting the precise moving and timing of God's detailed intentions. The obedient praying of the ambassador is far more effective as it is far more inline with God's heart, the actual source of righteous prayer. The ambassador's open life and trusting heart, open towards God, is God's communication pipeline between his heart and this poor old world. Our prayer is God's opportunity to get into a world that, unhappily, often prefers to shut Him out.

The possibilities, however, are both panoramic and exciting. Prayer will open the whole planet to God's holy thoughts. We can as easily touch a heart or a body for God on the other side of the world in our prayers as if we were actually there. Perhaps not in quite so many physical ways as if we were really there but quite as effectively.

Ambassadors may be staying somewhere in Africa but if their hearts are in touch with Jesus they will be burning for anyone anywhere in the world.

Prayer puts ambassadors into direct dynamic touch with anywhere else they need to be. We can all step aside today and shut the door behind us, spending half an hour with someone very ill in, say, Russia, as if we were there in person.

Surely you and I can set out to put in more half-hours for this private and Secret Service? No doubt we can all turn the key in the door of our busy lives, as it were, and be equally, potentially, in some far away trouble by the power of prayer as though we were physically right there.

It is obviously apparent that, if kingdom ambassadors were really there, they could influence people and events through personal contact, by being physically there in that needy place and using their muscles and their influence. It may well be so.

I suppose there must always be a personal touch and wouldn't it be so wonderful if many more of us were moved to 'get over there' and 'be there' where we feel God might be able to use us. The truth is that, no matter where we are, here or there, we will achieve more through our praying than through what we do. God can do more than we can. If we turned up in some impoverished and suffering country we could most certainly add our words and our efforts to our prayers. What a great thing to do! But over there or only here, we have first to win the victory in the spirit-realm, for every life, every step, every foot along the way, in secret. Then we may be able to add the strength of our bodies and our personalities in open and direct service at the point of need.

Any King's ambassador can of course, through their words and their works, do much more than just pray but only after they have prayed. None of us can do more than pray until we have prayed.

I am easily and often tempted to think that I should do more where I am through whatever appropriate kind of service springs to mind: then pray to 'invoke' God's power and

blessing to change things through my service. The reality is that none of us can do anything with any real kingdom power until we've done the prayer thing. We must first have won the victory in the secret place. It is intercession that wins the victory over the chief in charge of the problem and 'service' is taking the field after the chief has been driven off. That's the difference between works and prayer.

Service on its own, however love based, is limited by the limits of words and works to one situation at a time. This spirit-telegraphy called 'prayer', on the other hand, lifts the kingdom ambassador into direct touch with anywhere on the planet at any time.

I have met a number of truly gracious folk who consider themselves to be very practical types who say,

"the great thing is work: prayer is good, and right, but the greatest need is to be doing something practical."

In terms of the kingdom of God, as with many other things, the reality on Earth is upside down compared with what appears to be the kingdom truth. The kingdom reality is that when we understand these basic principles of prayer and put prayer in its right place in our lives, we put the horse back in front of the cart. We discover a new motivating energy burning under our skin, We want to be out there doing things. Even more - we find that it's those 'doing things' growing out of our own prayer that are the most powerful in the way those good works touch and change human lives. We can even find, with the deepest joy, that we might well be doing something for a whole country, if not for the entire world!

2.

Prelude

A much loved Pastor lies in hospital the other side of the world, regularly in touch with many friends in his need for the support of constant prayer. At least one of these friends pray as an ambassador of the King of heaven, The ambassador is honoured and happy to join in, bringing his friend daily before God while knowing that all God's children are always before him. It is a regular act of holy friendship and holy trust.

Despite many encouraging improvements in the Paster's condition, the day comes when his health takes a sudden and unforeseen plunge towards disaster. Reading this latest message, the kingdom ambassador friend senses a sudden anger rising up and overwhelming everything, anger that the war for the pastor's health might be lost after so many battles had been fought and won. Now the doctors are saying that the only hope is a Stem Cell Transplant. A few days later they announce that no match has yet been found.

Holy Nudges are coming thick and fast. A further spike in the ambassador's anger pulls him back into the presence of God. Once there, the ambassador proclaims the good news of the kingdom of God to the only two listeners, to his own soul and to God himself. Then he sits back and waits to hear of any

particular kingdom gates that need opening. A most unexpected idea soon arrives to pray for the kingdom's influence in a different country, some thousands of miles even further east of the Pastor's hospital bed. The kingdom gate, he perceives, is over a named country and a given named city within its borders. All righteous prayer emanates from heaven so, in partnership trust, the ambassador knows deep down that a match will definitely be found and knows where it will be found.

That same day, somewhere in that far off city, an unknown young girl walks into her local doctor's surgery and announces she should donate her Stem Cells. She does not know why she should do this, she simply has a feeling she should. Her cells turn out to be a perfect match and are soon high above the clouds, flying around the world. Twenty-four hours later they are flowing into the struggling Pastor. There may well be many other kingdom gates that need opening but how honoured the ambassador feels, being part of God's team, chosen and included in God's plan for this kingdom move to find a match for the Stem Cell transplant. The ambassador's part is well played. Wonders, they say, never cease!

Chapter 2

The Ambassador's Role is Outlined

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”

John 15:16 (NIV)

It is a common way of thinking that we should be careful, not to be caught up with any idea without knowing what might be in store for the unwary. Ambassadors are chosen and appointed to do what, exactly?

The clear kingdom answer is that we should work in harmony, in partnership with God, like Adam in the Bible story. Working with Him like this and the fruitful Partnership with God in His kingdom work is founded on a very simple idea.

On his way back to heaven, Jesus offered His disciples a ‘sandwich’. We more properly call that sandwich ‘The Great Commission’. Actually ‘offer’ might not be a good word to use in this context, as it implies something that might be optional. Far from being an option for Christians, the Commission sandwich idea contains a divine command to all of us to ‘eat’ it, to swallow the idea, to take it on board as a priority.

(1st part) “Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

(2nd part) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

(3rd part) And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18 - 20 (NIV)

It might serve the apprentice ambassador to imagine this as a holy 'sandwich' because it is a set of instructions describing a working relationship, a working partnership between God and his children. It is put together in three parts or layers like an ordinary sandwich; a slice of bread on the top (think Jesus) and another slice underneath (think Jesus again). The kingdom's prayer-giving ambassadors are the juicy filling in the middle!!

This is only my poor, analogous description of the God-designed, God-required working partnership between his ambassadors and himself. These partnerships work like this; He does His bit if we do our bit. He does what He wants to do, extend the kingdom, rebuild creation and we, in this partnership arrangement, do what He cannot do out loud, speak out what He taught and join him in prayer for what he wants to do.

Jesus' parts of the deal are parts 1 and 3. Part 2 is exclusively down to us. Parts 1 and 2 state that he has been given all the authority we need for everything and, in part 3, which undergirds the whole working relationship, he will always be alongside us with that authority.

Part 2, the filling, instructs us to teach the world what He taught His disciples. Nothing less than to proclaim the good news of the nearness of the kingdom of God and heal. We

proclaim and He heals the disarray in Creation; that's how the partnership is designed to work.

Early on in my journey I became aware that the church's limiting of its healing ministry to members 'especially called' to that work, (which makes it optional to the rest of us), is an offence in the eyes of God. His whole church was conceived to continue his whole ministry in the world which is, at its heart, a ministry of reflecting the character and the will of the Father in heaven. That will is, predominately, nothing short of the pulling back into a heavenly condition of the whole universe under the Grace of his love. That is what healing really is and it is the duty of every follower to follow.

