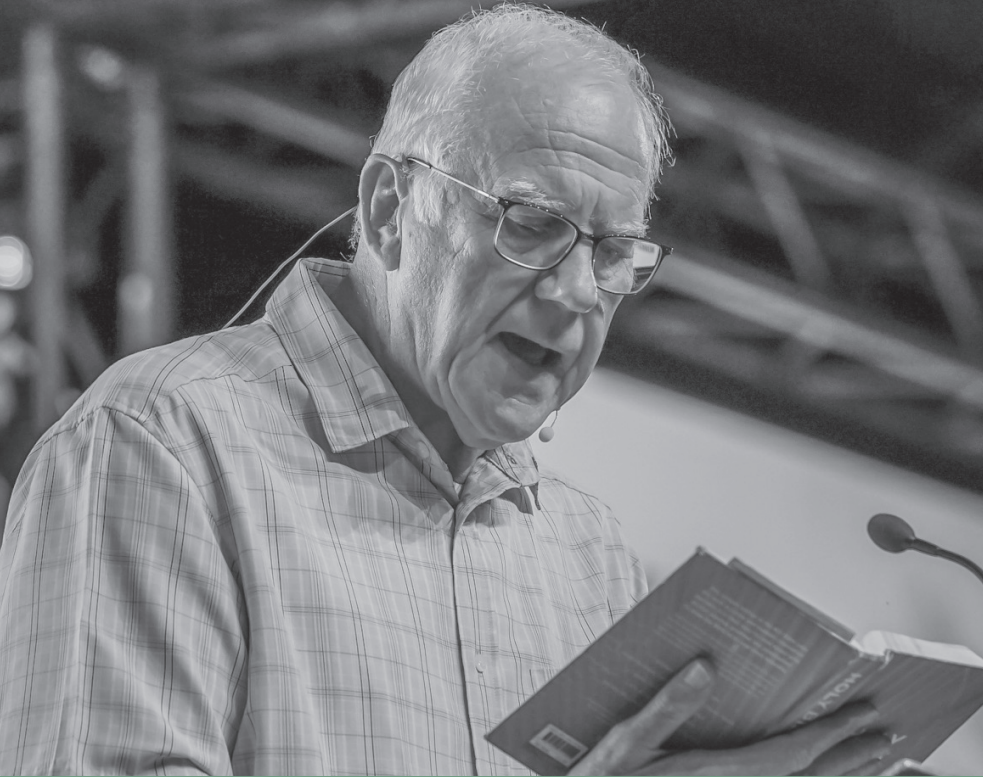


TONY HORSFALL



FOOTSTEPS OF FAITH

*Reflections from a lifetime
of following Jesus*

‘Tony, a much-loved Christian leader, shares with humility his life story, in an easy-to-read narrative. But this is much more than an autobiography. Breaking life and faith into different stages, Tony uses his experiences to help us reflect on our own spiritual journeys. Containing questions to reflect on, *Footsteps of Faith* can be used by individuals and groups to help us better understand ourselves and others. Highly recommended for those who want to grow spiritually.’

Dr Debbie Hawker, clinical psychologist

‘Tony is the author that I consistently recommend to Christian friends, missionaries, students and member care workers. This new book will be joining the list of recommendations. It is fascinating to read about the twists and turns of Tony’s life, but this is not a blow by blow account of his life. Rather it tells key elements of his story through the reflective lens of God’s power and plan. The reflections and questions at the end of each chapter are so helpful in applying Tony’s experiences to our own lives. To read it is to feel as though you’re chatting to him over a cuppa and you don’t want the conversation to end.’

Sarah Hay, HR and member care manager, European Christian Mission, and visiting lecturer, All Nations Christian College

‘This book is a generous gift. As Tony reflects on the formative work of the Lord in his life and leadership, he opens a space for us to discern the fingerprints of God in our own story. Reading this book feels like a conversation with a wise and experienced mentor. Whatever stage you’re at, his reflections will help you see your journey with deeper clarity and to be more present to the ways of God in what lies ahead.’

Melinda Hendry, ministry development lead, Living Leadership

‘*Footsteps of Faith* is an engaging spiritual autobiography of how Tony has learned to both seek and see God through the seasons of his life and ministry in service of Jesus. Tony’s desire to teach, disciple and mentor people in their faith in Jesus, to help all of us to more clearly discern God’s guidance, is evident throughout the book.’

