

There was once a magician on a cruise ship who performed mainly sleight of hand tricks. He had a regular spot on the ship's cabaret evening entertainment. He was actually quite a good magician, but his routines were regularly ruined by the onboard parrot who would fly around squawking out and giving away his secrets like:

"IT'S UP HIS SLEEVE, IT'S UP HIS SLEEVE!" or

"IT'S IN HIS POCKET, IT'S IN HIS POCKET!" or

"IT'S IN HIS MOUTH, IT'S IN HIS MOUTH!"

The magician was getting pretty sick of this and threatened to kill the parrot if it ruined his act one more time. That evening right at the climax of his act, just as he was about to disappear in a puff of smoke, the ship hit an iceberg and sank in seconds.

Amazingly, the magician and the parrot were the only two survivors. The magician was lying on a piece of driftwood in a daze.

As he opened his eyes he could see the parrot staring at him out of its beady little eye.

The parrot sat there for hours just staring at him and eventually said, "OK, I give up, what did you do with the ship?"

For many of us, life happens in such a way that it takes the stuffing out of us. Well laid plans go horribly wrong. Financial investments go sour. Relationships fall apart. Church is not the same anymore. Life has no movement. It is the same as same as!

God seems to be disinterested in our lives. Prayers are not answered. Bible reading seems stale. We do not feel close to God as we did.

It seems that we have hit an iceberg and like the parrot we wonder what has happened. What did you do with the ship?

Is God hiding something up his sleeve? What disappearing trick has He conjured now? Is God really in control of our lives? Why does it seem to get out of control from time to time? Where is God and what is He really doing?

The story of Job gives us some insights into how God may be in control of our world and things are really not heading down the gurgler!

Job's predicament begins in heaven, unknown to Job. Satan the adversary comes to God and suggests that Job is faithful only because God blesses him. If you take away the blessings, Job, like anyone one else, would drop God like a hot potato!

God gives permission for Satan to attack Job. In the attack, Job loses fields, livestock and family members (all of his children bar his wife). Some have wondered why Job's wife didn't get killed also. Her attitude and help was not very comforting!

He also contracts a disease that is painful and distressing. His mates come and give him all the pat answers as to why he is in this state of affairs. "You must have sinned!". "You need to be taught a lesson!"

Job knows that this is not true. He demands an audience with God to present his case. God appears but not in the way Job expects. God gives Job a lesson in creation and who really has the power!

Job sees things differently and repents of his insights. God affirms Job and restores his life, family and possessions back to Him.

For many people the story of Job raises more questions and answers. We all would like answers to the why's of life.

So what may we learn from the biblical account when our life hits an iceberg?

1. God is all powerful and nothing escapes Him

God is omnipotent and nothing escapes his gaze; not even a sparrow falling to the ground that from a human perspective is not worth much and is insignificant. Nothing about your life and circumstance escapes God's attention. He takes note of everything that happens to you and even prevents them harming you through the prayers of His people.

2. There is a bigger picture that we can't see

There is much that goes on in our world that we don't see, don't want to see and can't see. There is much that happens in the heavenly realm that few people can see. The world in which we live does not centre around us though we would like it to. The world revolves around God's Kingdom purposes and plans. There are things that we do not understand and not allowed to know.

Yet there is a spiritual war dynamic where Satan is able to attack the brethren with God's permission. Even Jesus said to Peter that Satan has asked God to allow Satan to sift him. (Luke 22:31)

There is a spiritual dynamic about our lives that does involve the enemy in some way. Job's story reminds us of that dynamic.

3. Bad things that happen to us does not mean that we are bad

The lie that we believe is that bad things = bad person. We take things personal when things happen to us. We question who we are and look for something wrong inside of us. We develop a negative outlook about ourselves that leads to further condemnation.

Job's friends adopted the "truth" of the day that bad things happen because you are bad. You are a sinner, Job, which is why this has happened to you! Job knew that he had done nothing

wrong. He was not a sinner and so what his friends said did not add up.

The challenge for us is to see the enemy's lie that we are a bad person (we are sinners) and it is our entire fault.

Jesus died so that we may be forgiven and made whole.

Bad things can happen to us if we are disobedient: don't take advice; don't follow God's directions or Word.

Bad things can happen because of the sin of others. I heard of two minister's cars being damaged by people hitting their car in a car park and driving off without telling them. They came out after their meeting with a panel dented and a \$1500 repair bill.

Bad things can happen to innocent people as we all live in a sinful world.

But that does not make you bad!

4. Things get better through an encounter with God

The turning point for Job was his encounter with God. God met him in a powerful and life transforming way. Job did not get his answers but he did meet God that enabled Job to face life differently. He saw things from God's perspective rather than his own.