We do indeed already have the revealed Word of God to proclaim but the King's ambassador's role is to testify to it, to witness to its truth. And faith comes by hearing, so we are expected to make waves!

We should be making no bones about this; the word of God is designed to be carried on our shoulders. King David fell into a place of demonstrating this so vividly when he went to collect the Ark of the Lord, the living word of God, the power house of the nation, from a farmer with whom he had left it. He was, originally, on his way home with it mounted on an ox cart and, passing over a farmer's threshing floor, one of the beasts slipped and rocked the Ark on the cart. One of the men helping to steady the Ark died under the wheels for his insolence.

David left it there, where it blessed the farmer beyond blessing and, some while later, David set off back to the farm to fetch the Ark for the remainder of the journey back to

Bethlehem, the City of David. But this time things were going to be different. He instructed his priests to carry it themselves, instead of using an ox cart to take the load for them and make the journey more comfortable. Why?

‘So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the Ark of the Lord, the God of Israel.

And the Levites carried the Ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the Lord.’

1 Chronicles 15:14,15 (NIV)

God had instructed Moses to install a gold ring at each corner of the base of the Ark, rings to take long poles so that the whole thing could be carried on their shoulders. And here’s God’s story from this; that the Word of God is designed to be carried on our shoulders and that carrying it any other way will only manage to get us half way home.

Any other way? How much more comfortable has it been for me to do it in any other way. My natural human thought patterns have led me to try ox carts whenever I could — special church services, sacraments, ministry styles and fashions, prayer techniques and so on, when what God really needs is for his ambassadors to proclaim the kingdom and the Cross. We are to proclaim the Word, the news of the nearness of the kingdom of God and, hearing that news, the people’s hope and expectation of the kingdom rises up to greet the

constantly inflowing Grace of our restoring God. Importantly, ambassadors are also proclaiming the good news to themselves at the same time with the same effect - the raising of their own trust.

The prayer-giving ambassador proclaims cross and kingdom, opening trapdoors of trust above problems and making room for God to be about his rebuilding work. It is meant to be a working partnership, based on mutual trust, as is any other working partnership. This is how the King and his ambassadors fit together for gaining victory in the world's brokenness.

3.

Prelude

Grandpa is coming to the end of life. He is ninety-eight years old and seems buoyant enough but he is weakening daily. Still his mind and memory are sharp, functioning as well as ever they have done.

In these latter days he has gone to live with, and is being lovingly taken care of by, his Christian family. They are attentively looking after his every need but he steadfastly refuses to discuss any matters of faith at all.

Knowing that the end must be near, the family's great desire above everything else is to see him kept free from pain and fear and to come to faith before he dies.. No matter how they try, no matter from which direction they approach the subject, he silently turns his head away from them on the pillow, absolutely refusing to listen. Every attempt is met with the same quietly rigid, rejecting response. Time is passing.

So the family mentions their fears for Grandpa to a friend, a King's ambassador, with their heartbreaking story. What are they doing wrong? Do they have the right booklets to share with the old man? Are they coming at it all the wrong way? How can they get the message of Jesus through to him? Would their friend have any helpful suggestions?

Two days go by while their ambassador friend sits before God, explaining everyone's feelings on the family problem and waiting for instruction. The ambassador is hoping for a key to pray for but forty-eight hours go by, as the practice of listening continues before the answer comes. Why the delay?

The old man's frame of mind needs a chance to settle before the ambassador's prayer can become active. The ambassador discerns in the secret place that the old man has been reluctant to absorb one faith if it then turned out to be the wrong one. He is aware of, and confused by, the variety of faiths available.

God's timing is always perfect. In the ambassador's times of holding the Old man's situation before God and seeking his kingdom in such matters, this key to release Grandpa's solid wall of reluctance has eventually and confidentially been given. In response, the ambassador asks for that kingdom gate

to be opened for the old man's sake, then making an imaginary visit to him at his bedside, announcing the good news of the kingdom and telling him the key and that God would wait for him.

That very evening, as his daughter takes up his supper on a tray, Grandpa turns to her and says,

“How can I have Jesus in my life?”

The rest duly follows and the old man dies in peace the next day, the family happily commending him into the Saviour's arms and giving great thanks for his life and the love and cherishing he had poured into them all.

On hearing the news, the Ambassador returns to the presence of God and smiles, saying, “Your love knows no boundaries at all. Now I am ready for the next one!”

Chapter 3, In Which the Apprentice takes his First Steps

I want to go in a simple and straightforward direction and hit the nail on the head. I trust no reader will be offended - I want to start with memories from the beginning of my own ambassador's apprenticeship, from my earliest enquiries. Starting on the subject with friends and colleagues, I remember some of my survey questions and their answers. Here are a few of them:

Q. Are all your prayers answered?

A. I've really no idea. I've never stopped to check.

Q. Does it really matter to you?

A. Not much - we have plenty of other resources to hand, e.g. our health professionals, science, Advisory bodies etc., but it won't do any harm!

Q. Do you find you pray often?

A. No, not really. Only in church. Otherwise it rarely enters my head. When I do, it's only in an emergency or if someone I know asks for prayer!

Q. Do you think we ought to pray more than we do?

A. Can't see the point, really. Anyway, that's what we have ministers for. Let the spiritual people do it for us. They are more likely to get God to work. They know best!

Q. Do you believe God loves us and wants to help us?

A. Well, that's the theory..... That's what they teach us but there's precious little evidence of God helping out when we need it. I don't like to say it but he seems too reluctant, really. But doubt is OK, isn't it?

Q. Would you like to see more of your private prayers answered?

A. Yes of course, but it isn't very likely! It doesn't work like that. I don't know the right words to use and I don't want to take the risk of getting it wrong.

Here was the unspoken dilemma facing me - God is love. God is good. God sees everything and is all powerful. He can do anything. He wants to be called Our Father, and what father would give me a snake if I ask him for a sausage? Why are not all my prayers being answered?

At the time of his death, the curtain in the Temple in Jerusalem, held as a protective shield between the holiest places and the common people, the barrier between heaven and earth, had been torn in two from top to bottom. That way it has stayed open. Had it been torn from bottom to top, the natural human way of doing it, it would hang closed again the moment we let go of it. Would Grace stop flowing if I stopped praying?

God had torn it from top to bottom so that, although I might decide to pull the opening back together, it would naturally fall open again. As I let go of it, heaven is revealed through the gap in the curtain - permanently.

This realisation erupted an earthquake in my soul, a dawning in my heart that whatever anyone, religious or otherwise, may think of God's reliability, his Grace is steadfast because of the torn curtain and the torn curtain is torn by God in the full acceptance that Christ died for us. I might be guilty in the past of pushing God off into the distance of everyday life because he does not always do what I think he should do. Now I know the absolute and historical truth, that Grace pours without ceasing and it does so because of the death of Jesus Christ. The river flows. The river has no dam.

I know now that Opening heaven is not something he does either independently, or only in reaction to the prayers of the saints. It does not happen only because I pray hard for it to be so. Neither does heaven open because I persuade the largest number of people to join in my prayers! There are things I constantly need to do in response to this saving death and resurrection of Jesus. I, like all apprentice ambassadors of the

kingdom, need to deepen my prayer partnership with him, being always ready to follow his nudging and to listen to his voice expressed through that nudging and follow his directing. As this improves with practice I find myself more easily under an already opened gap in the Universe.