Cliff Kay, Anglican minister, diocese of Sheffield, UK

‘One of the profound gifts in life is to learn from others who are further on the journey than ourselves. Tony offers this valuable gift. This is a brilliant book, rich with his life story, and all the more helpful as each chapter offers key reflections on crucial developmental and formational topics. You will find yourself somewhere in this book and have a road map for what is ahead. Here is a book worthy of deeper reflection.’
Scott E. Shaum, director of pastoral advancement, Barnabas International

‘*Footsteps of Faith* is more than Tony’s wonderfully full and authentic life story – it holds deep and rich wisdom from someone living a life abandoned to the glory of God. There is much insight here for anyone navigating life and particularly those in church leadership. The book is well informed and provides opportunity to reflect on one’s own season of life. I wholeheartedly recommend *Footsteps of Faith*.’
Morne Smit, pastor, God First Church, Christchurch

‘This is a wonderful book for every stage of life, whether reflectively looking back, managing the present, or preparing for the future. It’s backed by solid research but reads easily, good narrative as well as specific points to slow down and consider, with a challenge to think carefully and respond healthily. It’s heartwarming without ducking difficulties. The reality of God’s faithfulness within the ups and down of the Christian life, working with churches and mission agencies, is helpfully considered. God wants to work in us for change and through us for fruitfulness. We learn about “falling into grace”, and becoming more than doing. This is a book to read and benefit from, then to pass on to others.’
Alan Tower, Friends International National director (UK)



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OF FAITH

*Reflections from a lifetime
of following Jesus*



Ministries

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*O let me see thy footsteps,
And in them plant mine own;
My hope to follow duly
Is in thy strength alone.
O guide me, call me, draw me,
Uphold me to the end;
And then in heaven receive me,
My Saviour and my friend.*

John Ernest Bode (1816–74)

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Many people have been part of the rich tapestry of my life, but it has not been possible to acknowledge here the contribution that each has made to my growth and development. You are nonetheless special, and your names are written on my heart. I will always treasure your friendship and wisdom and your place in my story. Know that, as the apostle Paul would have said, 'I thank my God every time I remember you.'

I am grateful to my wife Jilly for patiently reading through the manuscript chapter by chapter, making helpful comments, and asking pertinent questions. Still in the early days of our marriage, this discipline provided us with a crash course in 'getting to know you.' You are aware I am no super-saint, but happily you still love me! You are a wonderful companion.

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I am so proud of my children Alistair and Debbie, and their amazing families. You shared much of this journey with your lovely Mum and I, both the joys and the sorrows. You are deeply loved and much appreciated.

Finally, huge thanks to my publishers, BRF Ministries, for believing in me as a writer for more than 20 years and now giving me the opportunity to share my story.

FOREWORD

It was the American evangelist D.L. Moody who reputedly summarised the life of Moses with the observation that he ‘spent forty years thinking he was somebody, forty years learning he was nobody, and forty years discovering what God can do with a nobody.’ It’s folksy wisdom, for sure, but in its simplicity it draws our attention to the developmental work that takes place across a leader’s spiritual journey.

In his first letter, the apostle John writes about ‘children’, ‘young men’ and ‘fathers’. A good case can be made for the idea that he is describing three stages of spiritual development. The children are new believers who are rejoicing that their sins are forgiven and that they have a heavenly Father. Further along, the young men are strong and engaged in spiritual conflict. And then there are the fathers: those who – in the words of John Stott – ‘possess the depth and stability of ripe Christian experience.’¹ It’s a compelling vision of the spiritual journey.

It may not feel to us that our journeys fall into such neat chronological classification, but it is helpful, not least as we get further along, to trace the ways that God has been at work in leading us. As Kierkegaard reminded us, while life has to be lived forwards, it is best understood backwards; or, in the words of William Bridges with which this book begins, ‘it is only in seeing where you have been that you can tell where you are headed.’

The book you are about to embark on is Tony Horsfall’s look back at where he has been and how God has led him to where he is today. Some of you will already have come across some of Tony’s story or

encountered his teaching on one of his retreats, or in one of the considerable number of books he has written previously. You will recognise the wise and gentle voice of a man who has walked with God through several decades and through several seasons.

