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Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "LAUNCH OUT INTO THE DEEP and let down your nets for a catch."
(Luke 5:3-4 NKJ)

Foreword.

In July 1995, the Lord impressed my heart with the phrase *launch out into the deep* and then marvelously confirmed it the very same day by giving it to a sister that had been praying for me. Looking back over the nearly 30 years since the Lord broke into our lives, my wife, Jeannette, and I readily testify that this phrase best sums up our lives with the Lord, especially, but not exclusively, since 1995. It seems that each year, the Lord Jesus has thrust us out deeper and deeper into His untraceable riches (Ephesians 3:8); to Him alone we give all the glory.

We have documented the highlights of this launching out in a special booklet titled *Launch Out Into The Deep*. It is available for the asking (PDF format via email).

We do not present the following as anything unique, for many of the Lord's people have experienced the mercy, grace, and love of God, as we have. All of us who belong to the Lord have a marvelous story to tell, and each story is unique in some way.

Simply, we all have our own story; it is *His* story, the story of our beloved Savior working in our lives to conform us to His image and to prepare us as His complement (fullness of His image) for the oncoming eons (ages) and beyond.

What follows is one chapter of our story of being launched out that specifically pertains to the grace of God that was poured out on us when Jeannette became gravely ill nearly six years ago. How appropriate that the name *Jeannette* means "God is gracious."

Through our personal stories, we are able to encourage others in the Lord, and all of our stories together speak volumes of ***God is love***. We pray that our story will encourage you, and even more so as greater tribulation and distress come upon this world. We all need encouragement in the day of shaking.

Let us never forget that our Lord Jesus is faithful, and His name is Faithful and True (Revelation 19:11).

So, let us begin with the journey.

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The journey.

We can testify that the major events in our life with the Lord have been preceded by a clear word, a dream, or a vision.

On **December 24, 2002**, we were visiting my parents, and one afternoon I decided to take a nap. Just as I lay down on the bed, I had a vision of a winding road; it seemed like I was moving along this road. Then I heard: ***“I am taking you on a journey you have not been on before.”*** I inquired if Jeannette was going along, and the answer was *yes*. I shared it with Jeannette, and we began praying over the matter of this journey, all along wondering and pondering what the Lord was going to do. We must confess that we never dreamed of the type of journey we were about to embark upon. Truly, Jeannette was going on the journey, and in fact, it was about her.

Starting in 2000, Jeannette had begun to experience periodic bouts of unexplained abdominal pain. She had had several bouts while on our last two trips to Ghana as well. Nevertheless, we prayed during these times, and she endured; but the pains would come and go over the next few years. During these years, we had purposed not to go to doctors unless it was absolutely necessary. Often, we would say that the Lord would take care of us. We thought we were being spiritual; but it was presumption on our part.

As we look back, we realize that trusting the Lord is not casting everything to the wind and saying the Lord will take care of it. It is His call if we are to seek medical help or not. Unfortunately, we had taken it upon ourselves to presume upon the Lord that He would be pleased if we never sought medical help. Our lesson: Never presume that the Lord will work a certain way; He alone is Lord, and we must learn to trust Him and learn to seek Him and His way for all things.

In spite of our mistake, we can testify that **God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose** (Romans 8:28 NASB). Absolutely nothing is lost in the experiences of life of His children called to grow up to be sons, to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

Interestingly, a very dear brother in Ghana named Stephen emailed us on September 20, 2003 to encourage us that *God is going to do a mighty work in your life soon*. Little did we know at that time how true these words would be.

During the summer of 2003, Jeannette began to have more bouts of these pains, and by September of that year, I noticed that she looked pale, which was very unusual for her. She did go to a doctor on August 12, 2003 with some symptoms that, when we look back, were warnings, but we all missed the severity of them. Within a month, she began to look like she had swallowed a beach ball, so it was time to see the doctor again.