The proper basis for heaven being constantly open over the kingdom apprentice is this: the closer the relationship between Christ and us, the greater the harmony and trust, the more open swings the trapdoor between us and the easier comes the flow of the benefits of heavenly grace into the world. So this is a relational issue, not one of theology or spirituality or style or technique in prayer. It is a tightening of the apprentice's prayer partnership, heartfelt relationship with the living, loving God. This way we walk along through life more readily in the flow of his grace.

The appearance of an 'open heaven' is undeniably a sovereign work of God. But the believers are involved. Often in such situations people have been praying, sometimes for years. There needs to be a real seeking hunger for the Lord and his righteousness. He sees that heartfelt desire for him.

To cement any working partnership, both parties need to move towards each other. God needs to move towards us and we need to move towards him. Relationships thus cemented in trust yield much more of heaven's influence in the world. God has already made his move in this relational issue by descending in Jesus, below the angels, to get down to our human size, as it were, to help us. Jesus, God's Son, died for the sins of everyone in the world so his commitment to mankind has already been fully demonstrated. It is total. His

offer to us, that we can be ambassadors in his kingdom, is an open one, complete and full.

Always completely God and always a completely sinless human, Jesus' movement towards us is full – all it ever will be. The response to this God-move, to complete this divine design of prayer partnerships, is that our apprenticeship should result in our moving from just being totally human to being Jesus-like as well. To cement any working ambassadorial relationship between us and God we must accept that he has already made his move towards us and now we need to move more towards him. We do this by allowing the mind of Christ to grow within us. The more this happens, the more the trainee King's ambassadors grow to think like him and the more the Spirit moves them within his will. Thus it is that the apprentice becomes naturally more in tune, more in harmony with God and his will in any situation in which he needs the ambassador to pray. If the prayer-giver learns to pray as God wants it done then we fall into the stream of his dream for creation and the swimming is glorious!

Each apprentice should consider that the continuing problem at hand is not due to God's reluctance at all. Could the problem be in them? Could it be that the apprentice has the cart before the horse? Could we have been looking at the problem of prayer from the wrong angle altogether?

The very first step I took along the apprenticeship road to some ambassadorial satisfaction was to get a simple grip on how I normally want to pray and a simple grip on how God expresses himself on the matter.

I needed to turn the prayer cart around so that the horse was out in front, leading and directing, doing the pulling. Prayer, I discovered, is not a question of overcoming God's seeming reluctance but getting involved in his willingness. Had I got it, commonly, the wrong way around? Absolutely!

Beginning my own apprenticeship, I would always pray as if I needed an ATM across the street for some ready cash. God do this, God do that. On the other hand, in his righteous thinking, God is waiting for me to listen so I can follow his Nudge instructions on prayer. Who to pray for? How to pray? What to pray about? Listening first and then praying as he wants it done, instead of deciding for myself what I want him to do, is getting it back the right way around, the horse pulling the cart along, stepping this way and that, navigating the route to freedom, deciding the best way to go.

This idea of allowing God to lead, instead of deciding for myself what he ought to be doing and where he ought to be going, would ensure I travelled his righteous highway with him, in prayer, that in a troublesome situation I would always be going to the right place (in his view) and fulfilling the right ambassadorial functions (in his view). This way of prayer, (in his view), rather than my being led by my own thoughts and passion, means my accepting that all righteous prayer comes from him. If, as an ambassador for the King, I then pray according to the flow of those God-views and God-opinions then I am assured that the whole weight of heaven is pressing down on the problem.

My prayer is in harmony. God can only do what he wants to do! If my own solution is not in his plan for his creation he will not do it, however hard I might pray. When I need

something I have tended to loose off ‘rocket prayers’ without, I must confess, much serious hope of success.

if only we apprentices knew the plan early on in this training then we could get involved in it. When we know God’s dream of how he’d like to see our prayer life then we can step into the stream of the dream! My usual First Thought has been: wait until some emergency occurs or until someone is brought to mind deserving prayer. Actually, if the horse is to pull the cart, this should be our last thought on the matter! The ambassador’s first Thought everyday should Be: how can I get to think the same way that God thinks? Then he can pop a prayer need into the ambassador’s mind. We are then ‘in the stream of the dream’.

Small steps of obedience like these are the first essential steps to success. Many thousands of years ago after Moses had died, Joshua took the Hebrew tribes to the river Jordan, After forty years of wandering around and around in a wilderness they had at last approached the boundaries of the Promised Land. This is part of God’s story about our prayer lives. They had come to the very edge of their dreams.

The river was at that time in full flood and there seemed no way over. Joshua had to determine how to cross it. If he had set out to draw up a list of his own practical ways out of the problem he might have considered ropes, boats and pontoon bridges but instead he decided to ask God the best way over the torrent. God had told him what he wanted - in human terms a most unwise course of action, to step out onto the river. They were obedient to God’s choice.

The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD put one foot onto the surface of the river and the river dried up. They soon stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground. They listened not to their own possibilities but to the Nudges of God and, doubtless to their delight, they proved that one step of obedience was all it took to allow them into the Promised Land.

As an apprentice ambassador of the kingdom, such becomes my hope for answered prayer, that one step of obedience would always take me over into the Promised Land, into heaven on Earth, as a fully fledged ambassador of the King. To be obedient, the ambassadorial apprentice needs to learn to listen, to hear the Nudges of the Lord or he only has his or her imaginations to be obedient to.

These Nudges are directed righteous prayers and there are other kinds. Righteous prayers are always answered because they are sourced in God and the others are of the hit-and-miss variety. The other kind may, perchance or by divine guidance, fall into the stream of God's dream but they might not. Believing that they should be righteous is not the same as knowing absolutely that they have come from him. All righteous prayer emanates directly from God. They are all his ideas in the first place. That's because he wants his plan implemented. He shares his thoughts with us simply to talk over with him. It is vital that we learn to listen. If we agree with his thinking then he moves. That's how the kingdom of God works in action!

God's dream is that, one day, life in heaven and life on Earth will become so similar we can't tell the difference. They would almost seem to us to be the same place. To stand in one would feel like standing in the other. This is God's story. That's what the picture of the Garden of Eden portrays in the Bible story. That's what the end of the Bible portrays in Jesus' return. Not yet - life can be a mess. That's because what we call 'The Fall' was not a once-off thing, lost in history - it goes on, getting further and further away from God's longings every day - Heaven on earth where everything is just right.

God's overall plan is very easy to understand - it is the REPAIR plan for the Universe and everything in it! Prayers of repair, when nudged by God and where our motives themselves are right, are always answered. They come from God in the first place. They are his plans and his prayers.

Thinking more like he does about these things puts us in the stream of the dream and away we go, learning to grow in God!

My continuing apprenticeship as a kingdom ambassador began with this first fundamental upheaval, a hard first lesson - that I should listen to the directing of the King rather than deciding for myself what would be good for the world and its people around me. A King's ambassador is not an unguided missile but an actively listening partner!

4.

Prelude

The King's ambassador is listening and watching with growing horror, as a TV reporter travels the length of the wall, as it is still being built, to keep the border secure between US and Mexico. The idea of the wall might have been originally conceived to guard against the inflow of illegal Mexican immigration but, at the time the documentary was being produced, the concern is being focused far more on the illegal trafficking of drugs and the waves of potential asylum seekers coming up from Central and South America through Mexico and up into refugee camps against the wall.

The TV Reporter ventures back and forth across the border as she travels from west to east along its entire length. During the series of her programmes, she collects views from those living both sides of the wall, from those it is intended to help and those it is intended to hinder.