It is a beautiful story, told with a humble and unassuming candour that doesn't rush past the jagged edges of disappointment or the reality of pain, yet points us unmistakably to the gracious guiding hand of a loving Father.

Part of the genius of the book is the way Tony has not merely recounted a sequential collection of stories from his life, but he has carefully drawn from each of the episodes key learning that has formed his path of discipleship. This in turn allows him to gently prompt us towards reflection with a set of wise and probing questions designed to help us to review our own adventure in following Jesus.

You will find this book to be a delight, and it will enrich you whatever your stage of life.

Dr Alan Wilson

Bible college tutor, author of *The Crucible of Leadership* and host of *The Leadership Journey Podcast*.

INTRODUCTION

You, an autobiographer? Why you? Why now? Because it is only in seeing where you have been that you can tell where you are headed.

William Bridges²

There comes a moment in life when we look back and ask ourselves, 'What was my life all about? What did it amount to?'

We may reach that place with a feeling of sadness and regret, wishing things had been different. More hopefully, we may come to the point of evaluation with a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment, feeling we have accomplished something meaningful during our brief time on planet earth.

As I look back over my own life, I am fortunate to feel more satisfaction than regret. Indeed, now in my 76th year, gratitude would be my overall emotion. I have so much to be thankful for despite my mistakes and shortcomings, and the painful episodes I have been through. For this I am truly grateful to God.

My ambition, from my youth, has been to follow God's will for my life. I have aspired to live as well as I can as a disciple of Jesus and to walk in his footsteps. The way has not always been easy and there has been some rough terrain and moments of danger, but at the same time there has always been much joy along the way. Many times, God's presence has been undeniably real and his blessing unforgettably tangible. It has been, and continues to be, a great adventure.

At a conference some years ago, a lady asked about my life. Having mentioned a few highlights, she said to me, 'My, you have had an interesting life!' I guess I have, but what disturbed me was her use of the past tense, as if it were almost over! It is not! I am still going strong and still enjoying the adventure of faith – present tense!

It has been said that to be a person is to have a story to tell. My aim in this book is to share with you some of my story (which I hope you will find interesting) and to highlight some lessons from my life of discipleship which may be helpful to you in reflecting on your own spiritual journey. This is not, therefore, an autobiography in the strictest sense of the word. I am not writing so much about what I have done as about what God has done in me and through me. I am not recounting my accomplishments but describing God's dealings with me down the years. From this perspective, it could perhaps be called a *spiritual* autobiography, where the story is being written by God. He is, after all, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2, KJV), and we are simply caught up into his bigger story.

In reflecting on my life, I have found it helpful to have in mind a framework or road map for understanding how God typically works in his servants over the years. I have been helped in my thinking by *The Making of a Leader* by Dr J. Robert Clinton, a book which aims to provide biblical insights into the patterns and processes God uses to develop leaders over their lifetime. His ideas are the fruit of studying the lives of hundreds of biblical, historical, and contemporary figures. He writes, 'Effective spiritual ministry flows out of our being, and God is concerned with our being. He is forming it. The patterns and processes he uses to shape us are worthwhile subjects for leadership study.'³ Clinton's work, although perhaps too mechanical and prescriptive, has helped many to understand some of the ways by which God is likely to be at work in us, and to recognise the contours of the spiritual journey.

A second significant work has been *The Critical Journey* by Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich.⁴ They focus more on identifying the

stages of faith, the seasons of life we go through on the journey of discipleship. Everyone's journey is unique, but there are enough significant similarities to discern certain stages that we will pass through as we follow Jesus over a lifetime. Their material certainly rings true with me and with others with whom I have shared it. Again, it has given me a lens for understanding and a way of describing my own spiritual journey.

A summary of both approaches is found in the Appendix section. These may be helpful to refer to as you follow my story.

Although I am writing with leaders in mind, I am not thinking solely about them. I hope that what I share is equally applicable to anyone who seeks to live for God, whatever their calling or stage of life.