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On **October 1, 2003**, the doctor examined her and immediately sent her for a special test (CT scan of her abdomen). At the conclusion of the test, the radiologist told Jeannette to return to our doctor immediately, for he was waiting for us. It was late in the day, and we had to drive quite a distance across town to the doctor's office.

We knew that something was wrong and figured it was quite serious; nevertheless, we had peace in our hearts. We even discussed the possibility that it was cancer. When we arrived at the doctor's office, we were immediately shown to a room to wait for the doctor. As he approached the closed door, the doctor let out a big sigh. We knew it was not good news.

He informed us that the scan revealed that Jeannette had colon cancer that had spread to the liver, which had two lesions the size of lemons. He said that the probability of conquering the cancer was not very good. In spite of this report, we were still very much at peace. In fact, the doctor was the one who was upset over the diagnosis. We told him that it was in the hands of the Lord.

The journey began.

As we drove home, we looked at each other and said, "*Well, the journey has begun.*" We knew in our hearts that this was the journey.

We had scheduled an appointment with a surgeon for the following week; however, Jeannette's condition worsened, and two days later, on **October 3, 2003**, she was admitted to the hospital. On a Saturday morning (**October 4, 2003**), she had emergency surgery to remove most of her large colon. Nothing could be done with the liver because of the extent and location of the lesions.

When she went to the hospital, the surgeon that we thought would operate on her was not on call, so another one was assigned to Jeannette's case. This was the Lord's doing, for he is a believer and treated Jeannette very kindly and warmly. We have since learned that he is considered an outstanding surgeon. He consulted with us that first night Jeannette was admitted and informed us that because of the location of the tumor in her colon, he would have to perform a colostomy. Normally, such news would be a difficult thing to accept, but we both were peaceful about even this. Jeannette, in particular, reacted with amazing calm. It was the Lord!

The surgeon gave us the option of when to have the surgery; but he voiced some concern that we should not wait too long, since the colon could rupture and cause more serious problems. At this point, it was obvious that Jeannette's colon was completely blocked, which was later confirmed by the surgery.

That night, several brothers and sisters in Christ that we had not seen for some time showed up at the hospital to be with us. It was a blessing to see them and know that they cared so much for us.

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The next day, on a Saturday morning, the surgeon arrived to see how Jeannette was doing. At this point, she was ready to get on with the surgery, so it was scheduled for later in the morning.

I will never forget that day as they took my wife of 30 years into the operating suite. They transported her from her room to the operating area, and the operating team was standing there, with smiles on their faces. It was very peaceful.

The grace of God came upon both of us in such a powerful way that the peace of God that surpasses all understanding filled our hearts. I will never forget looking at the lovely face of my wife as she lay there. Her body was in distress, but her spirit was soaring among the celestials in glory. She looked so peaceful, so calm, so restful, even as she was about to enter something that was filled with risk and uncertainty. I not only saw and experienced grace that day, but I also saw glory. I cannot describe it; all I can say is that I saw the glory of God in the face of my wife. I will carry this image in my heart until the day that we enter glory.

I kissed her, and they took the love of my life into the operating room; it was as if she were being led by the angels.

Again, a good number of brothers and sisters from a local assembly that we no longer met with came to the hospital to sit and pray with me while Jeannette was in surgery. About one hour into the surgery, a sister who is known as a prayer warrior turned to me, and said, *“Don’t you think we should start praying again?”* I agreed, and we all prayed for Jeannette, as well as for the skill of the surgeon.

About an hour later, the surgeon came out, and he had a big smile on his face. He said something like this: *“She is fine. I have good news. I did not have to do a colostomy. I looked at her as if she were my sister and realized that I would not want my sister to have one, so I looked for a way to avoid it.”* I praised the Lord and asked him when he made this decision. His reply: *“About an hour ago.”* This was when we began to pray. I testified to him of the faithfulness of the Lord, and he said that there were times that he felt his skill was beyond his own ability. We know whose hands were directing him that day. All the glory goes to God!