Kingdom Nudges come twice to the Ambassador during that documentary's journey along the border - once at the west end and once further east.

The first comes in hard while viewing people's experiences in Friendship Park near San Diego, learning that the only ability of Mexican and US based members of the same family, to meet up from either side of the wall, is only possible through the touching of their lonely fingertips through the mesh. No hugs..... family lives hanging on over many years through thick and thin with tearful children distraught at the lack of family togetherness.

All-too-short visits throughout the park are cloaked with desperate sadness and the horrifying inevitability of there being little or no possibility of change. One Mexican wife and mother tearfully reports that she has only spent fifteen minutes alone with her husband in the previous twenty years or so.

The second Nudge impacts the ambassador as the documentary journey comes towards the eastern end, along the great Rio Grande river which is itself the border. Being a border it still needs Border Guards and here they can be seen patrolling the river in fast patrol boats. The reporter counted no less than four machine guns mounted on the upper deck of each boat, machine guns to kill others of God's children?

In answer to these kingdom Nudges, the ambassador slips easily and quietly that night into the presence of God and waits. Prayer, at this point in any ambassador's life, is not listing but listening.

The realisation comes quickly, quietly, clearly. The Nudge-causing pain in heaven results from a set of manmade circumstances on earth which, for the moment at least, are far too complicated for the ambassador to suggest any cause of divine action. All that might be done is some kingdom 'Gate opening' which would be achieved by talking over the ambassador's feelings with God. Having asked for the 'kingdom gate' to be opened over both nations involved, the ambassador then leaves the presence of God with calmed emotions, wholly trusting that solutions, whatever they might turn out to be and however long they might take, are on the way. The King's ambassador has played what seems like a

small part in a large plan and yet every small part is vital.
Kingdom gates have been opened.

Chapter 4. The apprentice ambassador learns to keep fit.

‘Poor human reason, when it trusts in itself, substitutes the strangest absurdities for the highest divine concepts.’

St John Chrysostom (345?-407)

For me, trust is an absolutely essential prayer ingredient to seeing goodness coming into bad places. This is why trust works - it's where descending Grace meets with any prayer-giver's rising trust that the kingdom can get some elbow room to move!

Descending Grace? This is a given. The constant, unswerving divine plan is to repair our world so deeply that repairing Grace is constantly falling. This is one of the forgiving, accepting and mending results of the complete work of the cross. That work is finished and complete - prayer-givers can do nothing to add to it. Heaven's Grace is in continual flow, through the Temple's torn curtain into us. This is the stream of his dream to bring us all home.

It is right here that an apprentice kingdom ambassador has to come face to face with evil's great lie that mercy and Grace are not a permanent flow and have to be applied for through some kind of unreliable decision-making process. Such a belief reduces the cross to being far less than a perfect work - that God has to be persuaded by prayer to put his mercy and Grace into a particular problem. The lie then follows this common assumption by teaching us that if our prayers do not

‘work’ then we need to engage other techniques or ministries to ‘get him going’. This is an extremely effective part of the enemy’s attack on trust, knowing full well that trust is the major ingredient looked for in our hearts by God.

I find I need, because I am human, to keep up my general trust levels to meet this ever down-pouring Grace. This state of trust is not instant. It has taken me a number of years to see my general water table of trust rise sufficiently to make any serious use of me in the work of the kingdom’s advance. Even so, times of human sadness and disappointment often find me turning around to face such sadnesses and, in turning away to focus on them, I turn away from the face of God. After much practice I now find that God soon calls me back again into his presence, enveloped again in the great depths of his love for me.

In my mind, my prayers are divided into three categories: for myself, for others around me and the ambassador’s main work for the King. Despite the common beliefs on these things, I find the order is extremely important. Having taken the exercise prescribed below, I first pray for myself as everything I have and everything I need comes from him. I then must recognise that God, having made us and clothed us and fed us, has placed us in a very particular mission field - those people around us - our friends and family and acquaintances and, here is the climax of prayer, the situations outside my immediate mission field that God needs me to talk to him about. It is particularly in this last category that I need to be obedient for success, to listen, to hear what situations should catch my interest and what part God wants me to play in opening gates for his Grace to flow.

Raising Trust? One great and regular way for me, as a kingdom prayer-giver, to raise my fluctuating trust levels is to run through four helpful hints, not missing one and going through this exercise daily, if possible. I would heartily recommend this form of exercise to anyone to keep spiritually fit. It is a straightforward and simple way to proclaim the good news of the nearness of the kingdom of God. In a little while I found the exercise became so natural that it now reoccurs regularly throughout the day and, at every point, it becomes the opening background of all my time with the Lord. I have a designated time and place to do this exercise but, nowadays, that longing to be in the Lord's presence continues throughout the day. After all, he might speak with any of his ambassadors at any time!

I have read a number of books on a variety of different ways to conduct myself during these designated times and places and about different methods of growing close enough to God to hear his quiet Nudging, his directing in prayer. All that study only resulted in my being somewhat confused by people's differing opinions on what serves them best. All I want is to close the gap between myself and God sufficiently to be able to climb into the stream of his dream for the world and its people and be of some use in it. As an outburst of my love for him, I want to learn how to work jointly with God to help his kingdom grow.

Understanding such things, however, is a fruit of trust. The plant must mature before its fruit becomes edible. It does not pay me to look for more understanding to allow my trust to grow but it does pay me to daily confess my lack of trust and then, miraculously, understanding grows of its own accord.

I have resolved, therefore, to travel on my own, except for his Grace. To that end I have designed, built and practised a keep-fit discipline for myself, to worship him as often as possible, keeping my mind on his story rather than my own, hauling my mind back onto him whenever it is persuaded to wander by the events of the world around me.

I did not, originally, find this exercise easy but I have persevered with it despite all the difficulties that jump up along the way to stop me, learning not to feel a little guilty that I might have let God down when my concentration wanders off course.

Although I started by allocating a specific time of every day for prayer, I soon made this exercise my main business throughout the day. The more I attend to being with God during my waking hours, even when work and family duty seem to rule, the more I learn to drive away every thought that can interrupt my focus on God.

This has been my common practice for many a long time, ever since I began to discover God's story, God's kingdom story, streaming through and overshadowing the Bible story. Despite my taking spiritual exercise this way far less than perfectly, I have found it most rewarding. That reward, the sense of personal self worth that comes to every working kingdom ambassador, is a gift from the goodness and the mercy of God because we know we can do nothing without him.

Keeping myself in his presence throughout the day not only tends to restrict in me what might (wilfully) offend him. It also gives birth to a kind of spiritual freedom and a new and respectful familiarity with God in which I find it so much

easier to talk over the world's ills with him and see his rebuilding will at work in the world through his directing and my poor prayers in agreement.

My trust-raising and worship exercise is to remember the kingdom key - H O P E.

Firstly, H stands for heaven on earth. I sit or stand in God's presence and remind myself that his Master-plan is to make heaven and life on earth into a very similar place. There's a picture of what this would look like in the Garden of Eden story and in Revelation when Jesus comes back and Eden is restored. The rest of the Bible fills the gap between those two pictures.

The dream of God, as portrayed in Eden, is that any life on earth should be like a trouble-free life in heaven with him. Ambassadors must never forget they can only seriously and trustingly pray into what God already wants to do. Most of all he wants repair! There are thousands of smaller plans but they will all be subsets of the overall one.

Regularly rehearsing this first step results in my thoughts being a little more like his thoughts and, consequently, my prayers are more likely to be answered because they are reflections of his thoughts in the first place!