Of course, this is by necessity an edited version of my story, limited by my purpose and by the word count of a book of this size. Like the gospel writers, I have been selective in what I have included and have not attempted to recall every incident in my life (how tedious), even some of the important ones. No doubt afterwards my mind will be full of thoughts I could have shared, but I must draw the line somewhere. It is limited, too, by the vagaries of my memory, which is fading fast, so I have written now while I can still recall most things! In matters of controversy and conflict, I can only give my own perspective, which others may see differently, but I have sought to be honest and fair throughout and always respectful of others. Any errors of fact are my own responsibility.

When asked, 'What does your father do?' my daughter was at a loss for words to describe the nature of my work. She came up with the expression, 'Well, he's a kind of religious Indiana Jones!' I like that, although it may be a slight exaggeration. It does capture, though, the adventure of following Jesus – often exciting, sometimes daunting, occasionally scary, but always worthwhile and certainly never boring.

It may be helpful to explain the structure of the book, and how you may use it. Each chapter reflects a specific period of my life and begins with a narrative section telling my story. Added to that is a more general reflection about an aspect of how God may be at work in our lives during that stage. Finally, there are some questions for reflection (a point of connection with you, the reader) so that if you wish, you can ponder your own journey with God, and even, if it seems appropriate, to work on a personal timeline.

Some readers will be happy simply to enjoy the narrative by itself. Others will appreciate also the reflections to help them understand more about how God typically works within us on our journey with him. A few will use the questions as well, taking the opportunity to look at their own story, reflecting on the past and anticipating the future. Use the book in the way which most appeals to you.

Whatever approach you take, my prayer is that, as you read, you too may be inspired to follow Jesus wherever he leads you; and that as you read you will find yourself offering your life to God again in a joyful surrender to his amazing love.

1

BEGINNING

‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.’

JEREMIAH 1:5

Much of God’s early preparation in our lives goes on below the surface, so to speak, and the ultimate results are often not apparent until much later... God’s formation of our lives is mostly invisible to us at first.

Randy Reese and Robert Loane⁵

It’s a cold, blustery day in March 1950. In the small mining village of Brierley in Yorkshire, in the north of England, two brothers are outside playing – Dave (14) and Sam (12).

A lady passes by and says casually, ‘Hey, your mother’s just had a baby.’

‘She has not,’ they say indignantly.

‘She has,’ says the lady, ‘and it’s a boy.’

Startled by this unexpected news, the brothers run home as fast as they can and burst into the house. They are shocked to see their mother holding a newborn baby. Dave, overwhelmed by this

unexpected development, runs upstairs and refuses to come down. Sam disappears outside again, saying nothing.

Next morning when the two of them come down for breakfast, mother greets them with the baby, a little boy. 'Well then, what do you think?' she asks. 'Shall we keep him?'

There is a pause. 'I suppose so,' says Dave, resignedly.

Such was my entrance into the world and arrival into my family. Not the most auspicious beginning! I was a surprise, but not unwanted. I was the youngest of five children, Dave being the eldest, then Sam, and then my sisters, Dorothy (8) and Jean (5). The age of my parents, and the gap between myself and the others, suggest I may not have been a planned addition, but I was anticipated by God and not an accident or mistake. Another mouth to feed when times in post-war Britain were hard, but welcomed, nonetheless.

Made for a purpose

I find much comfort from the word of God to the young prophet, Jeremiah. Whatever the circumstances of his birth, his arrival into the world was carefully planned by God, and he was known to God even before he was formed in the womb. He was designed by God for a specific calling, to be a prophet to the nations, and his life unfolded in the light of this. His personality, gifting, and life experience all prepared him for his God-given assignment.

The same is true of each of us. We are created for a purpose. There are no 'accidents' with God, and we enter the world known and loved by our creator and maker. Hopefully this basic belovedness is communicated and confirmed to us by our parents and carers, but since there are no perfect parents and many damaged ones, most of us find it hard to believe that we are loved without condition. We spend much of our lives searching for connection, with God and others.

Childhood influences

Attachment science (or theory) is the study of how we make and keep connection with others, including God. Our style of relating is formed in the first months of life. If we experience closeness and feel safe and loved, we learn to trust and build relationships easily. If we experience separation and feel unsafe and unloved, then we may be insecure in relationships and anxious and fearful in life. Each of us develops our own unique and mostly unconscious attachment style, which affects how we relate both to other people and to God.