Once Jeannette was in post-op, I was allowed to see her. Since it was Saturday and only emergency surgery was done, the area was very quiet. Jeannette was the only patient. When I entered the room, the nurse said: *“You must be Stu. She keeps asking for you.”* I cry every time I recall this, for it reveals the deep love she has for me.

She was still under the effects of the anesthesia, and to this day, she has no recall of the first day after surgery. However, I recall it all. When I first saw her after surgery, she looked like a little girl all wrapped in blankets to keep her warm and to raise her body temperature. I said, *“Jeannette, good news! He did not have to do the colostomy.”* In this deep, slow voice, she said, *“Praise the Lord!”* She

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repeated it every time I told her she was doing fine. She may not recall that day; but her spirit was alive and speaking to me.

Normally, after an operation of this sort, the patient is sent to a regular hospital room. However, the surgeon gave favor to Jeannette and admitted her to the intensive care unit so that she would have one-on-one care. This was a tremendous blessing and a relief for me, so that I could go home and get some rest.

In addition, Jeannette had asked for a private room. Again, the surgeon gave her favor and kept her in the intensive care unit until one was available. The nurses were perplexed as to why she was in there as long as she was. It was the Lord who gave her the desire of her heart.

Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4 NASB)

Thy will, will be done!

When Jeannette was wheeled into the operating room, we did not know what the outcome would be with the surgery or the illness, whether it would be life or death.

Frankly, the doctors did not give us much hope. All we could do was trust the whole matter to the Lord, that His will would be done.

Our prayer was: *“Lord, Thy will, will be done and to You will go all the glory.”* Another way of stating this prayer is: *“Lord, whether this illness leads to life or death, it is in Your will, and in either case, You will receive all the glory.”*

This was not a prayer for healing; it was an acknowledgment of faith that God’s will was being worked out in this situation, no matter what the outcome. In death, God would receive the glory. In life, God would receive the glory. Either way, it would be to the glory of God.

We had seen too many brothers and sisters die from cancer, even some who were convinced that God was going to heal them. Several years prior, we had prayed and fasted with brethren in a local assembly for a brother who had cancer. I thought the Lord was going to do something in this brother; but he died shortly after. So, I could not pray directly for healing. Through the lesser healings that I have known personally, we had learned that it is entirely God’s will and His doing if He chooses to touch our bodies.

It isn’t a matter of how much faith we have or don’t have; it is a matter of having faith in the God who is faithful.

Our faith is always to be in God and not in the outcome of situations in our lives.

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Frankly, at first, I had no faith of my own that Jeannette was going to survive this bout with cancer. We were cast on the Lord and His mercy for such unworthy ones.

Throughout the entire recovery period, this one prayer of *Thy will, will be done* was our anchor. We can testify that God's will, will be done, and was done, and will continue to be done! As you will see, all the glory goes to our God.

Throughout this trial, we saw grace and glory in ways that we never would have experienced otherwise. Grace and glory go hand-in-hand, and we experienced both over the months that followed as the Lord began to restore Jeannette back to health. We experienced the outcome of the lavish grace of God; the outcome of grace upon grace was glory unto glory. We give God all the praise and glory!

Be still and know!

Several years earlier, we had attended Christian conferences in Hong Kong and were introduced to a Christian bookstore that sold attractive prints of Scripture verses. We purchased several of these prints, framed them, and hung them in our home. One in particular brought much comfort and solitude to our hearts during this time.

Be still and know that I am God. ... In quietness and in confidence [trust] shall be your strength. (Psalm 46:10; Isaiah 30:15 KJV)

There was no need to be stirred up or anxious about anything. Oh, there were rough days for both of us; but even through those moments, we could look at these verses that hung on our bedroom wall and be still and know our God. Our strength was in being still and allowing Him to be God over the entire matter. Our confidence was in the Lord.

In a day in which the world has experienced much shaking that will intensify as the day of Christ approaches, what are we to do? When we are faced with a life or death situation, what are we to do? There is one thing we can do: **Be still and know the loving embrace of God.** In our stillness, He will reveal Himself in the way that He knows is best for us.