We can get so self absorbed by our own issues and problems that we cannot see the wood from the trees. This self focus robs us of our God focus. Once we reconnect with God and meet Him afresh we see our lives differently.

In many ways we do not need answers but we need an encounter with God.

5. God can turn things around for our good

Job ends up in a different place. The sores are gone. A family is born. Wealth is redeemed. Job became a different man and was able to serve God again.

God gives back what was taken from Job. God will restore what has been taken from you. As I look at my life, I see the restoration of God in my life. Some of it was financial that enabled Liz and I to live for a few months while we were setting up Walking Free. Some of it was fantastic experiences meeting people and going places. Some of it was experiencing God in a new way that was awesome. Some was the repositioning of the ministry at Coolangatta by the sea! Some is seeing the way God brings healing and wholeness to people's lives.

Prosperity is never measured by your bank account though some would like us to think so. It is the measure of Shalom in your life: the presence and peace of God.

We continue to pray and seek God about the progress of Walking Free. New clients are not coming as quickly as before. But just when we think that we will have a day off, there is a phone call and a booking.

We are still trying to make contact with other churches to share about what we do. We just caught up with a couple we knew from College days. They came to the coast 25 years ago and planted a church. It has grown to 450 people over the years. He and the church are a part of the 3C network headed up by Phil Pringle at Oxford Falls in Sydney NSW. We will see what may come of this.

We are exploring with God how this ministry may be birthed where I am as the minister. The local church is sympathetic as we gently introduce healing and bring new life to the morning service. We have seen growth in the life of the church but we still have a way to go.

We need a few people committed to God's healing ministry to join us. They may not come to the local church but they need to live in the area. It is a huge prayer point that only God can answer.

We thank God for our friends at Toowoomba and Rosewood. I still travel each month to both places where they and I continue to pray for healing over the phone and face to face. We still see God blessing their ministry.

We had a great time in Adelaide with our family celebrating our eldest's, Naomi, thirtieth birthday. It was good to see family and friends. Not one visit to Adelaide goes by without an opportunity to minister God's healing grace.

I spoke with one lady about her life and she was prayed for today. A friend has had some physical difficulties and we were able to help her to search the internet about it as well as pray for her condition. The Lord prompted Liz to ring and connect with her. God brought it all together for her and us.

My son, David, is working on the website. He has given me a list of jobs to do to upgrade the info for the web page! I still have work to do on the training material and other material. Getting the time and the energy is the challenge. The book may have to be put onto the back burner until this material is done.

I thank God for the people who continue to support us financially. Some give small and some give big but all give out of their heart. It is a real blessing to look up the bank account and see the regular contributions of people that have invested their money into Walking Free.

I came back from holidays to do a funeral. The elderly husband lost his wife of 33 years. They were an amazing couple who travelled extensively in the seventies. They drove a campervan through Russia in the 1990's. The husband had some belief but most of the family did not. Again God gave me the opportunity to bring good news to people who rarely come to church.

Yet one guy who was present came up and thanked me. He was a Christian. His brother who was present was going through difficulties was touched by God and he is making some changes in his life. The family were very responsive to the service. Again, another God opportunity to present good news and challenge people about their eternal destiny!

May you continue to see God's activity in your life and the world around you. May you respond to the gentle nudges of the Holy Spirit to pick up the phone, sms, email or visit someone that God lays upon your heart.

May you continue to make a difference for the sake of the God's Kingdom.

Prayer Points

- Thank God that he is in control of your life
- Thank God that He is working for you behind the scenes.
- Thank God for His angels that are warring on your behalf and protecting you from the enemy.
- Thank God that He provides for all our needs.
- Pray for discernment concerning the next steps for Walking Free.
- Pray for new clients to come at the right time for our team members.
- Pray for new people to become prayer team members. Pray for a team to be established at Coolangatta. Pray for a healing centre to be established.
- Pray for Coolangatta church to continue to be open to the healing work of Jesus.
- Pray for wisdom and inspiration to develop material for training etc to put on website.
- Pray for our prayer teams: Hal and Debbie, Barbara, Robyn, Jenny, Liz and myself.
- Pray for our management team: John, Liz, Jamie, Robyn, Rod, Jen and Craig. Pray that we receive God's leading for our ministry.
- Pray for the Toowoomba site of Walking Free.
- Thank God for the financial provision of this ministry. We are grateful to the many that are obedient and give to our ministry weekly, monthly and one off. We have been blessed with gifts of merchandise and money, computers and printing. We have been blessed with many talented and gifted people who give of their time, talent and treasure each week to help this ministry have a Kingdom impact.