Although much of this happens before we are able to hold memories, reflecting on what we know of our early years can help us form some idea of our childhood experiences and help us identify how the presence or absence of love and connection has shaped us. Krispin Mayfield writes, ‘Attachment styles are the profiles of our basic approach to relationships. They are the patterns of how we seek and maintain closeness and connection, and they tend to be consistent over the course of our lives. It’s an aspect of our personality that imparts how we relate to parents, spouses, children, God, and anyone who is important to us.’⁶

So how did this work out for me?

We lived in a semi-detached council-owned house on a newish estate of similar houses, the house heated by a coal fire which belched black smoke into the atmosphere, as did all the others. Life was simple and basic. My father worked at the local coal mine, hard manual work, and very dangerous. Money was in short supply, wages being low. Dad had an allotment where he grew vegetables and flowers. His own childhood had been difficult, and he rarely spoke about it. He smoked and went to the pub but never got drunk. I would describe him as being a good man, but distant. He didn’t get angry and was never unkind or violent. He seldom raised his voice, but he rarely praised us. He did not want us to become proud or big-headed, characteristics unappreciated in a close-knit working-class culture.

Later in my life I came to realise that when I thought of God as my Father, I regarded him as good but remote and unlikely to say good things to me, that is, until I died – and then I might receive a ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ In the meantime, it was a case of working hard, hoping I was doing alright and that he was pleased with me. Like many believers, I had a lot to learn about the true Father heart of God with his unconditional love and approval, and his many ways of affirming his children.

Mum was the one we would turn to for comfort, and I felt I could tell her anything. She didn’t have a paid job but looked after the family. An abiding image is of her sitting by the fireside, pen and notebook in hand, trying to make ends meet on Dad’s poor wages. We often owed money to the local store and bought groceries ‘on tick’. I went to school with my socks darned and holes in my shoes. She knitted, and we wore jumpers she had made. We learned to value what we had and to be careful with money. Her kindness made me feel safe, and home was a happy place. This meant my image of God was not totally defective. I had an instinctive awareness that there was a God and felt he too would be kind and good, if a little distant.

Family factors

At some point in my preschool years, I spent a short time in an isolation hospital, although I’m not sure why. I have a memory of being in a cot with high metal sides. I’m told that when I came home, I was ravenous and would eat anything, especially crusts of bread. This separation must have been traumatic for a young boy used to being part of a big family. I often think this may be one of the reasons why I never used to enjoy being alone. I had an unconscious fear of abandonment which has been there throughout my life.

Because Dave and Sam were so much older than me, I never really felt I had brothers. I didn’t see much of them, and they were more like uncles to me. I was closer to my sisters, Jean in particular, although

she too was a fair bit older than me. There were plenty of other children to play with on the estate, and street games were popular, but I often played by myself as well. I loved roaming the fields and hedgerows, looking for birds nests and identifying them by their eggs. Perhaps even then my tendency towards introversion was forming.

Recognition of God

Ours was not a family with faith. There was no Bible in the home, and I never remember anyone ever praying with me. We didn't go to church as a whole family and God was never mentioned. What we knew about God came from school and from being sent to Sunday school at the village chapel.

I attended the village primary school which was connected to the Church of England. It meant that we were taught Bible stories and would go to the nearby church for Christmas, Easter, and Harvest festival. The pipe-smoking vicar would lead the services and tell us stories but made no attempt to help us find personal faith. I loved school and was keen to learn. The headmaster, Mr Balmforth, was my hero and I think his example made me want to become a teacher myself. Even then I can see leadership traits developing in me. I managed to pass my eleven-plus exams, gaining me entrance to the nearby grammar school which opened the door further to the love of learning, enjoyment of all kinds of sports, and becoming a leader.

In the 1950s it was still popular to go to either church or chapel, and we definitely identified as chapel people – which was considered more working-class – even though we didn't attend as a family. In many ways the Methodist chapel was at the heart of life in the village, and I joined my sisters in going regularly. Here we made friends with children our own age, did lots of fun things, but also learnt more about the Bible. Once a year, we would tour the village on tractors and trailers singing specially prepared songs to celebrate the Sunday school anniversary. Then we went back to chapel for cakes and tea, followed

by games in a nearby field and ice creams. They were special days filled with simple pleasures! The first books I ever owned (mostly Enid Blyton) were prizes for attendance at the Sunday school and created in me a love of reading. My belief in God was strengthened by all of this, and while I was not yet converted, I was becoming more spiritually aware.