Throughout the days that followed, we can testify that we knew the loving embrace of our God who kept us and, most of all, held Jeannette's body in the palm of His hand. It wasn't our strength; rather, it was His strength. All we had to do was remain still and allow our skillful surgeon to be who He is, the God of love.

I am healing her!

One night during October 2003, after Jeannette's surgery, she was having a difficult night, and at 3 am I tended to her needs. As I laid my head back on the pillow, I heard: "***I am healing her!***" I didn't say anything to Jeannette, but then she said to me: "*I don't know if this was the Lord but I heard, 'I am healing*

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you!” We praised the Lord. This was the first occasion that we both had a witness that this illness was unto life, not death.

In spite of this word, we still had a decision to make. The doctors strongly recommended that Jeannette begin chemo treatment, which is essentially injecting poison into the body to kill another poison (cancer). If not regulated properly, the chemo itself can cause great harm to the body. We had already learned our lesson about avoiding the medical profession, so we prayed about it and had a peace that Jeannette should start the treatments. The doctors gave her no chance of survival without it. It wasn't that we doubted the Lord's word to us. Rather, it was a peace that through this process, He was going to heal. In retrospect, going through the process was more than a healing of the body. It was a healing of relationships.

I can neutralize the side-effects.

Jeannette's chemo treatment was scheduled to begin in November. I was a bit tired and drained by this time. There were a lot of things that I had to tend to, most of all her care and seeing that she ate enough to regain her lost weight. We had been together for three decades, and we can testify to the truth that the two become one.

Husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies ... nourishing and cherishing it, just as Christ does His body. (Ephesians 5:28-30 NASB)

Consequently, I have always felt it is my responsibility to care for and nourish her, and yet, I knew that I could only do so much. I had learned 14 years ago that Jesus died for her, and He alone suffered for her, and He alone will keep her. (An explanation of this appears in the full version of *Launch Out Into The Deep*.)

With this in mind, in the afternoon of November 3, 2003, I was tired and needed some rest. I listened to some music and tried to relax, but my thoughts remained on my wife. Then the thought came to me for the second time: *“I am healing her!”* But I was unsettled and cried out, *“Then why does she have to go through the chemo treatment?”* [I was concerned over the side-effects.]

I heard: ***“Do you not think I can neutralize the chemo going into her body?”*** I answered, *“Yes, Lord, You can!”*

Jeannette's testimony is that He was faithful to this word, for she had only very minor side-effects from the treatment. The Lord kept her from any severe effects. This in itself is a miracle. Not everyone can handle such treatment; some even have allergic reactions and must stop it. Praise God; Jeannette's body took it with relative ease.

We began to realize that it was the process that the Lord wanted us to go through, and through this process, He was doing more than just healing her body; He was doing a deeper and far more important work in the two of us.

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I cannot really explain why I feel this way, but I believe the Lord actually healed Jeannette by the end of 2003 (around December 22, 2003), after only two rounds of chemo. At one point, I felt that the Lord had given me the number 129, which seemed to have some importance in her recovery. I began to think that she would be healed 129 days from when she was first diagnosed. In fact, by this time, her liver function tests were all heading back into the normal range, indicating her liver was functioning well, in spite of CAT scans that continued to reveal significant lesions. At any rate, what followed in the next month seems to support this.

Will you accept 5?

On January 21, 2004, I was sitting in my study contemplating Jeannette's fourth round of chemo treatment that was to begin later that morning. *Four* is the number of material completeness. Could this mean physical completeness, as in healing?

I was a little weary on this day and was crying out to the Lord. Three words came to my mind:

First: "***The journey is about to end!***" This was an amazing word since the journey had just begun.

Second: "***The cancer on the liver is being broken up.***" When I heard this word, I cried out to the Lord: *How will we know this is true?* Then, to my amazement, the third word came: "***Will you accept 5?***"

The number *five* is the number of grace, something that we learned in deeper ways during this time.