Secondly, the capital 'O' in the H O P E word stands for the OPPOSITE. All of us have gone the wrong way, the opposite way to God's intentions for us. Adam and Eve (in a snapshot depicting the ongoing movement of the whole human race to this day) turned their backs (as most of us are quite used to doing) on the life that God wants for us. They had to leave the

heavenly life in the garden, they had to turn their backs on living with God and in God.

Of course God has never turned his back on us. I understand history to be the patient wrestling of God with an ignorant, deluded and rebellious people - ignorant and rebellious precisely because we insist on seeing ourselves as the centre of the story. I compare this appalling drifting with an iceberg breaking away from the seaward tip of a glacier. Nowadays we are all standing on the iceberg as it sails away from the mainland shore. Drifting further and further away on the currents of this worldly life - our world contains hatred, sadness, unrest, impatience with one another, anger, a general lowering of too many human standards, disloyalty, viciousness and self-seeking. Then add pain, sickness, grief and sorrow to this mess and we know we are all very far from the home that God dreams of. The greatest sadness is that we are actually rejoicing in our freedom to make these bad choices and constantly seek to take down more and more God-based standards of life.

I find myself, every day, apologising to God for this human mistake, (that's the point here) and turn myself around, admiring his plan to draw us all back together into a perfect family life with him.

Thirdly, thinking about H O P E - I remember with joy the capital 'P'. It stands for 'The Plan'. Not my plan - God's Plan! His plan is to build his dream life for us together, - with him in a place where life seems indistinguishable from heaven itself. No pain, no sickness, no grief, no sorrow, no tears! He wants us all to come home in this life of ours. That's the Big Plan. That's amazing.....

So God sent his Son Jesus. He was continuously teaching about this kingdom home and what it would be like if we all lived within its boundaries. Then he was killed by evil, instead of our being killed by it, and the famous curtain in the Temple was torn in two, revealing heaven to all of us if only we would turn and look at it. There is now, should we find it, an open heaven above us all.

Out of Jesus' work on the cross we can share in heaven's riches of peace, abundance, immortality, a new more Christlike way of thinking and healing as well. That's the first major step in the Plan to dwell upon; to enjoy: about which I could learn a lot more.

And fourthly, the 'E'? Even Me? Yes - even I, even anyone, can easily become God's private prayer partner, an ambassador for the King. Practised in regularly running through the H O P E thought process in this exercise I am lifted out of this world and back into the stream of his dream, without fail, every day. It deepens our partnership.

Jesus came to us looking like a human being. That's because God knows the best way to get through to someone's heart is through the heart of another person. God the Father sent Jesus the Son. Then the Father and the Son later sent the Holy Spirit. Then the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit later sent.....all of us who listen!

There is a stream of purpose here - a divine dream-stream. Just being in the stream, dwelling on his marvellous plans for the world and wanting to be inline with them, brings up my sometimes flagging trust levels and increases harmony levels

with God. It happens automatically. It means that his intent to repair the world; the way we treat each other, the damage we do, the damage to ourselves, those divine wishes flow into and through us into those places where he wants to do kingdom business.

We all have key parts to play in his plan to recover the world. He may decide to implement a little bit of the kingdom through me today and, if I miss it, I could leave a hole in the plan's implementation programme. I must keep fit and stay tuned.

5.

Prelude

Hannah was having epileptic attacks, despite there being no history of epilepsy in her family. She had undergone an EEG test which showed an abnormal epileptic activity in the temporal lobes of the brain. Her attacks had become as frequent as every 3 days. She was suffering extreme exhaustion after each one .

She contacted one of the King's ambassadors who, after time spent secretly holding her up in prayer in the Lord's presence, felt guided by God to give her the verse, Proverbs 18:10:

‘The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.’

Up until that point, the epilepsy had lasted altogether for seven months.

Hannah did not have a fit since then. Neither did she experience any of the unpleasant side effects that followed an attack.

In the last consultation with her specialist, he told her that he could not explain the situation as, when epilepsy occurs during late teens, it usually takes a while before it begins to calm down. Hannah has told him that she is a Christian, a very definite explanation of why the epilepsy had gone!

She confesses, joyfully, that her healing has built up her faith so much and really brings home the truth to her that God is the same yesterday, today and for ever.

She has now had her first driving lesson - something she has been looking forward to for years!!

The ambassador’s only reaction is to raise holy hands yet again in the presence of the Lord and whisper, “Alleluia!”“

‘Jesus Christ can so interfere in a human life that it (the soul) can look up and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits," even in the midst of sorrow or suffering.’
Robert Pierce (1914-1978), founder and president, World Vision, in a private communication from World Vision

Chapter 5.

In which the ambassador is encouraged to walk on Further.

There are many times I need to press on with prayer and often with some urgency but I must emphasise that urgency in prayer does not mean energetic pleading but energetic trusting. When my trusting is riding high in the love and power of Jesus, that is when I find the greatest answers in prayer.

To keep trust at its highest, I do the H O P E routine every day and then pray for the first situation or the first person that comes into my head. Was that prayer God's idea or mine? This does not matter one jot to me. I do not necessarily stop to question it. If I am wrong it does not matter and if I am right then someone or somewhere in the world is about to see a significant change for the better!

This daily time of worship has spread itself into a fairly constant frame of mind, existing throughout the day. Things of the world draw me away from it and higher things then draw me back to it. I always hesitate, in this regular frame of mind, to take the first thought as being the God thought when it might be coming from self in reaction to something going on in me or around me. The problem surfaces when I find I hesitate to state, in my imaginary picture of the situation at hand, that I am speaking on behalf of the commander in Chief, the Lord Jesus himself. If ever I find that difficult to say I retreat to his presence and await a second stream of thought which, dare I say it, is often completely different from the first!

Now, having spent a time in prayer, I must watch for a result. I always watch for a result. An archer will always follow the flight of his arrow to the target to improve his aim. If no change becomes apparent fairly soon then I shall attend to God on the subject again. This is all part of tuning our spiritual ears to his Nudges.

For years I have followed the common lines of thinking about persistent praying but not any more..... It depends on what I think I am doing. My first thought was that I would need to keep nagging God, again and again, until he got the message. But that thought assumes a reluctant God which I eventually came to recognise as very poor theology.

My second thought was that there must be some sort of blockage so I need to lift someone up to his attention, onto his lap, into his line of sight, over and over again, quite forgetting that we are all bathed in his light all the time, anyway.

Eventually, I heard the scripture saying something I have heard and not properly listened to before. It says, "Make straight the way of the Lord." Make his way straight? Then it clicked.

Because of the cross, God's Grace is constantly pouring through the torn curtain. I do not need to nag a reluctant pouring, just sit back and watch it pour!

So prayer-givers need to make his paths straight so that goodness gets easily where it means to go. The enemy does not want this to happen. When Grace improves our lives it is because of the success of the cross. If the enemy can get this

flow to fail then he gets his way, he gets to deny the success of the cross and put doubts about that success in our hearts. Not on my watch!

Persistent praying is a vital tool in the ambassador's armoury. It is not about beating a path to heaven's door. That would be the wrong path. It is about beating down a path for God to the problem, beating down the enemy's defences. Making straight the way of the Lord.

Every time I get to pray again over a situation, which the enemy is reluctant to leave alone, I am indeed slapping the enemy around the ears again and again, back and forth, with the name of Jesus. The ambassador continues in this way to work the Lord's influence into the situation until he wins.