God's hidden work

Much of God's work in our lives in our earliest years is hidden from view, but reflecting on our past can help us to trace his hand in our lives from the moment of our birth (and even before). Dr J. Robert Clinton calls this phase 'sovereign foundations', when God is working providentially in our lives to bring us to himself and prepare us for the plan he has for our life. Our family or origin, the period of history we grew up in, the social culture into which we were born, and the things that happened to us, all shape who we become in later life. God weaves together all the bits and pieces of our lives into his unique design for us, even when we are not aware of it. God's formation of us in our earliest years is mostly invisible, beneath the surface, and often only becomes apparent later.

This was me, then, up to the age of eleven. I had safely navigated the childhood years without too much upset and was ready to enter my teenage years full of hope and confidence. I was aware of God and yet had no personal relationship with him, but he had made me for himself and was about to make himself known to me more fully. Then my life would really begin, but I could never have imagined the far-reaching plans God had for me, a working-class lad, hidden away in a tiny mining village in the north of England.

Reflection 1:

DESIGNED FOR A PURPOSE

Our childhood years provide the root system for our adult lives, often hidden from view but crucially important and continuing to influence who we are and how we live long after we have grown up. This is why it is helpful to reflect on our childhood and to understand how we have been formed and shaped by things that happened to us long ago.

God is at work in our lives before ever we come to know him, building foundations for the future. God has always been at work in our lives in ways that prepare us for his purpose. From Jeremiah 1:5 we learn that this work predated even our birth, God creating us with his purpose in mind, and placing within us certain gifts and personality traits that make us who we are. David wonderfully describes in amazing detail this creative act of God in Psalm 139:13–18, summed up in the expression that we have been ‘fearfully and wonderfully made’ (v. 14). He also connects the way we have been made with God’s plan for our life, paraphrased in *The Message* like this: ‘Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth; all the stages of my life were spread out before you, the days of my life all prepared before I’d even lived one day’ (v. 16).

With such a background, we can see that each of us has an intrinsic worth, value, and dignity. The apostle Paul concurs with this, saying, ‘For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do’ (Ephesians 2:10). The word translated here as ‘handiwork’ is the Greek word *poiema* and means literally a work of art, a piece of craftsmanship. It is the word from which we get the word ‘poem’, an apt description of the creativity

of God as he writes his message to the world through the story of our individual lives.

There is therefore a real sense in which we begin life with something of God's imprint on us, something which has been given to us and is there by grace, but other factors also shape us into the people we become, especially in our earlier years. Formative influences during childhood include the cultural and historical setting of our early years, our family background and history, the social milieu of our life, and the spiritual ethos (or lack of it) in which we grew up. That which is given is because of nature (or God), that which comes later is nurture; we are products of both.

Looking at my own story, I grew up in the 1950s, a period of optimism after the end of World War II, but still a time of austerity and simple living. I am therefore a 'baby boomer', one of the generation fortunate to be born in Britain after the war and into the welfare state with improving health care and better educational opportunities. I was a working-class boy, growing up in the industrial part of Yorkshire and absorbing the values of that context – hard working, thrifty with money, suspicious of privilege, and careful not to get above my station in life.

These were also the values of my family of origin, along with a guarding of our privacy, a dislike of too much emotion, a despising of showing off, an avoidance of conflict, and an aversion to asking for help. We were not physically expressive and seldom talked deeply of heart matters. Our horizons were limited and our exposure to people 'not like us' was infrequent. Spiritually, what we knew of God came from outside influences – a church school and the Methodist chapel. Religion was plain and simple, practical in expression and not at all showy. As you can see, much in my life needed changing and expanding!

Furthermore, since most of us are unaware of God in our early years, we inherit from our family and social network ways of behaving to

get by in the world on our own. These habitual patterns become our default position and are deeply ingrained. We can describe them also as ‘flesh patterns’ since they have their origin in what the Bible calls the ‘flesh’ – the sinful, independent self that does not know God. They may be helpful or unhelpful, but either way they express the human tendency to try to manage life without God. At some point later in life these will be exposed as inadequate, even destructive, and we will need to learn new ways that reflect our growing dependency on God.