Immediately in my spirit, I knew what the Lord was asking. There is a substance in the blood that indicates cancer activity; this is used to monitor cancer in the body, particularly colon cancer. It is not a perfect indicator; nevertheless, it is one of the markers that oncologists monitor. The substance is called CEA, and the normal level in the blood is 2.5 or less. Jeannette's CEA was higher than 30 at one point and had dropped to 15 during December 2003. I knew that the Lord was referring to a CEA of 5 as proof that He was speaking to me. I answered: "*Yes, Lord, I will accept 5.*"

Jeannette had had her blood tested a few days earlier, but we had not received the results. So, when we arrived for her chemo treatment, we asked the nurse for the results. She gave us a copy, and when I read it, my heart sank in despair. The reading was 15. Then Jeannette looked at it and noticed that it was not the most recent test; it was an old report. We informed the nurse, and she went off to retrieve the latest report. She returned and handed it to me. When I read it, I let out a *praise the Lord*. The CEA was not 5 but even less; it was 4.4. It was as if the Lord gave us a little more just so we would know that He alone was directing Jeannette's recovery and healing. Her CEA never went above 5 in the three years

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that followed. In fact, it continually went lower until it finally fell into the normal range. To God be the glory!

Why 4.4? It was a triple witness of the number *four*. It was her fourth round of treatment, and the CEA was 4.4. She was well on her way to full recovery.

As further proof, every few months, Jeannette had a special test (CT scan) to track the condition of the liver. Each scan revealed that the lesions on the liver were shrinking in size until it appeared that the cancer cells were being killed and were breaking up.

The desire of my heart.

The Lord is so good to us and so faithful to give us the desire of our heart. I recall a sister in the Lord who once chided me to be careful in what I pray. I never heeded her word, for I believe in a big God who answers big prayers. Even if my prayers are off in some way, I trust His faithfulness to read the intent of my heart.

On **August 3, 2003**, which was prior to the diagnosis of cancer, I offered up a prayer that, in a sense, was not big or grand, but what resulted from the answer to the prayer is glorious. The prayer was very simple.

“Lord, the desire of my heart is to see Jeannette set free and our relationship renewed before You come.”

We had been married for 30 years, and I sensed that our relationship was settling down too much. It wasn't that anything in particular was wrong, and yet, it seemed that we needed a renewal of our love for each other. Jeannette also needed to become free of certain things in her life.

The most glorious thing about her bout with cancer is that the Lord went all out to abundantly answer this prayer. We fell in love with one another all over again, and we are still in love today. We do everything together. We even learned to hold hands again, for as she was recovering, we would take walks in various parts of the city, all the time holding hands.

At times, the enemy would feed me lies that went like this: “You made a mistake. You never should have left your job. The dream was a hoax [explained in the full version of launching out]. Jesus isn't coming any time soon. Look at you now. You have all these unexpected medical bills. If you were still working, you would have had good medical insurance to pay for them.” As is usual with the enemy, there was some truth woven into these thoughts; but most of it was a lie.

It is true that, financially, this illness has changed things a lot for us, but if we had to relive the whole experience again, we would. We have been deeply bonded to each other. If I had been working, I never would have been able to care for my wife as I did. I was actually sad the day that I had to relinquish the household back to

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her and to see our life return to some normalcy. The Lord knew, and He called me out of a full-time job just so I could care for her and love her through the time, and for both of us to be renewed in our love for each other. Actually, it is more than a renewal, for it is deeper and stronger than when we first met. It is *sacrificial* love!

This love story could only have been written by the One who laid down His life for us and suffered for our sake. **We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren** (1 John 3:16 NASB).

We need to add at this point that the Lord also used this time to heal relationships in our families and with brethren in His body.

Before moving on, I need to make note of the date **August 3, 2003**. Four years later, this same day popped up in our lives in relation to a word the Lord gave to me on **August 3, 2007** about “the deal is done” and the sale of our last home that closed exactly on **August 3, 2009**. I wrote about this in my periodical *The Upward Call*, issue #03-0989, August 17, 2009, *Transcend Time. The Deal is Done*.