Should an ambassador need to be in church to pray like this? We can pray anywhere of course; we can pray while out walking the dog, while shopping, watching over the cooking, while sitting in a stationary car trying to drive home after a hard day at the office, everywhere and anywhere. It must be right to pepper our ordinary day with quick prayers in this way. However, all such routines, places and pastimes are filled with their own distractions and, when we are practising listening prayer, even the most beautiful distractions can be interruptive.

Not only this but we are not very likely to do it on any regular basis unless we decide to go off to some particular and quiet place, shut in alone with God. It is greatly helpful to designate a specific and private place to practise prayer. I find it an absolute delight - having an 'altar of prayer' in a secluded place without any distractions. There I meet with God and tell

him all my worries and sorrows, upsets and concerns and I tell him, too, about his loving kindness. There I bathe in the glow of his glory that upholds and sustains both me and those I pray for through all our difficulties in life. There I worship at his feet without interruption.

I could go into the nearby field and say my prayers and be aware of the presence of God or I could be in Church and be aware of him; but if I am more aware of him because I am in a quiet place set aside for the purpose of worship and prayer, that is my own shortcoming and nothing to do with God. He is present everywhere and in everything, willing to give of himself, everywhere he is welcome. I only know God rightly when I know him everywhere but so much of 'everywhere' has its own distractions.

For the kingdom ambassador at prayer, working for the kingdom of God is like doing a jigsaw. The picture on the box is beautiful - it's like the garden of Eden, a life of love, joy, peace, no tears at all. Only God sees and understands the finished picture on the lid of the box. It is life on earth but it looks like heaven.

Sadly, living in the world is enough to tip the jigsaw out of the box, breaking it into pieces as it crashes onto the table. Our prayer partner God presents his ambassadors with a table-top broken pile of life's pieces. Some jigsaws might break into half a dozen parts and some into hundreds and anywhere in between, depending on the complexity of the problem and the damage impact when it hits the table top. The resulting breakages can be too numerous and too confusing for any one of us to know in what order God wants the pieces put back together, so that the jigsaw can be rebuilt.

We may have the box cover to guide us but we must put ourselves into place in God's rebuilding scheme of things. Which piece should I pick from the pile and where on the table should I place my little piece of the jigsaw? Having done my daily H O P E routine and waited for a response from on high, I then talk over with God the first (or even the second) situation or person that has come to mind. Then, in my trusting him, his kingdom comes and his will is beginning to be done in this matter, as it would be in heaven. The Grace of the King begins its work.

6

Prelude

Beirut 2020. The sound of the explosion was heard across the Mediterranean, on the island of Cyprus. It comes as a shattering boom, quickly followed by a stunning shockwave that tears down commercial and residential buildings alike, tearing them down on top of people.

Hundreds die that day, hundreds of thousands are made homeless by the blast in the grain store down by the docks. Federal help will not be easy as the Lebanese economy is already in tatters. The country's foodstuffs are largely

imported and here are weeks of grain supplies instantly destroyed in the explosion.

Such pain! Hospitals in overload, so many homes destroyed, shocked and badly wounded people within a few square miles of the fertiliser warehouse, hungry families, immediate national food shortages, pre-existing economic ruin. International charities of every kind rush in. Where would the king's Ambassador stand in all this horrific mess?

There are hundreds of thousands of people and countless situations to pray for. Will one single prayer for the country as a whole do the job? Will it suffice? God has many prayer-givers at his right hand and the Ambassador knows that such a massively complicated situation would not be left to one prayer-giver alone.

The whole national disaster is far too complicated to be humanly understood. Only God can determine which of his Ambassadors should pick up which piece of the jigsaw puzzle. He alone, reflecting the ambassador's prayer, opens the kingdom gate above each problem to allow his Grace to flow.

It is time for the Ambassador to open the communication channels with God to learn prayer direction in this disaster. Having proclaimed the kingdom towards God for his pleasure and the raising of the Ambassador's own trust levels, it is time to wait, to hold an imaginary string of pictures of the disaster in the mind and to see which picture rises above the others in seeming importance.

The Nudge arrives. It is a purely imaginary picture that fills the Ambassador's whole view of the disaster. Rescue workers are toiling in the hot sun, lifting, shovelling and pushing blocks of concrete aside in their haste to reach a sobbing baby under the rubble.

Will this little baby survive? Is it too injured? Are its parents alive? Will they find each other? What should be the Ambassador's point of prayer? The answer, the prayer's directing, comes swiftly in three words, 'massive internal injuries'.

The Ambassador's heart sinks at the news but soon lifts again, becoming further involved in the conversation with God. As the heart rises, so does trust in the Ambassador's divine prayer partner.

Here human faith knows hidden truth. The kingdom gate is being opened over this baby, thousands of miles away, and rescue, healing and family reunion are all on the way. The result is known in advance to the Ambassador by faith.

'Prayer is like the dove that Noah sent forth, which blessed him not only when it returned with an olive-leaf in its mouth, but when it never returned at all.'

Edward Robinson (1794-1863)

Chapter 6

The prayer partnership begins to develop

Jesus has said to all his potential kingdom ambassadors, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, 'though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.'" Luke 8:10 (NIV)

Until I came to the King and accepted his ready offer of an apprenticeship as an ambassador of his kingdom, I was suspicious of anything to do with mystery. I expected that the deepest truths of the highest subject, kingdom power and glory, should be so broken down into tiny pieces that we ordinary people, in pulpit or pew, could understand them in the spaces of spare time we might have between reading the newspaper and watching television.

Perhaps the kingdom is not advancing as fast as it should because, like me, there may be too many of us quite happy with the most superficial interpretations of kingdom truths, lazily resting in the superficial judgements that flow from such ignorance.

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" John 14:8-9 (NIV)

Here's a statement of truth from Karl Barth (1886-1968), during his 1963 Princeton lectures:

A student asked: "Sir, don't you think that God has revealed himself in other religions and not only in Christianity?"

Barth: "No, God has not revealed himself in any religion, including Christianity. He has revealed himself in his Son."
Karl Barth

To dispel my own natural tendency to slip into neutral I stay with the daily H O P E routine and, through using it, I feel I am growing in the knowledge of the kingdom's secrets. In doing this, I have found it always vital to pray through Jesus, in his name or through Jesus Christ Our Lord. I would never say those words in God's face without knowing why!

This is why. If a judge in my own country went overseas, determined to judge a case over there that he is very interested in, he would be politely asked to go home. He would have no right to be at the Bar over there. He would be disbarred in that country. In the same way I am, even as an appointed ambassador, disbarred from standing in front of Father God, banned by the human race's misdoings, our turning our backs on him for centuries.

If our prayers are righteous (these are the ones that come to us from him in the first place), if it is these prayers we are responding to, then they come with Christ's agreement built in. These are the kingdom-stretching prayers.

Then it is as though Jesus himself, as we play our part in this agreement with him, takes these prayers on board and comes with us to speak to Father God, on our behalf. It's as though he introduces us afresh by saying something like,

"Father, this is a friend of mine. We get on well together and I agree with this prayer."

Then it's as though the Father looks at us and says,

“That's fine. If Jesus wants it then I want it and so you can have what you're asking for.”

I cannot really pray properly without my prayer partner, Jesus. It is precisely why the H O P E routine is so important - it keeps me in the stream of God's dream. When I keep doing it I see the difference!

I have grown to see that allowing an effective prayer relationship to develop with God, through which he can work, needs three of my organs, an ear, a tongue and a pair of eyes, metaphorically speaking. In order of use, I first need an ear to pick up God's prayer wishes for me, then, secondly, my tongue talks to him, then, thirdly, my spiritual sight, my sense of awareness to keep watching out for the result.