During this period, God’s working in our lives may be invisible and it may be only when we take time to reflect that we can begin to see his hand at work shaping us and directing our path. For some this may be an easy and joyful thing to do as we discover that God has been lovingly present and active all along. For others it will be difficult because our early years were painful and traumatic and contain memories long since buried and hidden away. We may need skilled help to explore the darkness and confront the pain, but this will be necessary if we are to find healing and the freedom to become more fully the person God has made us to be.

Randy Reese and Robert Loane say that if we neglect to return to the beginning, there may well be fault lines which will appear later in our life and leadership. They write, ‘We will come to learn that the leadership we provide essentially flows out of who we are. And if we have not come to honest terms with who we are, eventually that will show itself when the work of leadership becomes more stressful and challenging.’⁷

Our awareness that we have been designed for a purpose may not dawn upon us until we are much older, but it is still true in childhood. Latent within us are gifts, talents, and abilities which will hopefully blossom and flourish as we discover who God is, the purpose he has for our lives, and then give ourselves wholly in response, but this will take time. Through the ups and downs of life, even in childhood, our character is taking shape and our personality beginning to shine through. The great danger, though, is that we try to be something

other than who God designed us to be, fearing that, somehow, in ourselves we are not enough.

How does this happen? Other people may not like us as we are and may pressurise us to conform to their expectations for us. Life may squeeze us into its own mould, inviting us to do what is popular, profitable, necessary, and acceptable. Our own self-doubt may push us into paths that lead us away from who we really are and into more comfortable choices. The pain and trauma we experience may require us to adopt a different persona simply to survive. Thus, we may lose touch with our original self, and the purpose of God, and develop a false self (not in the sense of being evil, but simply not authentic), wearing it like a set of clothes to cover who we really are. In this way the spiritual journey becomes a search for one's true self, and it may take many years to discover that we are not really being who we were created to be, and then to have the courage to search for the lost part of us.

Psychologist and spiritual director Dr David Benner says, 'Being most deeply your unique self is something that God desires, because your true self is grounded in Christ. God created you in uniqueness and seeks to restore you to that uniqueness in Christ. Finding and living out your true self is fulfilling your destiny.'⁸

The spiritual life is therefore a journey into the discovery of who we truly are, and the purpose for which we were actually made – in other words, our vocation. This is a journey that begins when we first come to Christ and hear his call to discipleship, a call not just to follow him, but to be with him and become like him.

Point of connection

Allow my story and the following reflection to stimulate your own thinking about your early childhood. Let the thoughts come freely, along with any emotions. This may require that you set time aside where you can think reflectively, with the help of God's Spirit.

- Can you see how God has been at work in your early years, building his sovereign foundations?
- How may you have been shaped by your family of origin, the society in which you grew up, your geographical location at the time, and the culture of the day?
- As you look back over your earliest years, do you feel you have any attachment issues? Has there been significant trauma which has not been attended to?
- What gifts, talents, and abilities do you think have been there since birth, part of the way God made you with his purpose in mind? Why not give thanks for this?

You may like to make a timeline of your life, dividing it into the different decades. Then add significant moments and places to illustrate your journey. You might put positive experiences above the line, negative ones beneath the line. Use colours if that helps to identify key thoughts. This will take some time and thought, and there is no rush to do it, but it could be a helpful exercise alongside reading the book.



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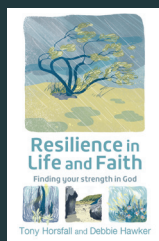
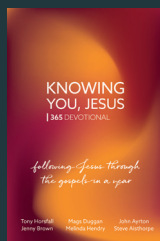
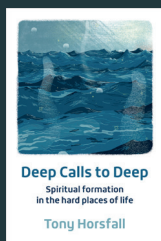
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Tony Horsfall is an established author and well known as a retreat leader in the UK and internationally. With a background in mission, he regularly speaks at events and conferences. He has written a number of other books for BRF Ministries, including *Deep Calls to Deep*, *Knowing You, Jesus*, *Resilience in Life and Faith*, and *Rhythms of Grace*.



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