The journey is over!

During June 2004, Jeannette received a tenth round of chemo treatment. We both sensed that this was it, that she was not to receive any more of this chemical in her body. We prayed that the doctor would understand and that he would not urge her to continue with more.

At 7.30 pm on June 5, 2004, I heard: ***“The journey is over!”*** This was exactly eight months since her surgery. The number *eight* refers to a new beginning or new birth. A new beginning had come. That month, Jeannette had another very specialized and expensive test called a PET scan, and it revealed that she had no cancer in her body!

When we next visited the doctor in July, without us saying a word, he said: ***“Well, it is time to stop the treatment.”*** The Lord had gone before us to move on his heart with wisdom. By the way, *ten* is the completion of divine order, that is, the completion of a series or round of anything, the completion of a whole cycle. Truly, the cycle had been completed.

During September 2006, three years later, she had another PET scan, and it too revealed that there is no cancer. From a medical standpoint, she was diagnosed as in full remission three years after the diagnosis of cancer.

Since we were moving out of state in another month, Jeannette had her last visit with the oncologist in April 2008. His closing words went something like this: ***“I will take credit for curing your colon cancer, but I do not think you had cancer in your liver; it must have been something else.”***

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In other words, in his mind, he could explain why the cancer was gone from the colon, but he could not explain why it was no longer in the liver as well. We now realize that he never expected the liver to recover from the cancer, and when it did, he had to have another explanation.

I suppose we could be critical of the doctor, but we have to appreciate that, given his training and, frankly, his pride, this is all we could expect from him. It really matters not, for we know the true source of Life and who brought healing. It was all the Lord's doing and all the glory goes to Him.

In closing, it is important to note that the healing of Jeannette's body was for this particular bout of cancer. None of us knows what tomorrow will bring. At times, we have been hesitant to even testify of the goodness of the Lord. We wondered: What if the cancer comes back? Won't people mock this testimony and say that we were deceived? We came to realize that what God did was for this time alone. We don't know what either of us will go through in the years ahead until the Lord comes for all of us. We know this: God's will was done, and it is for His glory. We would be disobedient if we did not give Him the glory for His grace, mercy, and love that He lavished on us during this time.

It has been six years since the start of this journey.

We came to see grace in a way that took it from our head to our heart, from a word on a page in Scripture to a life-changing experience. We cannot explain why Jeannette was spared at this time. Only God knows. But through this time, we came to define grace in a new way. To us, ***grace is the overwhelming power of God that takes the ugly and transforms it into the joyously beautiful.*** Think about it!

Perhaps, someone reading this is on a journey with the Lord right now; be encouraged, God loves you and His lavish grace is always sufficient.

In closing, we leave you with the words of a song.

As Jeannette was recovering, we spent many hours together; sometimes we would just rest on the bed and listen to music. One song in particular touched our hearts during this time. It is now our song, and it is entitled "Knowing You."

All I once held dear
Built my life upon, all this world reveres
And wars to own;
All I once thought gain
I have counted loss
Spent and worthless
Now compared to this.
Knowing You, Jesus
Knowing You
There is no greater thing

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You're my all
You're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love You, Lord.

Now my heart's desire
Is to know You more
To be found in You
And known as Yours
To possess by faith
What I could not earn
All-surpassing gift
Of righteousness.
Oh, to know the power
Of Your risen life
And to know You in
Your sufferings
To become like You
In Your death, my Lord
So with You to live
And never die.

Knowing You, Jesus
Knowing You
There is no greater thing
You're my all
You're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love You, Lord.

“Knowing You” (All I Once Held Dear), sung by Matthew Ward; words and music by Graham Kendrick, 1993, Make Way Music

There is nothing greater than knowing Jesus through and in our experiences of life. His life is to be lived, not taught.

KJV	King James Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NKJ	New King James Version

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