Bible study (albeit private reading time at home) is the background listening side of all this. The grand purposes of God come in through our ears, as it were, passing through our hearts where they take on the flavour of our individual personality. Then they pass out of us through our tongues (albeit silently) in the form of prayer, back to God.

God is always speaking but, even where there may be someone wanting to listen, the sounds of this world too easily smother the sound of his voice in our souls. Reading the Bible makes this process much easier - it's God in print. God himself speaks in these books and displays the backcloth for his recovery planning.

Any skill should be exercised or it is lost. It is a longing of mine to be included in God's general and generous offer of a prayer partnership in kingdom building and my only way in is to build the H O P E discipline to exercise such an intimate relationship. I knew that I would never be good at anything unless I was prepared to put in regular time to practise. It works. If I wanted to learn a foreign language I could never do it without study and without a great deal of practice. I could never speak a different language just because I wanted to! Being a prayer partner with Christ and being a Kingdom building ambassador needs the same practice. I need constant prayer practice, not to get the words right but to spend my prayer times focused on him.

The fundamental basis of kingdom-stretching prayer is not contained either in our form of words or in the manner in which we address God with them. It is in something else entirely – it lies in having a right relationship with him, a holy working partnership, the horse before the cart.

I am learning to sit on the cart's driving seat and follow the horse, learning to listen and follow him. Strangely enough, the king's ambassadors are not teamsters. We don't pull the reins this way and that to steer the horse, we hold them lightly in our fingertips, picking up the signals coming back down the length of the reins and, surprisingly, steering the cart to follow the horse.

The only practical basis for relating to God in this way is Jesus. It is only through him. We have outlawed ourselves by turning our backs on him. Though we are designed and built to be in touch with God, the human condition is that of having

broken away from him and being unable to repair the damage ourselves.

Jesus came. He was both entirely God and entirely man. Nothing has changed, in that we can reach back to our heavenly Father God through Jesus, and only through him. The blood shed on his cross is the basis of all prayer. It is only through the 'buying back' business of his dying that the sought-after relationship that underlies all our prayer is established. I can come to God through Jesus to get my having ignored him straightened out. Only as I keep in step with Jesus in what drives my prayer life can I seriously practise prayer, staying involved in his kingdom-stretching dreams.

I have no need for prepared words, if any at all. Silence is golden. God does not listen to my words but to my heart.

'He prays well who is so absorbed with God that he does not know he is praying.'

Francois de Sales (1567-1622)

7.

Prelude

The Bushfires were ranging and roaring out of control. Thousands of fire fighters were struggling around the clock, against overwhelming heat and an unbreathable atmosphere of thick smoke, to contain thousands of blazing acres of destruction. The dry season was at its peak, drought reigned and the wind was forcing the fires onto new ground every moment of very long days and overheated nights. Human inhabitants were being rescued, evacuated. Hearts were being devastated by lifetimes' losses. Animal inhabitants were largely being wiped out by the firestorm. Rescue trucks patrolled the edges of the fire fields, searching for the injured, the frightened and sometimes still burning livestock and wildlife alike.

These wildfires had been out of control for over two weeks, causing the king's Ambassador to offer prayers of intercession in the most unspecific terms. So many were involved - panic-stricken people, professional firefighters on the verge of collapse, tortured animals, smoke-covered cities, isolated neighbours. Who to pick to pray for? This wildfire problem had far too many aspects to focus prayer.

So the Ambassador waited. General prayers were offered every day but this king's Ambassador was awaiting any specific job that God had in mind. Then came a great Nudge while watching film of local inhabitants being evacuated by boat from local beaches. Recognising an abnormal and considerable spike of concern as a prompting from God, the Ambassador went to a private place to listen. What thought came to mind? A conversation with God occurred to him.

"I want you to stop the wind."

"That's impossible!" was the reply. "People can't do things like that."

“But we can do greater things than these!” came the divine response.

So, quite simply, recognising that God can do anything if we are obedient, opening the kingdom Gates as he suggests, the Ambassador asked God to do something with the wind that might help. All the other aspects of this dreadful problem could now be left to other ambassadorial team members under the command of our Commander in Chief. In faith, he left the presence of God, satisfied that his tiny part in the near future of that country was complete. Was it only a tiny part?

By the following morning the wind had died right down and changed direction, allowing hundreds of re-energised firefighters to attack the problem again and speedily gain control. They started winning.

The Ambassador grinned at God. “I just love being a member of your team! I feel most honoured that you picked me.” the Ambassador chuckled.

Chapter 7

In Which The Ambassador Takes Stock.

We ambassadors, like every other human being, have two trap doors opening into ourselves from God—our eyes and our ears and we need to be constantly aware of both of them. It is through these two that God comes in and makes himself and his views known to us. Everything we know about God’s thinking comes in this way. Both these trapdoors are mounted in our hearts and are under our own control.

At least they shut gradually. This 'soft' closing, as it were, is God-slowing down the closing process. He makes our trapdoors close gradually and gently so that, while they are still closing, the thought of his presence might still be appealing to us.

Those rare days when I am too busy to spend private time with God, somewhere with no interruptions, are just like my hearing things without being willing to listen. It is the same as looking at something reluctantly but not really seeing it at all. The tuning that allows me to hear and see God lies deeper still, down in the intentions, the dreams, the desires of my heart.

Any unreadiness on my part to hear his Nudges and obey them has the eventual effect of deafening my ears. It blurs my vision of God and then blinds me to his answers. Constant enthusiasm to serve the King as his prayer partner, his ambassador in a troubled world, has the opposite effect. It keeps my hearing sharp and raises the lids from my spiritual eyes. Spiritual ears and eyes are very sensitive organs. Hearing and seeing is done with our hearts.

God is commonly thought of as being silent but his silence may simply be our deafness. The truth is he is speaking all the time but we are so absorbed with everything else going on in life that we do not hear him. He is ever looking into our faces with his deep and tender eyes but we can be so wrapped up in something else that our focus does not see his loving gazing. He gets no answering glance from us. How disappointing that must be for him!

As an apprentice ambassador, I first found the absolute truth of this by experimenting myself, in a time without regard for worldly things or people but only for God. I obeyed the inner voice for prayer (my holy Nudges) in ways that are often quite unexpected and which often have, in my poor human view, little or nothing to do with the problem at hand. Then I learned to watch, secretly and quietly, for the result. It usually comes with an always surprising certainty and speed.

The reason for this is simple. In being prepared to set life aside in a time and place devoted to listening to the nudging in the heart, we are simply moving back into our native air where, of course, all the powers work better.

The nerve channels of our ears and eyes run down into our hearts. An intense young Hebrew, Isaiah, was once caught in the temple one day by a vision of God. The sight of this glory held his heart for the rest of his life. With the sight of the glory came the voice and the message for the nation: "Tell these people - 'you are continually hearing, but you do not listen, nor take in what you hear. Your eyes are open, they look, but they do not see.'"

Then the voice said, "Make their heart fat, and their ears heavy, and their eyes shut."

By continually telling us what we continually refuse to hear because it does not suit us, Isaiah is setting in motion the action that brings these unwanted results; ears that will not hear will become spiritually deaf; hearts that have no wish to love and obey get into a state of degeneration; valves that refuse to move in loving obedience will get too heavy with fat to move at all. The fat clogs up the hinges in our spiritual trapdoors.

The more we begin to live more regularly in the presence of God, the more we become conscious of something wrong with our tongues. The sight that comes into view, the sounds through our spiritual ears that nudge our hearts can (and should) make us painfully self-conscious about this defect. We are 'lost for words'.

Moses found himself slow to speech, if not stammering. Isaiah felt the need of a burning, cleansing coal for his tongue. At that blessed time of Pentecost, the first thing that God did to heal his disciples was to deal with the use of their tongues.

A few lines in Paul's letter to the Ephesian circle of churches detail the steps down this ladder towards spiritual blindness and deafness because of the hardening of their hearts.

The start of all sin, Paul suggests, is the setting of one's self against God. Choosing some other way than his. He calls it 'hardening of the heart'. The native juices of our hearts are drawn away from God and dry up.

This hardening leaves our doors open, inevitably, to ignorance which then opens any further doors to anything that is solely directed to satisfying self. The limits on this downhill speeding into spiritual, mental and physical depravity is, thankfully, slowed down by the application of our consciences, the brakes of God.

Now Jesus is the music of God's heart, freshly sounding in our hearts. He is the face of God, close up, tenderly looking into our faces, wanting to catch our eye.

It is here that the river bed of our own outpouring grows more like Christ. Many of us have good works and good attitudes flooding out of us while paying scant attention to the purity of the river's bed. The flow of the water in the stream may look inviting but it is dirtied and coloured by what it might be flowing over.

Wrong motives and the anger of bad relationships can send a good stream through a bad channel. The stream of life can be turned the wrong way around. It is turned in.

Its true direction, on the other hand, is straight up. The true centre of gravity for the King's ambassador is not downwards or inwards but up and out. Regular and uninterrupted time in the presence of God is what keeps us aware of upward gravity and keeps the blessings of God's influence flowing into this broken creation.

8.

Prelude

The Press reporter gets access into the crowded desert refugee camp the day before the bombs start to fall. The following morning he witnesses the neighbouring nation's Army and Air Force's explosive invasion across the border. The invaders have identified the refugee camp as being a terrorist hideaway

and seem determined to subdue it at any cost. Heavy guns are shelling, rockets are screaming in like hordes of killer mosquitoes and bombs are being tossed into the camp by high flying jets. The orphan camp children are running.

They have no parents to shelter them. Their mothers and fathers have left their home countries to be here and have subsequently been killed or captured in earlier gunfights across the country. Now their children are alone, torn and tattered, screaming, running this way and that to avoid the death blasts that could injure them or end their lives at any moment.

Many of these scared children are, the reporter discovers, the grandchildren of comfortable and peacefully well-established families in other far off countries, living quietly and at peace with the world. Various child support agencies, wanting to put families back together again, cannot get into the camp to rescue the children because of the shelling. It is simply far too dangerous.

A King's ambassador, sharing the reporter's shock from two thousand miles away, retreats into the presence of the King, not knowing what to say. Bathing in the peace of God's presence does little to calm the urgency of the situation in the ambassador's heart.

“What do you want me to do? How can I pray?”

The Nudge in the ambassador's soul is quite clear and quite shocking. “Tell them I want the invasion stopped,”

There are surely a hundred other aspects to this problem which would be much easier to pray for? A sense of complete uselessness grows from realising that there is absolutely nothing, at that range, that the ambassador can do. But there is.

The ambassador, in her prayer imagination, sees herself gaining an appointment to meet the leader of the invading country's Government. She boldly addresses him in her mind's picture of that meeting.

"Sir," she says, "I'm here on behalf of the King of the kingdom of God. He is the Commander-in-Chief of an army of countless angels (that's a lot bigger than yours) and I speak on his behalf. He tells me that he wants you to stop this invasion immediately!"

Returning then to God's presence, the ambassador thanks him in faith that some movement is now on the way. The following morning sees the invaders declare a cease-fire and withdraw all their armed forces back across the border. Several child support agencies gain immediate access to the camp, gathering up the frightened children and carrying them to safety. Another twenty four hours see them flying out of that beleaguered country and on the way to a new life in the secure bosom of their wider families.

The King's ambassador fills up with pride in being a member of the Chief's army. Back in his presence she can only boast of Jesus!

Chapter 8

The Ambassador Sinks into God's Love

I cannot lose sight of the fundamental concrete foundation of prayer, that God is GOOD and that God is LOVE. To set either of these two aside is to hammer down my own trust levels and the lower they go the less likely any prayers of mine will be answered.

The world around us badly needs kingdom prayer-givers and I find it sensible to join in, as I began to see the people around me as my mission field! It may even be that God has placed me among them for the particular purposes of being a kingdom Ambassador there. I throw myself excitedly into the work, believing I have become a change maker by working in prayer partnership with God to extend his kingdom today. I had begun my Ambassador's apprenticeship by thinking there was only one way we believers look at God,. There are two, the common way and the kingdom way. They are very different from each other.

The Common Way: this approach assumes a God who seems remarkably reluctant to get down here and help his children when we need him, if truth be known. If we ask for something, we may or may not get it. Who knows? We are not sure we really expect anything to happen but there is no harm in asking!

This is worshipping a god built out of our life's experiences, not out of Jesus' teachings on the kingdom of God and his promises to us. If we do not trust then we do not leave the door open for the inflow of his repairing Grace. The fewer prayers are answered the less we trust and then even fewer

prayers get answered. We spiral quickly down into a life without trust. We can soon find ourselves giving up serious prayer altogether.

The Kingdom Way: this, I find, is very different. This is seeing the loving God who longs, above everything else, to bring all his children home into a perfect life with him, as pictured by him in the Bible story of Creation. Reading the same scriptures from this kingdom viewpoint has changed my view of God into a trusting relationship which yields repair fruit. Seek first the kingdom of God, Jesus says, and all these things will be added unto you. The effective kingdom ambassador sticks with Jesus' promises.

I had, then, to step forward in the humility of accepting I might, just for one moment, have been wrong and start to seek the kingdom view of things again. I began to abandon the idea of judging God by my own experiences.....his apparent reluctance in answering prayer might not be his decision at all but mine, my own closed eyelids, my own turning away?

Gloriously, there are no limits on who can pray or what we can pray for. There are, however, three limitations placed on us. They are these: firstly, the most effective prayer goes through Jesus; secondly, the prayer-giver should seek first his kingdom, to know it and to love it; thirdly, the prayer-giver is to trust him.

The relationship with God that drives my prayer life has one all-absorbing purpose, to please Jesus - not myself or those around me but him. Real prayer is not so much something I do but an attitude—an attitude of dependency, dependency on God. It's living closely with him so that there can be common

lines of thought between his mind and mine. Such common lines, for all of us, are the vehicle God has appointed to communicate the blessings of his Grace and goodness to anyone and everyone. To make this a reality, all the king's ambassadors and all his people need him to fill their minds with his thoughts and then his desires become their desires, flowing back to him in their prayers.

Our most common prayer is, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done." The kingdom of God does not come because we try to pull God's will down here to fit into our own lives. It is only fully come when God's will and our's become the same. That is the ambassador's prayer deal with God.

So I constantly practise the habit of inwardly gazing on God. Every time I do this, I know that something inside me sees him. Even when I am pressured into withdrawing my conscious attention in order to be involved in other things, there is a secret communion always going on inside me.

A train, to reach its objective, needs a set of two parallel rails on which to run. With one rail missing, or even a gap in one of them, the train will struggle to reach home. At worst his will could be derailed altogether. Thus it is that God's will and his ambassador's will must be kept in tune, in parallel so that the desires of God's heart can find their home in the lives of his children.